



**Arizona Autism Charter School, Inc.
Parent Policy & Responsibility Handbook
Central Phoenix, West Valley & Tucson
School Year 2024-2025**

Our Mission

The mission of the Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. is to educate students with autism and other neurodiversities using evidence-based strategies grounded in the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). This educational model will be delivered by highly trained teachers and staff. Our goal is to make this high-quality, specialized education accessible to students with autism in the Phoenix Metropolitan area and beyond.

Our Vision

Our driving force is to empower students with ASD to reach their full potential in motivating and engaging environments using individualized programs so that each child gains the skills to integrate into the community and become a fulfilled, productive citizen.

The Board of Directors for Arizona Autism Charter School, Inc.

The Board is responsible for meeting the mandates of the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools and the Arizona Department of Education and the overall operation of the charter school.

Executive Team

Founder & Executive Director	Diana Diaz-Harrison
Head of Schools	Myla Goyne
Senior Director for Data and ABA Programming	Claire Piper
Director of Talent Management	Susan Contino
Director of Operations and IT	Dan McCarty
Director of Compliance and Strategic Initiatives	Annie Loftis

Campus Support Team

Director of Special Education and English Language Learners	Kristina Christman
Director of Transition and Essential Piece Enterprises	Angela Kennedy
Director of STEAM and Innovation	Supreet Kaur
Director of Teacher Preparation and Parent Engagement	Tracy Malcolm

Campus Leadership Teams

Upper Campus Director	Denise Ballard
Upper Campus Director of ABA Practices	Carla Smith
Early Learning Center Director	Patrick Masson
Early Learning Center Director of ABA Practices	Mogo Gabre
West Valley Campus Director	Katie Ferback
West Valley Campus Director of ABA Practices	Christopher Morris
AZACS Online Campus Director	John Paquin
Tucson Upper Campus Director	Kelly Hardegree-Ullman
Tucson Upper Campus Director of ABA Practices	Brittany Parmigiane

Administrative Support Team

Registered Nurse	Jessica Mangieri
Student Management System Manager	Maria Colunga
Special Education Clerk - MIPS	Lesley Tuxtla
Special Education Clerk	Alondra Jimenez-Herrera
School Nutrition Manager	Holly Vaughan

Early Learning Center

Office Manager/Receptionist/Attendance Clerk	Yessenia Garcia
Certified Nursing Assistant	Jacqueline Austin

Main Campus

Office Manager	Mekayala Gutierrez
Receptionist/Attendance Clerk	Arleth Sanchez

West Campus

Receptionist/Attendance Clerk	Diana Burruell
Office Manager	Nisha Teague
Certified Nursing Assistant	Monica Ulmer

Tucson Campus

Office Manager	Andrea Every
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Online Campus

Receptionist/Attendance Clerk
Administrative Assistant

Adele Shemberger
Ariana Flatt

Office

Office hours on all campuses are 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

School Contact Info

Early Learning Center (ELC), Grades K-3
1445 E. Indian School Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85014

(602) 883-7500

Main Campus, Grades 4-12+
4125 N. 14th St.
Phoenix, AZ 85014

(602) 882-5544

West Valley Campus, Grades K-6
11039 W. Olive Ave.
Peoria, AZ 85345

(602) 283-5994

Online Campuses, Grades K-12
1430 E. Indian School Rd. Suite 200
Phoenix, AZ 85014

(602) 346-0300

Tucson High School Campus, Grades 6-12
1300 S Belvedere Ave.
Tucson, AZ 85711

(520) 372-0660

Attendance Is Essential

School attendance is ultimately the responsibility of the student and their family. Arizona law ARS § 15-803 A requires students to attend school from the ages of 6 – 16. Arizona Autism Charter School believes students need to be at school daily to maximize their learning opportunities. As families who have chosen a specialized school, we request that your student attend school daily. This practice provides students with a consistent routine to help them develop a strong work ethic, reduce stress, form lasting relationships, and encourage academic and social progress.

If a student is habitually absent or tardy, AZACS will make every effort to work with the family to improve attendance. School and Arizona state policy requires that we notify the proper state authorities if no improvement is made and attendance continues to be an issue.

Instructional Time Model

In the 2021 Legislative session, H.B. 2862 was passed, authorizing charter schools to adopt Instructional Time Models (ITMs) to provide flexibility in the method and manner in which instructional hours are provided to students. AZACS takes advantage of this new legislation that allows for some flexibility to traditional seat time and face-to-face instruction. AZACS reviews this option annually to ensure we are providing flexible parent choices to maximize a student's engagement and success in their education. Annual plans for ITM are approved by the school board and submitted to the Arizona Department of Education. Campus Administration will communicate to eligible families each year regarding any ITM opportunities in your child's grade level and program.

Excused Absences

Pursuant to A.R.S. 15-901(A)(1), excused absences are identified by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). ADE defines an excused absence as an absence due to:

- Illness
- Doctor appointments
- Mental or Behavioral Health
- Homelessness
- Time Necessary to Process for the Armed Forces
- Bereavement
- Family emergencies
- Out-of-school suspensions
- Religious holidays

ARS 15-807(B) states that in order for absences to be counted as excused, the elementary, K-8 or middle school must be notified in advance or by the end of the school day of any absence by the parent or other person who has custody of the student. High schools must receive notification from the parent or other person who has custody of the student within 24 hours of

For an excused absence, parents/guardians must notify Arizona Autism Charter School by 9:00 am of each day the student is absent.

To report an absence, please email the campus where the student attends or call the school to leave a voice message.

Early Learning Center (K-3) ELCattendance@autismcharter.org

Elementary Campus (4-5) Elementaryattendance@autismcharter.org

Upper Campus (6-12) Uppercampusattendance@autismcharter.org

West Valley (K-6) Westvalleyattendance@autismcharter.org

Tucson Upper Campus (6-12) attendanceTC@autismcharter.org

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences reflect poorly on student achievement, so we strongly encourage students to minimize the number of unexcused absences they incur. AZACS is responsible for a minimum number of instructional minutes for state requirements. AZACS takes this responsibility very seriously and we count every minute of our school day to ensure that students meet these minutes and receive the maximum benefit possible. The following are some examples of missed school days that will be considered unexcused absences:

- Family Trips
- Non-school related activities (e.g. sporting events, cultural activities, celebrations, trips)
- Truancy (non-attendance)
- Regularly scheduled therapy appointments

Any student who is absent from school without the permission of the parent/guardian and/or without the knowledge and permission of Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. is considered TRUANT and may be subject to disciplinary actions in school and/or by local authorities. If a parent/guardian fails to send their child to school, the child will be considered truant. Under Arizona State law, Arizona Autism Charter School is required to report excessive truancy to the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS).

Excessive Absences

Should a student reach ten (10) total absences (excused or unexcused) within a semester; the Administrative Staff will meet to align interventions to support the student in regularly attending. A student's parents/guardians will be notified and asked to participate in this process to review the circumstances that led to the excessive absences. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to ensure consistent attendance. If the parent/guardian fails to take the necessary steps to provide your child with appropriate education you may receive a citation. If convicted, it is a Class 3 misdemeanor punishable by jail time and/or a fine.

Arizona State law states that any student who has 10 consecutive unexcused absences must be dropped from the school enrollment. If a student misses school more than 15% of the time, the student may be denied promotion due to Arizona state law and receive a failing grade in that class. The student may be required to repeat the grade the following semester, the following school year, or at summer school.

Tardiness

Lateness to school and class is disruptive to instruction. A student will be considered tardy to school if he/she arrives after the campus's instructional start time. Upon late arrival, the parent/guardian must sign the student in at the front desk. Four (4) unexcused late arrivals to school will be considered habitual and parents may be contacted.

Late Arrival & Pick Up Policy

At Arizona Autism Charter Schools, we understand it takes a lot of commitment to get your child to and from school every day. We appreciate the efforts of our families to arrive on time and pick up your child at the end of the day. We also understand that sometimes unforeseen challenges arise that may result in your child being late for school or you being late to pick them up at the end of the day.

For late arrivals, please bring your child into the campus and sign them in for the day. Appropriate attendance will be documented by staff once your child arrives. Your child should arrive by the campus-specific start times each school day.

If a situation arises where you will be late to pick up your child, all families will be given a 30-minute grace period from the end of the school day where staff will supervise your child and have them ready for pick-up. In those rare instances where you will be more than 30 minutes late for pick-up, your child will continue to be supervised by staff in our late pick-up room. Because we will have to have staff stay on the clock to supervise students, we will be required to charge a fee for a late pick-up that is more than 30 minutes after dismissal. Late pick-ups will be charged a \$10 fee for each 15 minutes late up to \$40/hour.

We want to avoid this fee at all costs and understand challenges happen. Please be sure to communicate with the front office if you know you are going to be late.

Illness Policy

If your student appears to be ill in the morning before school, please have him/her remain at home. In general, students will be sent home from school if they have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or more if they are experiencing vomiting or diarrhea, or if they have symptoms of a suspected communicable illness or condition. If your student is sent home from school, please keep in mind that he/she should not return to school until he/she has maintained a 98.6-degree (normal) temperature for 24 hours without being given medication for fever reduction (such as Tylenol, Motrin, etc.). The student should have experienced no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school. If parents, guardians, or emergency contacts are called to pick up a student due to illness at school, it is expected that your student will be picked up as requested within one (1) hour of notification.

Chronic Illness Policy

When a student is identified as possibly requiring a plan to address significant absences associated with chronic health conditions (via registration, attendance data, parent or teacher referral) a medical certification

form shall be completed and returned to the school within thirty (30) school days. The parent, teacher, and Principal shall meet within (15) days following the return of the medical certification.

The parents shall submit a written medical certification to the Campus Director, which will include:

1. Medical diagnosis
2. Physical limitations affecting physical education activities and other requirements
3. Anticipated surgeries, treatment or hospitalizations that, although not expected to cause sufficient absences may interfere with regular school attendance.
4. Physician's signature and date signed.

The parent, teacher, and Principal shall meet within (15) days following the return of the medical certification. Please contact the school Sr. Registrar for a Chronic Illness Verification form to be signed by a physician and kept on file in our office.

Signing Out Early

We strongly discourage parents/guardians from signing students out early for appointments, therapies, or other engagements that can be scheduled during school breaks, half days, or after school hours. Students who must leave school early for unavoidable purposes must have their parents contact the school and the parent/guardian must sign their child out at the front desk. Parents must remain in the lobby area until the child is escorted to the lobby from the classroom by staff. A parent/guardian must authorize all additional family members or others who can sign their child out of school by updating their emergency contact information on their parent portal.

Also, to avoid classroom disruptions, **students will not be released for dismissal 15 minutes before regular dismissal time** *except on an emergency basis*. This is to ensure that staff members have time to complete all academic lessons and proceed to staff posts to ensure that students can safely be dismissed to the traffic line. Please help us keep all children safe by not routinely picking up your child early from school.

Students who are routinely signed out early will be marked as an unexcused absence for that time.

Identification for Picking up a Child

Parents/Guardians and any authorized adults on the emergency contact list should present identification upon picking up a student at the front desk. authorized to pick up your child must be listed on the authorized contact list. If someone who does not routinely pick up your child is picking them up after school they must come into the office and show identification to pick up your child. If you have a new provider working with your child, please make sure you have updated your household information in your parent portal and authorized us to release your child to the provider. If someone is coming to pick your child up during the school day, please ask them to bring identification into the office so that we can verify the correct name on the pickup list.

Pickup will be conducted with the use of **PikMyKid**, an app-based pickup system that replaces our previous one. All parents or primary pick-up persons are recommended to register themselves via the **PikMyKid** app on

their smartphones. During pickup, individuals must use the **PikMyKid app** to “Announce” themselves as soon as they arrive on campus. All vehicles must display their pick-up tag while in line preferably near the front visible through the windshield.

The **PikMyKid app** also allows parents to delegate pick up of their children to another individual, so long as that individual is listed on the authorized contact list as mentioned above. It's recommended that these individuals also register themselves on **PikMyKid** as well as have a pickup tag in their vehicle.

Individuals who do not have this information may be asked to park and walk into the building to show ID which may delay the pickup of the student. Each family will be assigned a student number and that number will be identified on the student's pickup tag. Each family will be given 3 tags and can request additional ones from the Registrar.

For any additional help or questions about **PikMyKid**, please contact the IT Team at itsupport@autismcharter.org or call the helpline at (602)273-5199.

As a reminder, students are expected to be picked up on time each day. Please understand that a Director will be in contact with the parent or guardian if a student is picked up late more than 3 days within a school year.

Parent Communication

AZACS makes every effort to communicate proactively using different modalities for families. Communication takes on a variety of forms including SchoolMessenger (Informational out dials, email, and/or texts using this service to create automated notifications for communication in the event of a crisis as well as school information), direct email, and direct phone calls just to name a few. We also provide scheduled Parent-teacher conferences in grades K-5. In addition, we offer scheduled observations up to four times per school year to maintain transparency and team collaboration.

For any classroom concerns, the classroom teacher should be your point of contact. For any concerns not resolved through your child's classroom teacher, please reach out to the Director for that campus.

Ways to effectively communicate with your child's teacher include:

- Via Email- Please call the school if you need to know a specific teacher's email address or find the teacher's email address on the website.
- Via Phone- This method may be used outside of instructional hours. Teachers are requested to return calls within 24 hours. Phone calls will not be transferred to the classroom during instructional hours.
- Daily Communication Binder - This method will be used by your student's teacher to communicate daily progress, achievements, challenges, and behaviors. This also provides an opportunity for the parent/guardian to give feedback.

Communication between school and home should remain respectful and collaborative. Inappropriate or unprofessional communication will not be condoned.

Opt-in to SchoolMessenger to receive important school information delivered via text message to your mobile phone by texting "Y" or "Yes" to **67587**.

Parents and Guardians

You can take advantage of our Text Messaging Service

Our school utilizes the SchoolMessenger system to deliver text messages, straight to your mobile phone with important information about events, school closings, safety alerts and more.

You can participate in this free service* just by sending a text message of “Y” or “Yes” to our school’s short code number, **67587**.

You can also opt out of these messages at any time by simply replying to one of our messages with “**Stop**”.

We recommend saving this short code and Caller ID to the contacts on your phone. This will help prevent any 3rd party call blocking systems from interfering with your receipt of important messages sent by the school or district.

SchoolMessenger is compliant with the Student Privacy Pledge™, so you can rest assured that your information is safe and will never be given or sold to anyone.



**Opt-In from your
mobile phone now!**



**Just send “Y” or
“Yes” to 67587**

 [Information on SMS text messaging and Short Codes:](#)

Our notification provider, SchoolMessenger, uses a true SMS protocol developed by the telecommunications industry specifically for mass text messaging, referred to as “short code” texting. This method is fast, secure and highly reliable because it is strictly regulated by the wireless carriers and only allows access to approved providers. If you’ve ever sent a text vote for a TV show to a number like 46999, you have used short code texting.

***Terms and Conditions** – Message frequency varies. Standard message and data rates may apply. Reply HELP for help. Text STOP to cancel. Mobile carriers are not liable for delayed or undelivered messages. Alerts sent over the wireless Public Alerting system are to take precedence over any notifications sent via the short code. See www.schoolmessenger.com/tm for more info.

Conflict of Interest

AZACS Staff are not permitted to accept any position (e.g. babysitting, home therapy, habilitation, respite, etc.) outside of our organization with a current student. This is considered a conflict of interest to work with a current student outside of the school for any other organization or private funding. This is to protect the privacy of all students and maintain the professional relationship between school personnel and families.

This policy protects the employee from being placed in an uncomfortable situation and possible ethical dilemma. It is very important to ensure proper and appropriate boundaries for the protection of the students, families, and staff members. If employment with the family occurs before the hiring of the individual, the employee and student that is served can not be housed on the same campus and the employee is responsible for letting their Director know of the circumstance.

Allergies

AZACS is a **Peanut Free** environment. No peanut products are permitted on campus. Please do not send students to school with **any** peanut-related products. In addition, all students must have an updated AZACS Allergy Information packet on file each year listing all diagnosed allergies. Families are encouraged to inform the School Nurse if changes occur throughout the year so that additional precautions can be taken in specific classrooms as well as common areas. AZACS reserves the right to request medical documentation to verify listed allergies.

Lice/Nit

If a student is found with active head lice, guardians will be contacted and the student will be sent home for treatment. The guardian will be encouraged to begin treatment of the student immediately. The student shall be checked upon return to school and allowed to remain in school if no active head lice are detected. When it is determined that one or more students in a class or school are infested with head lice, a notice will be sent to families with information about the detection and treatment of lice.

National School Lunch Program

AZACS Central Phoenix and West Valley campuses participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). We offer breakfast and lunch to all students. Breakfast and lunch orders must be completed monthly by the due date for your student to participate.

We strongly encourage parents to fill out and submit a school meal application form for free or reduced lunch benefits (FRL). This information can also be used for other programs such as Pandemic Electronic Benefits (P-EBT), federal and state funding for your school, discounted rates for internet service, and many more.

If your student requires meal accommodations for a medical reason, the Arizona Department of Education requires a medical statement signed by a medical professional. We must have this form completed and returned for any special dietary needs. Without this completed form, we will NOT BE PERMITTED to accommodate your student's dietary needs and you will be required to provide your child with a packed lunch.

Visitor Procedures, Tour Policy, Parent Observation & Volunteer Protocol

Arizona State Law mandates that all visitors to any campus, including *parents* must check in at the school offices before entering the classroom areas.

All visitors are required to check in at the front desk and provide their government-issued identification card.

AZACS uses Raptor Technologies to perform a background check on-site before visitors are allowed on campus.

Parents, Guardians, DDD case managers, and other professionals working with a family are welcome to visit their student's classroom with prior permission. *Due to the nature of the students served at Arizona Autism Charter School (AZACS), interruptions and distractions in the classroom must be kept to a minimum for all students in the room.*

*All visits must be pre-approved by a member of the administrative team and will be limited to **one 30-minute visit, per appointment. Observations are limited to once per quarter, for a maximum of (4) four visits per school year.** We ask that all families wait six (6) weeks into the school year before scheduling visits and observations to give students and staff time to adapt to their new school routines without disruptions. Please contact one of the campus directors to make arrangements for observations at least **one (1) week in advance of the intended visit.***

All visitors must report to the front desk to sign in and receive a visitor name tag. Visitor identification and a signed Release of Information Form will be requested at that time if a person other than the parent/guardian is observing. Visitors will also be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. An AZACS staff member will accompany the visitor to the classroom or observation hub. All visitors must sign out at the front desk when leaving the school facility. For the safety of all students, there are no exceptions to this requirement.

Groups of visitors (more than two (2) persons) will be asked to visit the classroom at separate times. AZACS requests that siblings or small children are not brought along during scheduled visitations.

Visitors to the Main Campus will be escorted to the observation hub for the complete time of the observation. Visitors to the Early Learning Center or West Valley will observe through the classroom glass or in the classroom. Teachers and therapists are not able to take instructional time to discuss class events, procedures, or student matters with visitors. It is recommended that a second visit is arranged *before or after* school with the teacher and/or the therapist to discuss the visitor's observations.

School administrators, or persons acting in their absence, are authorized to refuse entry to the school to persons who do not have legitimate business at the school or do not have proper signed documentation. Any person or persons engaging in unacceptable conduct will be asked to leave the school grounds.

Parent Observation Protocol

All observing parties must comply with the following conditions:

- Who May Be Observed: The sole purpose of a classroom visit by a parent is to observe their student

and the instructional program being presented within the allotted time frame (**no more than 30 minutes**). Observations are limited to **four times per year, once a quarter**.

At no time should a parent's motive for or focus of a classroom visit be to observe another student in the classroom. If the Director knows that the focus of a parent's visit is to observe another student, he/she reserves the right to deny a requested visit or to end a visit that is in progress.

- Parents must request an observation at least one week before the proposed visit.
- Check-In: Parents/guardians must check in the main office and obtain a visitor's badge from the office staff before the observation period. No more than two visitors may observe at one time.
- Conduct during Classroom Visitation: Classroom visits are scheduled for no more than 30 minutes per visit. Parents are expected to enter the observation hub escorted by the administrator.
- Parent Questions/Comments: Parents wishing to discuss their student's behavior after the observation should schedule a separate conference with the teacher/Director.
- No Audio or Video Taping of Classroom: Video and/ or audio recording of classroom visits by the parent or guardian is prohibited without prior approval. Electronic devices which could be used for video or audio records should not be visible during the visit.
- School Administration: The Director or his/ her designee will be in the hub during the parent observation.
- Observations conducted during virtual school will also follow the observation protocol. Parent observations during virtual school will not be conducted if the child is not present in the virtual class with the observing parent.

Tour Policy

Tours are available to current parents/guardians and/or parents/guardians of prospective students who are interested in learning more about Arizona Autism Charter School. During a tour, parents/guardians will be accompanied by a school administrator or other staff members for the entire tour. Parents/guardians will learn about AZACS' education, be provided with a brief tour of the campus, and receive answers to any questions families may have. AZACS will only allow parents/guardians of prospective students to visit/observe classrooms through a scheduled tour. To schedule a tour, please contact the applicable AZACS campus.

Parent Volunteer Protocol

All observing parties must comply with the following conditions:

- Sign up for structured volunteer efforts through the front desk. All volunteer events must have prior approval from the school administration.

- Volunteers will be provided a workspace for all projects. Additional materials and any other needs should be requested from the front desk.
- Volunteers should remain in the area provided and are prohibited from roaming halls without an escort or going into classrooms.
- All volunteer efforts will be given a specific allotment of time to allow the use of space for other needs.
- Check-In/Out: A staff member will escort volunteers to the specified location upon arrival. A visitor's badge must be worn at all times.
- When projects are completed, the volunteer should check out with the front desk staff.
- Conduct during Volunteer Period: Volunteer projects are generally scheduled for no more than 2 hours per visit. Parents are expected to remain in the room provided, and report to the front desk once completed. Parents should not interact with students in the hallways, etc. This may cause unnecessary disruptions.
- No Audio or Video Taping on school premises: Video and/or audio recording of school visits by the parent or guardian is prohibited without prior approval. Electronic devices that could be used for video or audio recording should not be visible during the visit.
- State Standards/Guidelines: Volunteers will be asked to produce an IVP Fingerprint Clearance Card before scheduling
- Any person not abiding by the above requirements will be asked to leave the school.
- The school administration reserves the right to approve or deny volunteer requests.

Visitor Procedures above apply to volunteers as well.

Custody

The most recent custody papers are to be kept on file in the school office.

This would be the latest dated court decree. It is the parent's responsibility to provide the latest and most recent court papers to the school. **Each year, even if the custodial rights have not changed, the burden is on the parent who has the appropriate paperwork to provide every year during registration.** Otherwise, the school uses the most recently dated papers received to validate custody.

Order of Protection

1. If there is an order of protection due to custody (or any other issues), the student file is flagged in the school office. Orders of Protection are typically only good for one year. When Orders of Protection expire it is the custodial parent's responsibility to give a copy of the renewed Order of Protection to the school office.

Guardianship

1. Legal Guardianship and Temporary Legal Guardianship can only be established by Court Order. If a child does not reside with natural parents, the school will request "letters of guardianship," issued by a court, before enrolling a student.

Guardianship for students over 18 years old

In Arizona, a parent can file for legal guardianship in one or both ways:

- Have the student declared legally incompetent with legal paperwork
- File for legal guardianship and receive legal guardianship of the student

School Paperwork / Payment Deadlines

AZACS operates under the supervision of several different regulatory bodies at both the state and federal levels that impact every procedure from IEPs to instructional minutes to expenditures and reporting requirements. As a result, we are frequently audited and need to complete reports on tight deadlines.

We will provide three opportunities for you to respond to requests for information (e.g. records, RSVPs for meetings/events, etc.) via email and/or phone. After those three opportunities, your and/or your child's ability to participate in the meeting/event or activity may not be guaranteed.

Uniform Requirements

The AZACS uniform consists of a blue or maroon polo shirt with the AZACS logo. Students can wear navy or khaki shorts or pants of their choice. Girls can also wear a navy or khaki skirt. An official AZACS Spirit Wear shirt may be worn on Fridays. Shoes should be closed-toed or sandals with secure straps (no flip-flops). In cooler weather, students can wear an AZACS zip-up sweatshirt from Dennis Uniforms or a plain navy or maroon zip-up or button-up sweater or sweatshirt. Information on how to order uniforms can be found on the school website under the "Parent" tab or by contacting the vendor listed below. You may also contact the front desk for more details.

Dennis School Uniforms

3645 E. Indian School Road Suite 1

602-377-5154

<https://www.dennisuniform.com/>

Online Students

AZACS online students are not required but are suggested to wear school uniforms. When coming on-site or attending any AZACS social function, uniforms will be strongly suggested.

Medication Administration

- Prescription medication may only be administered by trained staff members upon the receipt of a Medication Administration Form completed and signed by the student's physician and legal parent/guardian. See the front office/health office for Medication Administration Forms.
- Medication **must be in the original prescription bottle**. Your pharmacist may give you a second, labeled bottle for medication administration during school hours.
- Medication should be brought (by an adult only) directly to the school office. **It is not acceptable to send it in a child's backpack, lunch box, etc.**
- It is the responsibility of the parent to make sure there is enough medication in the office. **Parents must be responsible for ensuring medication does not run out at school.**
- Parents will be notified at the end of the school year to collect any remaining medication. Any uncollected medication will be destroyed per protocol by the school nurse.

Immunizations

The state immunization law requires all students to have an immunization record on file for school attendance. If your child is exempt from immunizations, a signed immunization exemption form must be on file. These forms can be found in the school office. **All records must be on file before A STUDENT ATTENDS SCHOOL. PLEASE NOTE: The state mandates that a child without an immunization record on file will not be allowed to attend classes until the school receives this information.**

Child Abuse

AZACS maintains strict adherence to Arizona laws and statutes governing the reporting of suspected child abuse. All individuals required to report suspected child abuse are protected by state law from criminal liability.

Child Find

Arizona Autism Charter School will identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities within their population who need special education and related services, regardless of the severity of their disability. In its identification process, Arizona Autism Charter School will include children who are suspected of being a child with a disability and in need of special education, even though a student is:

- Advancing from grade to grade
- Highly mobile, including a migrant student [34 C.F.R. 300.111]

Arizona Autism Charter School will inform the general public and parents within its population of the responsibility for special education services for students aged three (3) through twenty-one (21) years, and how those services may be accessed including information regarding early intervention services for children aged birth through two (2) years. Services for an eligible student with a disability shall extend through the conclusion of the instructional year during which the student attains the age of twenty-two (22). [A.A.C.

R7-2-401.C] Arizona Autism Charter School will require all staff members to review the written procedures related to child identification and referral on an annual basis and maintain documentation of the staff review. [A.A.C. R7-2-401.D]

Identification screening for possible disabilities shall be completed within forty-five (45) calendar days after:

- Entry of each preschool or kindergarten student and any student enrolling without appropriate records or screening, evaluation, and progress in school; or
- Parent notification of concerns regarding developmental or educational progress.

Screening procedures shall include vision and hearing status and consideration of the following areas:

- Cognitive or academic;
- Communication;
- Motor;
- Social or behavioral; and
- Adaptive development.

For a student transferring into Arizona Autism Charter School, Arizona Autism Charter School shall review enrollment data and educational performance in the prior school. If there is a history of special education for a student not currently eligible for special education or poor progress, the name of the student shall be submitted to the administrator for consideration of the need for a referral for a full and individual evaluation or other services. [A.A.C. R7-2-401.D] If a concern about a student is identified through screening procedures or review of records, the parents of the student shall be notified of the concern within ten (10) school days and informed of Arizona Autism Charter School's procedures to follow up on the student's needs. [A.A.C. R7-2-401.D] Arizona Autism Charter School shall maintain documentation of the identification procedures utilized, the dates of entry into school, notification by parents of concern, and the dates of screening. The results shall be maintained in the student's permanent records. [A.A.C. R7-2-401.D] If the identification process indicates a possible disability, the name of the student shall be submitted to the administrator for consideration of the need for a referral for a full and individual evaluation or other services. A parent or a student who has reached the age of majority (18) may request an evaluation of the student. [A.A.C. R7-2-401.D] If, after consultation with the parent, Arizona Autism Charter School determines that a full and individual evaluation is not warranted, Arizona Autism Charter School shall provide prior written notice and procedural safeguards notice to the parent promptly. [A.A.C. R7-2-401.D]

Annual Notification of Rights under FERPA for Schools

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights concerning the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the Arizona Autism Charter School receives an access request.

Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child's or their education records should submit to the school Director a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make access arrangements and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the Arizona Autism Charter school to amend their child's or their education record should write to the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want to be changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. The criteria for determining who constitutes a school official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest must be outlined in the school's or school district's annual notification for FERPA rights. A school official typically includes a person employed by the school or school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its employees and who is under the direct control of the school concerning the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the [School] to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in § 99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas,

disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, § 99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student –

- To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(3) are met. (§ 99.31(a)(1))
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of § 99.34. (§ 99.31(a)(2))
- To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency (SEA) in the parent or eligible student's State. Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of § 99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, enforcement, or compliance activity on their behalf if applicable requirements are met. (§§ 99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)
- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary for such purposes as to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§ 99.31(a)(4))
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, before adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to § 99.38. (§ 99.31(a)(5))
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, to (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction, if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(6))
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§ 99.31(a)(7))
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§ 99.31(a)(8))
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(9))
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to § 99.36. (§ 99.31(a)(10))

- Information the school has designated as “directory information” if applicable requirements under § 99.37 are met. (§ 99.31(a)(11))
- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student’s case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, by State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(L))
- To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, under certain conditions. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(K))

Arizona Autism Charter Schools (AZACS) Enrollment Policy

AZACS has established fair and equitable enrollment procedures to be used throughout the school years.

AZACS will enroll all eligible students in grades K- 12 who submit a timely enrollment interest form unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building per ARS 15-184.

AZACS shall give enrollment preference to pupils returning to the charter school in the second or any subsequent year of its operation and to siblings of pupils already enrolled in the charter school.

AZACS may give enrollment preference to and reserve capacity for pupils who are either children, grandchildren, or legal wards of any of the following:

- (a) Employees of the school
- (b) Employees of the charter holder
- (c) Members of the governing body of the school
- (d) Directors, officers, partners, or board members of the charter holder

Applications will be accepted year-round however open enrollment for the following school year will officially start on January 1 of the current year, but selection of students for the following school year will take place starting in February. At the end of the open enrollment period, for any grade level/program for which there are more applications than available spaces, a lottery will be held to select students who will attend the school in those classrooms/programs. Students who are not selected through the lottery process will be put on a waitlist. The same procedure will take place each school year. If more applications are received than the available slots, then a lottery will be held to select students who will be enrolled.

AZACS may refuse to admit any pupil who has been expelled from another educational institution or who is in the process of being expelled from another educational institution.

AZACS shall not limit admission based on ethnicity, national origin, gender, income level, disabling condition, proficiency in the English language, or athletic ability per ARS 15-184.

BULLY POLICY

Definitions of bullying

- *Unwanted aggressive behavior(s) involving an observed or perceived power imbalance;*
- *Done by another youth or group of youths, who are not siblings or current dating partners;*
- *Repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated;*
- *Inflicts harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm (Center for Disease Control).*

Types of bullying

- *Verbal bullying: saying or writing things that could be mean or hurtful. Things like: name-calling, threats, taunting, teasing, and inappropriate sexual comments*
- *Social bullying: involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Making someone feel like they don't belong to a group*
- *Physical bullying: involves hurting a person's body or things that belong to them.*
- *Cyberbullying: involves bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets.*

Process for the investigation by the appropriate school officials of suspected incidents of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

AZACS staff will fill out a bullying report and turn it into the administrator. A member of the Admin Team will investigate the report including

- 1. Interviewing all parties involved to get statements*
- 2. Inform families involved within 24 hours of the report.*

Disciplinary procedures for pupils who have admitted or been found to have committed incidents of harassment, intimidation, or bullying

Consequences for bullying include but are not limited to: time out of class (Alternative Learning Location), lunch/recess detention, community service, additional staff supervision, peer mediation groups, and suspension, and are based on the level of offense.

DISCIPLINARY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

AZACS follows disciplinary policies and procedures as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Students who attend AZACS may not bring to school or have in their possession any item that may be classified as a weapon (for example: guns, knives, matches, lighters, etc.). A student who brings such items to AZACS may be required to participate in daily searches of persons or personal possessions thereafter to ensure the safety of the student and others. Possession of these items may be considered grounds for recommendation of

suspension.

Assaultive behavior by students (use of a weapon or object used as a weapon or battery against a staff person or another student) will not be tolerated at AZACS. The parents, caregivers, or guardians will be notified immediately in the event assaultive behavior occurs. A recommendation may be made for suspension, a Manifestation Determination meeting, or a review of placement.

Electronic Devices and Other Prohibited Items

iPods or other portable music players, cameras, electronic games, iPads/tablets, laser pointers, skateboards, roller blades & skates, wireless/Bluetooth earbuds, and other toys that are not part of the academic, behavioral/emotional, or extracurricular program are prohibited on campus.

Audio and/or visual recording with any device on campus is strictly prohibited.

Cell Phones and Personal Technology

The use of cell/smart phones and smartwatches during the school day is prohibited. The reason for such a prohibition is to promote an uninterrupted academic environment. If a student needs an electronic device for a medical reason, that will be arranged. Please contact your campus Director for more information.

AZACS believes that limiting on-campus use of cell phones and personal technology is essential to the proper formation of the young to place limitations on it. While the ubiquity of personal technology is a given, the following restrictions/allowances apply at the school:

1. If it is absolutely essential for the student to possess a cell phone/smartwatch, the student should keep their cell phone or smartwatch turned off (not merely silenced, but off) and cell phones and smartwatches must be stored in their backpack during the school day. Cell phones and smartwatches may not be brought in pockets or purses.
2. If a student needs to call a parent/guardian during the school day, the student must come to the school office to use one of the school's phones. In rare cases in which parents/guardians need to get an emergency message to a student before the end of the school day, they should call the school's main telephone line and ask for a message to be delivered.

Parents/guardians should be mindful that texts or other messages that they send directly to the student during the school day are to be picked up after school dismissal.

3. Violation of the above restrictions may result in confiscation of the cell phone/smartwatch and disciplinary action upon the Director's discretion. Cell phones/smartwatches will be turned in to the school office and released only to parents/guardians after confiscation.

SUSPENSION OF PROGRAMMING

Administrative suspension of programming may occur based on a decision by a Director. If this decision is made then if needed, an IEP meeting may be held. An administrative suspension may be effective immediately, or upon determination of need by administrative review, to determine a course of action through clinical intervention, change of placement or programmatic modification.

ABA Behavioral Strategies and Crisis Prevention

AZACS employs the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to minimize and extinguish maladaptive behaviors. ABA is used as a daily protocol to help students manage their behaviors positively and proactively. If a student escalates into a crisis, becoming a danger to himself or others, Quality Behavioral Solutions to Complex Challenges (QBS) strategies are used. The QBS program's proven strategies give human service providers and educators the skills to safely and effectively respond to anxious, hostile, or violent behavior while balancing the responsibilities of care. These strategies include verbal de-escalation, therapeutic holds, calming rooms, or seclusion. Arizona Autism Charter Schools only uses these strategies as a last resort and follows all restraint and seclusion reporting requirements per A.R.S. § 15-105.

PARENTS RIGHT TO KNOW

Following the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, you have the right to request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child's teacher. Specifically, you may request the following:

- Whether the teacher has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or substitute status.
- The baccalaureate degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

If you would like to receive this information, please talk with the respective Campus Director of the campus where your child is enrolled.

Early Learning Center - Patrick Masson

West Valley - Christopher Morris

Main Campus - Denise Ballard

Online Schools - John Paquin

Tucson Upper Campus - Brittany Parmigiane

Extracurricular Activity Guidelines

For students who participate in extracurricular activities (e.g. Special Olympics, choir, clubs, etc.), parents/guardians will be required to sign a consent form acknowledging all guidelines and expectations for their student's participation (e.g., after-school pick-up requirements, attendance requirements, etc.). These guidelines will be made available to parents at the start of the school year and when a student first signs up to participate in an extracurricular activity.

McKinney-Vento

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that children and youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth. To ensure access to educational and other services necessary to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held, AZACS has developed policies and procedures to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, and academic success of children and youth experiencing homelessness (42 U.S.C. §§11431-11432). If you are experiencing homelessness or unstable housing, please reach out to our McKinney-Vento liaison, Tracy Malcolm at tmalcolm@autismcharter.org.