

Fall 2020



# TOWSLEY CHILDREN'S HOUSE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Dear Families,

We have been absolutely delighted to welcome back staff, children, and families to the center! After several meetings with health practitioners, UM COVID Leadership team, UHR Work-Life program Leadership, and all 3 Children Center's Directors, Towsley Children's House reopened in July with lots of caution and creativity. We have updated our drop off procedures to include health screening, curbside drop off, and curbside pick-up.

We reopened with approximately 19 teachers and at 30% enrollment capacity. Center hours for July-August are 9:00-5:30. In our reopening part 2 in September, we will welcome back the remaining full time teachers and enrollment will increase to approximately 50% of our full capacity with full core staffing. We do not plan to utilize college student support this fall. September and moving forward, our hours will remain 9:00am-5:30pm.

Additional modifications to our operations that you can expect this year:

- Field trips have been limited to nearby walking trips only. Busses will not be used until further notice.
- Center-wide family gatherings will not be held until further notice.
- Staff meetings and professional development will be virtual.
- Playgrounds have been divided into pods so each classroom will be able to spend as much time outside as possible in separated spaces.

For a review of pandemic procedures:

[UM Children's Centers Reopening Policies](#)

[Welcome Back Families](#)

[Meals and Snack Guidelines](#)

This has been an unusual year and series of events and we thank you for your patience and flexibility. The children have transitioned well to their new rooms and classroom communities. Our pandemic procedures have proven to allow for engaging experiences for children while keeping everyone safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Beth Ann

UM Towsley Children's House Center Director

734-763-3400

[bablanch@umich.edu](mailto:bablanch@umich.edu)

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Welcome .....	1
Core Values .....	2
Home Visit .....	3
Saying Good-bye .....	3
Wearing masks.....	4
Drop off/pick up.....	5
Space preparation.....	6
Project Approach.....	7
Ages & Stages .....	7
Rain Play.....	8
Who's Who .....	9
Center Calendar.....	10

## IMPORTANT DATES:

- First Day of School—  
Monday, August 31st
- Center CLOSED— Nov. 26  
& 27 (Thanksgiving Holiday)

## Core Values

### Community

We foster relationships between children, adults, and families to create an inclusive environment where individuality and differences are embraced.

### Play

We believe play is essential to children's growth, development, and understanding of the world around them.

### Nature

We provide children with connections to nature to experience all of Earth's wonders.

### Inquiry

We create an environment where children are encouraged to ask questions, investigate, collect information and represent their understanding.



“If it hasn't been  
in the Hand...  
and the Body...  
it can't be in  
the Brain!”



- Bev Bos

## HOME VISITS

Children that are new to a classroom can anticipate being invited to have a home visit during the month of August. A classroom teacher will contact the family to set-up a zoom visit. This is an informal visit that allows for the teacher to make a positive connection with the child in a comfortable setting. This can help ease the transition to a new classroom.



---

*“No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.” -  
James Comer*

---

## SAYING A GOOD GOOD-BYE

These strategies can ease the jitters of separating on your child’s first day at school.

**Keep your tone positive and upbeat.** Children pick up on the reactions of the trusted adults in their lives. So try not to look worried or sad, and don’t linger too long. Say a quick, upbeat good-bye and reassure your child that all will be well.

**Think about creating a special good-bye routine.** For example, you can give your child a kiss on his or her palm to “hold” all day long. Or, the two of you can sing a special song together before you leave. Good-bye routines are comforting to children and help them understand and prepare for what will happen next.

**Be sure to say good-bye and don’t slip away.** Doing so may cause your child to mistrust you and will only lead to more determined clinging next time. Always let your child know you are leaving. You’ll be helping them learn that separation can be faced and managed.

**Bring along a comfort item to leave with your child.** It might be a picture of you, a special blanket, or a personal item from you. This object can give emotional and physical comfort to the child.

**Let the teacher help your child.** If your child is having a harder time getting engaged or saying good-bye, you may want to ask your child’s teacher to stay with your child as you say good-bye so that when you leave, he can turn to another caring adult for support. Allowing the teacher to comfort your child when they are upset will help build a strong connection between the child and teacher.

**Resist the rescue.** Try not to run back in the classroom if you hear your child crying, as upsetting as this can be. This is a big change and your child may, quite understandably, feel sad and a little scared. But if you run back in, it sends the message that he is only okay if you are there and it is likely to prolong your child’s distress and make it harder to adapt. Rest assured, teachers have many years of experience with helping families make the shift to school. Instead, you can wait outside the classroom for a few minutes to ensure that all is well, or call the school later in the morning to check in.

# DROP OFF ROUTINE FOR GOOD HEALTH

## 1. Wash hands upon arrival

**Let's Wash Our Hands!**

Whooshy washy!  
Wet our hands  
Under running water

Add some soap and  
Rub them hard  
Don't miss any part!

Between our fingers  
Under the nails  
Rid germs without fail

Front and back  
And round the wrist  
No germs will be missed!

They may hide  
But we shall seek  
So we will not fall sick!

Splishy splashy  
Bye bye germs  
Down the drain they squirm

With clean towels  
We dry our hands  
Now let's show our friends!

**Remember to wash our hands:**

- After using the toilet
- After sneezing or coughing
- After playing with pets
- After sports or playing outside
- Before eating

Health Promotion Board

## 2. Take a drink of water



## Ways We Communicate

- ◆ Classroom Daily Happenings: A photo of the White Erase Board outside of classrooms.
- ◆ Individual Child's Developmental Notes: Available in Teaching Strategies Gold app weekly
- ◆ Weekly Classroom Communication: Sent electronically every week from teachers
- ◆ Quarterly Center Newsletter

## WHY ARE MY TEACHERS WEARING A MASK?

*Sometimes children ask us questions that are hard to answer — The link below will provide you with some useful tools to help you explain.*

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/why-are-people-wearing-masks-answering-your-childs-questions>



# DROP OFF AND PICK UP

**Drop off and pick up will be done at the front driveway entrance. The lobby will be closed to families.**

Drop off in the morning is between 9:00-9:30 am. If you need to drop off later, please call your child's classroom or the front desk so someone can meet you upon arrival.

Ideally, the same parent or designated person should drop off and pick up the child every day. If possible, older people such as grandparents or those with serious underlying medical conditions should not pick up children, because they are more at risk for [severe illness from COVID-19](#).

Staff will be wearing masks.

Children in the preschool classrooms Oak, Evergreen, Maple and Sycamore need to wear masks during drop off/pick up. Masks will be worn during the day while inside unless eating or resting.

Parents are required to wear masks during drop off and pick up, or if there is a need to be in the building.

Children will wash hands upon entering their classroom, as is customary.

The family health screening app [Health Screening Survey](#) is to be completed before arrival then the results need to be presented to the teacher upon arrival. Those with symptoms will need to go home as defined below.

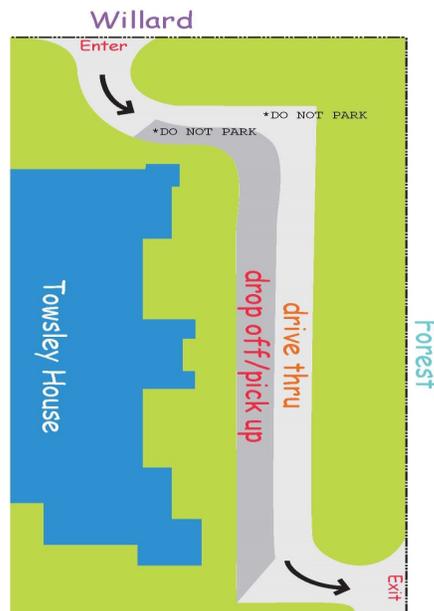
Staff members and children's temperatures should be taken at home before coming to the center. If the family/staff member does not have a thermometer, temperature will be taken at the center.

Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or above will need to stay home and remain there for ten days after symptoms first appeared and 72 hours (3 days) after fever has subsided without medication, whichever is longer.

If testing shows negative for COVID, an individual may return to the center based on advice from Occupational Health or a child's pediatrician - with accompanying documentation of negative COVID test.

Pick up will be from 5:00-5:30 in the front drive. One of your child's teacher, will be waiting outside. If families need to pick up before this time, please call your child's room or the front desk.

## Towsley House Drop off/ Pick Up Plan



## Space Preparation

Used spaces will be frequently cleaned and disinfected through the day and deep cleaned at the end of each day. We will use these guidelines from the CDC for [cleaning and disinfecting](#).

Classrooms, playgrounds, staff break and work rooms will be rearranged to prevent spread and encourage social distancing, to the maximum extent possible. For example we will:

- Remove toys and objects which cannot be easily cleaned or sanitized between uses.
- Limit the number of toys and materials out each day, and clean thoroughly each day.
- Re-arrange furniture in classrooms to encourage children to spread out while playing.
- The playground will be divided with barriers to keep classes separate.

Preschool Playground Pods  
separated with barriers shown below.  
(infant/toddlers also have pods)



## PHASES OF A PROJECT

### Phase 1: Beginning the Project

The teacher discusses the topic with children to find out their prior knowledge and experiences they have had. The children represent their experiences and show their understanding through discussions, drawings, idea webs, writing and other work. Teachers help children develop questions their investigation will answer. Families are encouraged to discuss the topic and share their expertise.

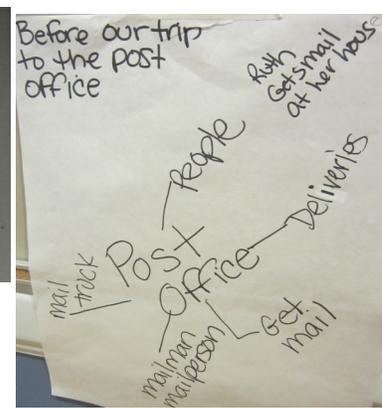
### Phase 2: Developing the Project

Children will have opportunities to do fieldwork and speak to experts when available. The teacher will provide resources the aid in the investigation; real objects, books, and other research materials are gathered. Children will have the opportunity to represent what they are learning. Children will work at their own developmental level in terms of basic skills, constructions, drawings, music and dramatic play. Group discussions take place so that children are aware of all the different work that is happening in the class. A topic web can be used as a quick way of documenting the progress of the project.

### Phase 3: Concluding the Project

The teacher helps arrange a culminating event or work through which children share with others what they learned. As the children select material to share they are involved in reviewing and evaluating the whole project. As the project concludes, the teacher helps the children transition to the next project.

Source: [www.projectapproach.org](http://www.projectapproach.org)



## PROJECT APPROACH

Along side a play-based curriculum , UM Towsley Children's House incorporates The Project Approach to guide learning and development. The Project Approach refers to a set of teaching strategies that enable teachers to guide students through in-depth studies of real-world topics. Projects have a complex but flexible framework which teaching and learning are seen as interactive processes. When teachers implement the Approach successfully, children can feel highly motivated and actively involved in their own learning and produce work of a high quality.

A project, by definition, is an in-depth investigation of a real-world topic. Projects have a beginning middle and end. The study may be carried out with an entire class or with small groups of children. Projects typically do not constitute the whole educational program; instead, teachers use them alongside other approaches. Topics of study are based on children's interests, the curriculum, things happening in the environment, etc.

Source: [www.projectapproach.org](http://www.projectapproach.org)

## AGES AND STAGES

Because your child's first 5 years of life are so important, we want to help you provide the best start for you child. As part of this service , we provide the Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3), online screening to help you keep track of your child's development . The questionnaire may be provided every 2-, 4-, 6-, or 12-month period. The first phase of the questionnaire takes place in the Fall before parent/teacher conferences.

You will be asked to answer questions about some things your child can and cannot do. The questionnaire includes questions about your child's communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal social skills.

If the questionnaire shows that your child is developing without concerns, we will continue to work in partnership with you to support further development. If the questionnaire shows some possible concerns, we will contact you about getting a more involved assessment of your child. Information will only be shared with other agencies with your written consent.

We look forward to your participation in our program!

# Playing in the Rain

The children love playing in the rain and we as teachers had to ask ourselves, “Why do we stay inside when it rains?” When it rains, it changes the environment that we are playing in. Everything is a little bit different when it’s wet out! This revelation sparked during the celebration of International Mud Day. Children and staff were mixing mud and water together and the discussion of rain and what it does for us came about. As a staff we brainstormed ideas as to how we could embrace the rain with children. Rain gives the children many stepping stones to learn from and we need to go outside to experience it!

Being outside, rain or shine, and playing in different environments exposes the children to nature and soil. This can boost their immune systems and some bacteria have shown to increase levels of serotonin in our brains, helping keep us calm. As we know, being outside also helps with children being active. When it rains, puddles form on our playground. The children stomp through them, scoop water with shovels to add to the sand area, mold mud, and even “cook” with it. Children are strengthening their gross and fine motor skills while doing this.

Rain also gives the children a new sensory experience. When the outdoor classroom is wet, the materials feel different and some need to be manipulated differently than we when they are dry. When playing outside in the rain, it also takes different coordination to walk, run and balance.

If it is warm enough and there is no thunder and lightning, we will be heading out to explore our outdoor classroom in the rain.

## **To support Rain Play:**

- When you see rain in the forecast send a rain coat and boots if you have them. If not a spare pair of clothes is sufficient.



By: Mel Joling



## **WHO'S WHO AT TOWSLEY**

### **Infant/Toddler Classrooms**

**Sprouts:** Leslie Thompson, Sandra Canales, and Sheila Hall

**Sassafras:** Sonja Whitehouse, Leanna Lingenfelter, Samantha Huff, and Hollyn Formosa

**Magnolia:** Angelique Rudolph, Darius Cobb, Megan Brown, Kim Hull

### **Preschool Classrooms**

**Willow:** Serena Simmons, Jessica Polonchan, and Asmaa Naser

**Oak:** Heather Cole, Karen Ong, Associate teacher to be hired

**Sycamore:** Kellie Chestler-Root, Amanda Matthews, Amber Bruckner

**Maple:** Kamaria Hayes, Emily White, Marie Gaab

**Evergreen:** Elizabeth Powers, Clara Aldrich and Candace Pankey

### **Support Staff**

**Cathy Hendrix:** Administrative Assistant

**Katie Meyer:** Resource Teacher

**Korinn Kulinski–** Resource Teacher

**Ciara Segó–** Associate Teacher

**Ashley Howarth–** Associate Teacher

**Denise Pelky–** Program Teacher

**Courtney Rouse–** Program Associate Teacher

**Andrew Moeller:** Program Associate Teacher

**Mary McCarthy:** Program Associate Teacher

**Sarah Mauck:** Program Associate Teacher

### **Administration**

**Beth Ann Blanchard:** Center Director

**Jasmine Boster:** Program Director



## 2020-2021 Calendar



**First Official Day of School**.....Monday, August 31

**CLOSED – Labor Day Holiday**.....**Monday, September 7**

October.....Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month

**CLOSED - Thanksgiving Holiday** .....Thursday-Friday, November 26-27

Last Day for Children (before Winter break) .....Monday, December 21

**CLOSED** Staff Professional Development.....Monday, January 4

THE CENTER WILL BE **CLOSED** FROM  
**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22nd THROUGH MONDAY, JANUARY 4th**  
PLEASE ARRANGE ALTERNATE CHILDCARE FOR THIS TIME.



Children Return from Winter break .....Tuesday, January 5

**CLOSED - Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Professional Development)**.....**Monday, January 18**

March.....Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month



**CLOSED TO CHILDREN (Professional Development)** .....**Monday, May 3**

**CLOSED -Memorial Day Holiday**.....**Monday, May 31**

**CLOSED - Independence Day Holiday**.....**Monday, July 5**

**Last day of 2020-2021 school year** .....Friday, August 20



**CENTER CLOSED**.....**August 23-27**

First day of **2021-2022** School year .....**Monday, August 30**

**CLOSED - Labor Day Holiday**.....**Monday, September 6**