

California Child Care Home License #376620805

Thank-You for your interest in our program!

I believe that all children are special and unique. It is my goal to provide your little one(s) with a safe environment that nurtures self-esteem and security, and to create a truly collaborative provider/parent relationship.

Please take the time to read this document carefully!

These policies are meant to keep misunderstanding from happening. Many issues raised in this document never crossed my mind until they occurred. I find it less stressful to have very detailed rules so that everybody can first refer to this document to get answers to most of their questions, and come to me if the issue is not addressed.

I try to offer some flexibility and I understand that life can be challenging at times, but for the sake of fairness and ease of management I should not be *expected* to make exceptions to my policies, as I have experienced in past years that favors tend to take on a life of their own very quickly and deplete the energy that I put into providing a nurturing environment for your children.

I hope this text provides parents with a clear picture of the expectations I have for them and that they can have of me, so we can all focus on the best care for your child rather than on financial or scheduling considerations.

If you have a question or concern regarding any of these policies, please don't hesitate to speak up! Communication between parents and providers is the key to each child getting the best care possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

PART I: BACKGROUND, PHILOSOPHY, TYPICAL DAY (starts on page 2)

PART II: CALENDAR, RATES, ATTENDANCE POLICIES (starts on page 9)

PART I

I. About Me:

My name is Cecile Josaitis. I am a French-born US citizen. I have been in the US for over 20 years and in San Diego since 2002. I live with my partner Eric (who went through the same rigorous background check process as I did for licensing purposes) and part-time with my two sons who are 17 and 15.

I was born and raised in Angoulême, a medium-sized medieval town in southwestern France (Bordeaux/Cognac area). I am the second of five girls. My father is a retired dental surgeon and my mother, a registered nurse, became a homemaker after I was born. We grew up with a deep sense of—extended—family, and of our French/Spanish heritage.

My mother was always the do-it-yourself type and she encouraged all projects and activities that fostered our creativity, artistic skills and ability to focus. My parents also insisted on a good musical education; I studied the piano for 10 years and taught myself the guitar and the basics of some brass & wind instruments.

I graduated high school at 16 *magna cum laude* with a major in sciences and a minor in foreign languages. I spent the next year as an exchange student in Colorado, studied humanities in Paris for 2 years in a select prep school setting, and went on to complete two Bachelor's degrees in 1998 (English, Teaching French as a Foreign Language.) I then spent two years in graduate school at the University of Oregon in Eugene. I did coursework and research in French literature, language acquisition and multiculturalism in education, acquired ECE units, and taught 2nd-year college French.

I have been running Ami-Ami preschool with passion and dedication since 2005. Though licensed for up to 8 children, I have made the decision to limit enrollment to 4-5 children, to preserve the home-like feel of our setup and stand apart from the anonymity of commercial daycare centers and large-scale language-immersion preschools with less natural and less frequent one-on-one nurturing interactions. I consider myself a hybrid between a devoted nanny and a fun teacher.

I enjoy cooking, home improvement, working on my cars, board games, and I have a passion for hiking and camping, especially in the desert. I am also an artist outside of daycare hours (charcoal portraits, acrylic painting and ceramics).

II. Contact me:

For emergencies and same-day inquiries, I can be reached at **(760) 230-2072**. For all non-urgent communications, I prefer email -- cecile_josaitis@hotmail.com

III. Infants:

I typically keep the minimum enrollment age around 15 months (or whenever a child is steady on their feet, which can sometimes be much earlier), mainly to ensure that all children have the physical independence to make the most of our setup and of the activities offered. If applicable, enrolled infants will be on an individual schedule, depending on their needs and the parents' desires. I offer an environment that stimulates small and large muscle coordination, the senses, creative expression, and socialization.

IV. Toddlers:

Toddlers will be encouraged to participate in the informal preschool program. Many of the activities we do work for all ages; children simply benefit from them differently depending on their level of development. We learn through play, supervised self-guided exploration, teachable moments, and (semi-)structured activities.

V. Preschool activities:

I believe that until they start “real” school, a child’s main “job” is to learn *how to play*, and to learn *through play*.

Play affects all areas of development and encourages children to become inquisitive, to nurture their intrinsic motivation, and it teaches them to be passionate about processes rather than just results.

I try not to overuse “good job” praises and other pats on the back for every little accomplishment (this encourages “people pleasing” and a need for external validation); I ask the children how *they* feel about what they just accomplished, point out the benefits of a newly acquired skill, etc., to help them appreciate and value their own progress—not just the pride or joy *others* derive from it.

Everything in our daycare playroom and outdoor space has been carefully selected for its interactive qualities in various areas of development. Our space is set up so that anything that requires no help to use is within reach and items requiring closer supervision or assistance are within view but out of reach. Not all toys/equipment/books we have are within view at all times; I have established a rotation as an easy way to create instant novelty and to continue to pique the children's interest.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of the types of activities available to your child at Ami-Ami:

1. Small muscle:

Coloring, puzzles, play dough, moon sand, a variety of blocks and other activities.

2. Large muscle:

Crawling, marching, jumping, dancing, stretching, balancing, ball games, etc.

3. Creative play (stimulates child's imagination and language skills):

Toy characters and animals, train table, role play (restaurant, doctor, etc.), dress up, and puppets.

4. Arts & Crafts:

Projects emphasize creativity/technique and most importantly *trying* rather than final outcome.

5. Music:

Daily use of songs, rhymes, guitar and other instruments, recorded or "homemade" music. As a musician I am well aware of the many benefits of music in terms of bridging the left & right hemispheres of the brain and as a creative outlet.

6. Science:

Activities that encourage investigation, observing, discovering and problem solving (cooking, growing a plant, bug hunts, water table, blocks etc.)

7. Math:

Counting is a part of every day. Many activities/toys involve concepts such as volume, size, shape, sorting, patterns, etc.

8. Language Arts:

Story Time will occur daily. Children will often be encouraged to participate in social conversations, puppet play and role-play. Being an attentive listener will be encouraged. Books are displayed at eye-level to encourage reading. I teach letter recognition and their associated sound to the children who are cognitively ready.

9. Outdoor Play:

We will go outside daily, weather permitting. Please be sure your child is dressed appropriately, and **please apply sunscreen prior to coming to daycare from April to October** (I will re-apply as needed throughout the day). With appropriate shoes/coats, we will still spend time outside even when it is a bit cold/rainy. On days when we absolutely cannot, we will have some "energetic" indoor activities.

10. Responsibilities:

Each child will be responsible for performing age-appropriate daily tasks such as putting away shoes, picking up toys, etc. No child will be "punished" for not performing a certain task but rather acknowledged and occasionally rewarded (see "Behavior & Discipline") for attempting and/or carrying out the task. This helps build self-esteem and independence.

VI. French Language:

Early exposure to multiple languages has been proven to be extremely beneficial for young children, whether or not they retain the language as they grow older. Over the first few years, the brain forms more new connections than it ever will for the rest of that child's life, and a second language creates new neurological pathways.

I speak French around the children virtually all the time. Even when the children speak English to me, I respond in French. Aside from using a lot of gesturing/sign language, I make very few exceptions for children who come from non-francophone households, as they "close the gap" more quickly that way.

Be aware that comprehension happens a lot faster than production, so it will take a while for children in my care who do not hear French at home to start actually speaking it. However, they will generally recognize many words within a few weeks and understand me quite well within a few months.

VII. Behavior & Discipline:

I believe in positive discipline for children rather than punishment, though the latter (when applied appropriately) is essential to learning as well. Children are helped to understand why their behavior is not acceptable, while being shown that their feelings are recognized.

When children exhibit negative behavior I will:

- a) Tell them gently yet firmly that their behavior is not acceptable
- b) Redirect them (show them what is acceptable)
- c) Talk to the child about their behavior (reprimands will not be frequent) and help them understand the emotions that may have triggered it.
- d) Time-outs will be used for a repeated behavior that affects the other children directly and for which a) b) and c) were unsuccessful (repeated pushing, for instance) Time-outs give the child a chance to cool off, and me a chance to talk them through their difficulties. Time-outs will not exceed one minute per year of age and the child will not be left unattended.

- Under extreme circumstances and if no improvement occurs, a behavior may be grounds for termination, with or without notice depending on its gravity and its consequences for the other children. This has never happened in 14 years.

Reinforcement remains to me the best way to discipline children. When it comes to negative behavior, I am fair and consistent. When it comes to positive behavior or achievements, I do not rely on empty praises or "treats-for-tricks" but I am upbeat about each child's accomplishments and help them feel good about themselves by showing interest, asking questions and helping them realize that they should feel proud (and not just because I do).

We also have little “star charts” to occasionally earn stickers for something a child may be particularly struggling with. When the chart is filled out, we celebrate their progress and they get a special privilege or a small gift (fun pencil, temporary tattoo, etc.).

The charts do not come out often (last resort for specific difficulties), so that children don't become solely driven by the idea of rewards to perform tasks or display behaviors that are basic skills to function in the world. The stickers are not so much an incentive as they are a positive comment (“if you do this I'll give you that” is different from “I see that you did this; I think it warrants a sticker, don't you?”).

VIII. Toilet Training:

When a parent feels a child is ready and shows interest I will assist with toilet training. Parents will need to bring extra clothing (more is always better during the early stages of potty-training). This can be a frustrating time for everyone but remember... every child will learn eventually! I have done this A LOT and I am always available to give you tips and to help you assess whether your child is physically/emotionally ready.

Note: This is a collaborative effort! Parents should not expect me to potty-train a child if he/she is always in diapers at home.

IX. Meals & Snacks:

Parents are responsible for their child's lunch, which will be refrigerated/reheated as needed (notes with any relevant instructions on child's meal are helpful). If a child leaves a significant amount of their lunch untouched, I will not discard it so you can have an idea of what they chose to eat and how much.

Please avoid very messy dishes such as pasta in heavy tomato sauce.

No peanuts or tree nuts please, unless you check with me first that no child currently at daycare has such allergies.

I provide healthy, nutritious snacks in the morning and afternoon--organic and local as much as possible. The children are offered the food and encouraged but never forced to eat. If your child brings special treats to daycare make sure there is enough to share and *please refrain from bringing anything loaded with sugar!*

Note that I never refer to food items as “good” or “bad” but as more or less “important”, in order to keep children from having a conflicted relationship to eating and to help them develop good habits based on knowledge rather than taboo.

The only beverage offered during regular daycare hours is water. It is easier for parents to control daily servings of milk at home, and it prevents inadvertent access to another child's cup in case of lactose intolerance.

X. Daily Schedule:

This is a general overview of what a typical day may look like. Because I often let the children take the lead, it varies but this should give you an idea of what I strive for in terms of structure and variety.

09:00 AM	Greetings / settle in
09:15 AM	Circle Time / Indoor free play
09:45 AM	Music music music!
10:00 AM	Morning snack
10:15 AM	Outdoor free and semi-structured play (gross motor skills & cooperation)
11:00 AM	Guided creative/discovery play (art/nature/sensory/etc.)
11:45 AM	Lunch
12:30 PM	Story time, gentle songs
01:00 PM	Nap time or Quiet time (puzzles, books, drawing)
02:00 PM	Guided activities by age/interests (crafts, math-oriented games, pre-writing activities, etc) with a break for afternoon snack
03:10 PM	Clean up + quit time routine until pick-up

XI. Supplies:

Please label children's outerwear and please refrain from bringing items of value (sentimental or other). Children may occasionally bring *one* toy from home (nothing too small please, as it may get misplaced!). The other children may ask them to share/take turns--if your child doesn't want to that's perfectly fine but if it causes too much of a problem the toy will just be put away in their backpack to enjoy at home.

Please bring the following things for children to have available:

- Two complete changes of extra clothing (more during potty training)
- Diapers & wipes if needed
- Sippy cup or bottle if applicable.
- Pacifier or "blankie" if needed
- Sun-block, teething gel, diaper rash ointment, etc. as needed
- Outdoor clothing such as hats, light coats, etc. as dictated by the weather.

Only your child's sippy cup (if applicable) and reserve of diapers/wipes (if applicable) will stay at daycare. The rest will come and go with them.

We go outside every day and often do messy activities: clothes *will* get dirty, so please don't dress your child in their Sunday best to come to Ami-Ami!

Parents are responsible for soiled clothing, which will be placed in a plastic bag in the child's backpack.

XII. Safety:

Our house is set up as a safe environment for children, with Inspections conducted annually by the licensing agency. We have emergency fire procedures and practice drills are completed regularly with the children who are old enough to understand them.

I carry professional liability insurance through Allstate.

XIII. Pets:

We do not have any pets (aside from the praying mantises, ants or butterflies we raise in the spring). I have a strong allergy to cats and a mild allergy to dogs (as do my children), so if you have any at home please ensure that your child's clothing is free of pet hair to come to preschool. I am also extremely allergic to horses but I think it is far less likely to be a problem.

XIV. Television Viewing

Screen time is very limited. It typically takes place before 9:00am for children who may be early or after 3:30pm while waiting for parents who may be late. If the children request it I will play one short episode of Barbapapa, Oui-Oui, Pierre Lapin, Bonne Nuit Les Petits, etc. around lunchtime. It can be a good way to show actual French dialogue rather than just one-way input from me, and to build up vocabulary with simple, relatable visual references.

XV. Miscellaneous:

I may occasionally take pictures of the children during daycare activities for sharing with parents and for advertising purposes (no names will appear). Please let me know if you do not want your child's photos to be used on my website or Facebook page.

It is not my place to promote religion to the children-- the Golden Rule suffices. If you have an issue with exposure to certain elements of a cultural holiday, please share those concerns with me and we can discuss alternatives.

PART II

XVI. Days & Hours of Operation / Annual calendar:

General:

Monday-Thursday 9:00am-3:30pm

We follow the **San Dieguito Union High School District** calendar.

The 2020-2021 school year will begin on August 24, 2020

IMPORTANT NOTE: the district school year ends on June 11, 2021, however Ami-Ami will be open until June 18 as I have to take an extra week off TBD during the year for my sister's wedding in France (I will provide the exact dates with at least 3 months' notice).

Federal holidays:

We are closed on Labor Day, Veterans' Day, MLK Day, Presidents' Day & Memorial Day.

Breaks:

- Thanksgiving: November 23-27
- Winter Break: December 21, 2020-January 1st, 2021
- Spring Break: April 5-9, 2021

XVII. Drop-off/Pick-up policies

If a child is **dropped off later than normal, pick-up time still remains the same.**

Parents should notify me (preferably the previous evening) if they will be bringing children later than normal or not at all. This just helps keep our routine running smoothly. Parents should also let me know if they will be picking up children early so we can allow enough time for wrapping up projects and for proper quit-time routine.

Although parents are allowed to visit anytime their child is in my care, they **must plan to pick up the child whenever they do.** Children feel a certain relief when their parent arrives, and they may not understand and may become very upset if the parent leaves again without taking them along.

A child will only be released to their parent(s)/guardian or a person specifically authorized by them in writing. Anyone other than parents will have to present valid ID for the child to be released.

(I legally have to release a child to either parent/legal guardian at their demand

regardless of custody orders, unless I am provided with a copy of a restraining order stating otherwise.)

XVIII. Tuition Rates / Other fees: PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Tuition is due for the reserved spot **whether the child attends or not.**

The total school-year tuition is divided into 10 equal installments to be made from late August to late May, independently of holidays or breaks in a given month.

Please add 10% to tuition rates until the month of a child's second birthday (excluded).

Days per week (contract)	Annual Tuition	Each Installment	(Per diem equivalent)
2 days	\$6,460.00	\$646.00	(\$85/day)
3 days	\$9,270.00	\$927.00	(\$82/day)
4 days	\$12,000.00	\$1,200.00	(\$80/day)
Drop-ins	Rate		
Full day	\$90.00		
1/2 day (to/from 12:15pm)	\$50.00		

- Days of care will be stated in the contract.

No substitutions (e.g. “can we do Monday instead of Tuesday just this week because we have other plans on Tuesday?”). Extra days are extra, billed at the drop-in rate, regardless of whether the child is present on their scheduled day of attendance. Permanent substitutions must be requested in writing and will depend on availability.

- Enrollment:

I will reserve your spot with signed contract and the non-refundable payment of one tuition installment for the desired schedule. That amount will be held as a deposit (see “Payments”) that is credited to your account upon disenrollment.

A signed contract is not valid and a spot not officially reserved until one installment has been paid.

- Tuition calendar:

Monthly installments are due by the 24 of each month from August 24 to May 24.

Annual tuition is prorated for families enrolling during the school year.

If paying by check and a child is absent on tuition day, payment is still due. If it is a scheduled absence, I recommend making your payment prior to said absence to avoid late fees.

- Schedule changes:

If at any point parents wish to add days to the agreed-upon schedule, the request will be granted based on availability, and if granted, the initial deposit must be supplemented accordingly.

Requests for a reduction in number of days require a 30-day notice. The deposit will be partially refunded accordingly.

- Coming in early/Leaving late:

A fee of \$20.00 per half-hour (or portion of) will be charged for *unscheduled* early drop-off/late pick-up.

Morning/afternoon *scheduled* overtime is \$10 per half-hour or portion of.

Scheduled means I am given at least 24hrs' notice. Please be aware that **I may not be able to accommodate** all requests, so make sure you have a back-up.

In the event that parents cannot be reached, I will call an emergency contact should a child remain in care more than 30 minutes past the agreed-upon pick-up time.

- Other:

There will be a **\$5 fee** per calendar day for **late tuition**, up to \$35.

I offer a 10% tuition discount on the lower tuition for two siblings enrolled concurrently.

Penalty fees are recorded as they occur and added to the next month's tuition (with a detailed ledger emailed to you upon request).

I always provide a receipt for the initial deposit, and they are also available upon request for all subsequent tuition payments.

- Wait list:

If your candidacy for enrollment is otherwise accepted but no spot is available for your preferred schedule(s), or if you want priority consideration for a future time, you can be placed on a wait list by filing out an application and paying the non-refundable \$75 fee.

Families waiting for the next available spot will be contacted in chronological order. If no suitable spot opens up during the school year, I will save their place on the waiting list from one school year to the next if they still wish to be considered for enrollment. Openings for the next school year are determined around April 30th each year. At that point, upcoming spots will first be offered to pre-enrolled families, families on the wait list if any, and then to other applicants.

XIX. Illness:

I will care for a mildly ill child (slight runny nose, mild cough).

However, if it is anything more than that, I will not be able to give your child the attention they need and deserve. They could also make others sick through physical proximity or contact, sneezing, sharing toys, etc. If a child becomes ill while at daycare (diarrhea, vomiting, etc.), parents will be notified and he/she must be picked up within one hour. It may be a hardship, but this policy protects your own child when others get sick!

I enforce a strict pre-eating/post-toileting/post-outdoor play hand-washing policy.

I need written permission to administer any prescription medication. All medications must have the child's name, frequency of administration and dosage on the label.

Please notify me within 24 hours of the diagnosis of a serious contagious illness or parasitic infection so that I can inform the parents of each exposed child.

When a child displays any of the following symptoms, he/she will **not be permitted to attend daycare until 24 full hours after the last incidence** of fever, vomiting, severe diarrhea (not contained by a diaper or that cannot be held in all the way to the toilet), **or until 24 full hours after antibiotic treatment (if applicable) has begun** as prescribed by a physician:

1. Fever of 100 or more
2. Severe diarrhea
3. Unexplained rash – until a medical exam has indicated it is not a communicable disease.
4. Contagious illness (flu, severe cold, stomach bug, etc.)
5. Vomiting
6. Pinkeye or eye drainage.
7. Chickenpox – until all blisters have dried and formed scabs, about 6 days after
9. the onset of the rash.

Please respect my illness policy. If a child is not well enough to go outside to play, they are not well enough to attend preschool. If I get sick after caring for a sick child, I may have to close the daycare and inconvenience several families including yours. **Knowingly sending me a sick child for personal convenience is grounds for termination.**

XX. Immunization policy:

I must have immunization records for each child. Parents will be asked to keep these records updated. While it is your right to forgo vaccination for your child, **in accordance with California Law I do not accept children who are not getting immunized according to the recommended schedule.** No exemptions are granted, **religious or medical.**

XXI. Unforeseen events/Personal days:

I am allowed 2 paid sick/personal days per school year. Any other occurrence beyond the first 2 for the year is deducted from the next installment at the per diem rate. Unused sick/personal days do not carry over to the next year.

I will try to give parents as much notice as I possibly can, but some situations are truly unforeseeable. Families should **have a reliable back up at all times.**

XXII. Terminating/Continuing child care: PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

After the contract is signed a **2-month notice** must be given in writing (email acceptable) prior to terminating childcare services, and a 1-month notice prior to reducing contract days. For disenrollment, parents are financially responsible for the duration of the notice (minus the one-installment credit from their initial deposit) **whether the child continues to attend or not** for those 2 months.

I require such a substantial notice because of the vision I have for the care I provide. I purposely choose to keep our group very small to improve the quality of the one-on-one time I can offer the children, but also to strengthen the significance and depth of the social experience with their peers over time. Turnover is detrimental to those goals. I prefer long-term mutual commitments with families who firmly intend to stay through the entire school year, and preferably continue enrollment until pre-K or kindergarten. Many children I have had in care in the past were with me for several years, and their younger siblings after them.

- Exception to the 2-month notice:

If another family is available to take over your spot, I will waive the 2-month notice requirement and you will only be financially responsible for tuition up to the date of the new child's enrollment.

- Continuing care from one school year to the next:

Enrolled families have their spot reserved by default for the following school year, but need to confirm with me that they intend to retain their current spot (or inform me of any desired schedule changes) by the last week of April each year, after which point I will start assigning openings to new families who wish to enroll.

To continue enrollment families sign an addendum to the original contract, I provide the new school year calendar, and the deposit rolls over. Otherwise, the spot is made available to someone else in the Fall and the one-installment deposit is credited toward the last payment for the current school year.

- Repeated failure to pick up the child on time without warning will be grounds for termination, with a one-month notice. The deposit will be partially refunded if applicable, based on notice date.

- Gross misconduct on the part of parent or child is grounds for immediate discontinuation of services. Note that in all my years as a provider, I have only had to terminate care once, because of categorically unacceptable behavior on the part of a *parent*--not a child.

Remaining prepaid days (if applicable) and the one-month deposit will serve as severance pay to partially recoup what would have been the notice period.

- If tuition is **more than two weeks past due** and no special arrangements have been made with me it is grounds for immediate termination without notice. The one-month deposit will be retained to partially recoup the debt as well as the loss of income from what should have been at least 60 more days of paid care.

I know that life throws us curve balls on occasion and that a family may find themselves in an unexpected predicament. If that is the case, I urge you to let me know as soon as possible so that we can figure out a way to maintain some sense of normalcy for your child until things get better.