



Early Childhood Center
— WHERE WE PLAY TO LEARN —

Parent Handbook 2023-2024

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Philosophy and Curriculum

The Early Childhood Center (ECC) promotes an environment where children become independent, confident, lifelong learners with a strong sense of self. We proudly offer a positive, child-centered preschool experience that fosters a love of learning in a nurturing community. In each child, we strive to cultivate:

- Autonomy
- A sense of belonging
- Respect for others
- Enthusiasm for exploration

The policies in this handbook support and protect the values that have strengthened ECC for more than 50 years.

Our Curriculum

We offer a child-centered and developmentally appropriate program for two- through five-year-old children. ECC has chosen to implement the play-based learning framework of Creative Curriculum® for Preschool. Creative Curriculum® is a comprehensive system of learning based on research and knowledge regarding all areas of child development – social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language.

The teachers use their own experiences, as well as the children’s interests, to adapt the curriculum to be unique to each ECC class. Classroom observations and assessments become important tools for the teachers to communicate with parents.

Play allows children to learn about the world and themselves. As children play, they learn new skills, develop coping mechanisms, test new ideas, and master their bodies. Creative Curriculum® for Preschool provides extensive guidance for teachers in the content areas of literacy, math, science, social skills, and the arts. As children make choices about where to play in the classroom, they are learning a variety of skills. For example, building with blocks promotes material exploration, as well as spatial planning, symbolic representation, dramatic play, and social interactions. In the area of art, teachers emphasize the process rather than the finished product. As children use art materials, they are planning and carrying out a task and also using symbols to represent their ideas.

Our play-based curriculum offers children many opportunities for positive interactions with other children and adults. We treat each child with respect and reinforce his/her value as an individual and as a unique member of the ECC community.

Nondiscriminatory Policy

ECC is a nonsectarian preschool. ECC admits students of any race, color, religion, and national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities and does not discriminate in administration of its educational and admission policies.

Staff Qualifications

All ECC teachers meet or exceed the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) licensing requirements. All of the lead teachers hold a four-year college degree and have completed required basic coursework in early childhood education. Some teachers hold a master's degree. Every year, the director, teachers, and assistant teachers must complete a required number of continued training hours. All of the staff have experience working with young children in a supervised program. In addition, our staff members truly love and understand child development and our play-based philosophy.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality plays a vital role in promoting respect for every individual and fostering a strong community. ECC takes confidentiality very seriously and makes every effort to protect each family's privacy. Communications among staff and parents about children should be kept confidential at all times. ECC recommends that conversations about a child, behavior, or incident should be conducted in private, away from the child and other members of the ECC community. Discussions in the hallways should be kept to a minimum. If a parent has a question or concern, we suggest that this parent first contact the teacher via email or in person to arrange a time to discuss.

Communication

Communication between home and school is vital to a successful preschool program.

School-Wide (Nonemergency) Information:

- The ECC office communicates with parents in a number of ways:
 - Email
 - Telephone
 - ECC website
 - Parent orientation
 - Notices sent home in children's backpacks

Classroom Information:

- Weekly recaps from each class are sent via email to parents.
- Each teacher will email at the end of each school day a summary so that parents will know what activities were included in the day.
- Weekly lesson plans are posted in the classroom.
- For information about bringing food for birthday and classroom parties, please make sure to review the "Food at ECC" section. In accordance with our **Class Party and Birthday policy**, only store-bought foods can be served, and the food provided must be preceded by a completed list of ingredients and food label notifications, submitted to the teacher **at least 2 class days** before the food is served. Food must

be store bought and adhere to our nut-free policy.

- Please be sure to check the contents of your child's backpack each night so that you can find important notes, art projects, and so forth.
- Artwork from different classes will rotate on the hallway bulletin boards throughout the year.

Please see the "Emergencies" section of the handbook and our Emergency Plan (found online at www.eccpreschool.com) about how communications will occur during a school-wide emergency.

Child-Specific Information:

- During arrival and dismissal times, staff members must devote full attention to all of the children. Please keep conversations brief. If you need to communicate specific information, a written note or email is preferred.
- Parent-teacher **conferences** are held three times per school year (fall, winter, and spring). The fall conference is an informal meeting for parents and teachers to have an opportunity to discuss the child. For the winter and spring conferences, the teacher will prepare an evaluation for the purpose of sharing observations and documenting the development of each child. At the conference, teachers and parents will discuss the evaluation and your child's developmental progress.
- If, at any time, you have special concerns, please feel free to contact your child's teacher – use email, send a note, or call the office to leave a message. During school hours, teachers cannot accept phone calls. If you have a message for a teacher during school hours, please call or email the office, and we will relay the message. The teacher will respond as soon as possible.
- If you wish to talk to the teacher at length, you can email the teacher and, if needed, arrange a time to meet in person or over the phone.
- Please do not discuss problems or concerns in the presence of your child or other parents.
- Please communicate with the teacher about any changes at home or within the family (i.e., parent on a trip, family member in the hospital, sick grandparent). These changes can affect your child's behavior, and it is useful for staff to be aware of these developments. ECC will always respect your privacy.
- **If your child is going to be out of school for any reason, please let the office know.** For illnesses, this is especially important so that we can inform families of any communicable disease symptoms while maintaining confidentiality. In addition, teachers and children miss a child when they are absent, so they would like to know that the child is okay.

Admissions

ECC admits students of any race, color, and national and ethnic origin. There is no entrance exam. If parents have any major educational, social, or developmental concerns about their child entering ECC, parents need to discuss these concerns with the director before the

child's first day of class. It is important that a positive and appropriate learning environment be established for each child. In an effort to create the best fit for your child and family, ECC reserves the right to place children in classes by age, gender, and developmental level. ECC does not discriminate in administration of its educational and admission policies.

Procedures for Enrollment and Withdrawal

Enrollment:

- Registration for enrollment begins in January.
- Enrollment priority is given to current students, their siblings, and alumni families.
- When registration takes place, applications are taken on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Class placement is made on the basis of age and gender (in order to maintain a reasonable balance of boys and girls in each class).

Withdrawal:

- Written notice must be provided to ECC at least 30 days prior to withdrawal.
- During the summer, you must notify ECC by July 1 in order to be excused from Tuition Payment 2 due on August 1.
- If a child is withdrawn, there will be no refund after monthly tuition has been paid.
- The Registration Fee and Tuition Payment 1 are not refundable or transferable.
- If written notification is less than 30 days, the family is responsible for tuition 30 days after the written notification.

Tuition Payment 1, or a portion thereof, is refundable only in the following limited circumstances:

- Full refund: If withdrawal of your child is due to your child needing early childhood intervention services provided by Montgomery County, including but not limited to PEP, Child Find, or preK-3 enrollment, Tuition Payment 1 will be refunded.
- Partial Refund:
 - If your child was placed or enrolled in both morning classes and Afternoon Adventures and you withdraw from Afternoon Adventures due to your child needing early childhood intervention services provided by Montgomery County, including but not limited to PEP, Child Find, or preK-3 enrollment, the Afternoon Adventures portion of Tuition Payment 1 will be refunded.

PLEASE NOTE: On occasion, a program is not an optimal fit for a child or family. ECC is a school that will make every effort to work collaboratively with families to resolve any challenges that arise. Additional resources may need to be used to support a child's success in the school environment. If, after all reasonable efforts are exhausted, and a problem cannot be resolved, ECC reserves the right to dismiss a child from the program.

Tuition

- Tuition payments for each month are due on the 1st of the preceding month, as noted in the Enrollment Agreement, whether or not your child is in attendance or school is in session.
- **A late fee of \$25.00 will be charged if payment is received after the 7th of the month.**
- **There will be a \$40.00 fee for any returned payment.**
- Tuition Payment 2 is due by August 1st.
- Tuition payments may be mailed, placed the exterior drop box, made via ACH (please contact office for more details) or submitted to the office.
- There will be no tuition payment for the month of June, since this payment was made at the time of registration.
- Sibling Discount: Each younger sibling receives a 5% tuition discount.
- Members of the Universalist Unitarian Congregation of Rockville receive a 5% tuition discount. We will not be able to combine with a sibling discount.
- ECC reserves the right to terminate enrollment should an account become overdue.

Tax Identification: ECC's federal tax ID number is 52-0956983.

Required Forms for Enrollment

These forms must be on file before a child attends class.

1. Health Inventory
2. Emergency Form
3. Emergency Preparedness Form
4. ECC Parent Signature Page
5. Enrollment Agreement
6. Child Questionnaire
7. Cultural Diversity Questionnaire
8. Parent Interest Survey
9. Medication Authorization Form (if applicable)

Below is a brief description for each form:

1. **Health Inventory:** (includes immunizations) Please be sure to refer to instructions accompanying these forms.
2. **Emergency Form:** YOU MUST FILL OUT BOTH SIDES
 - Document allergies and medical problems on the back. In the event of an emergency, this information is critical.
 - When you list persons to contact in case of an emergency, please list persons who live within a reasonable distance of the school, who are known to your

child, and who would be willing to pick up your child in any emergency. Please bear in mind that, if your child is ill and ECC cannot reach you, we may call those persons listed on your card. This list can be updated at anytime during the year with written authorization to the office.

- **Unless we have a note or an email from a parent, a child will only be released to person(s) listed on the Emergency Form.** Please advise your child's teacher and the office, in a signed note or email (email bailey@eccpreschool.com only please), each time your child is to be picked up by someone not previously authorized. **We will not release your child without this prior written notice.**
- It is the responsibility of the parent to keep the emergency information up to date.
 - It is an MSDE requirement that this Emergency Form be signed and dated by the parent annually.
3. **Emergency Preparedness Form:** ECC has formulated emergency procedures to notify parents of any unexpected events, such as our school closing or an evacuation. In the event of an emergency situation, ECC will contact you by text message and/or phone call from an ECC staff member. **Please keep your information up to date throughout the school year.**
 - Please make sure to let the office know if your emergency contact number does not receive text messages so that we can make other arrangements for reaching you in case of a school-wide emergency. A school-wide text message will be our preferred way of reaching out to parents during an emergency. If a school-wide text message is not possible, you will receive a phone call from an ECC staff member.
 4. **ECC Parent Signature Page:** This form is needed in the event that emergency treatment is required, as well as for neighborhood walks and photo or publicity purposes.
 5. **Enrollment Agreement:** The Enrollment Agreement outlines the details of the relationship between your family and ECC. It includes payment guidelines, withdrawal details, and other policies. As per your signed enrollment agreement, you have indicated that you had access to A Parent's Guide to Regulated Child Care provided by the Maryland Child Care Administration. You can read the guide at any time by going to www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/licensing_/branch/parent_guide. In addition, it states that you have read, understand, and agree to the contents of the parent handbook (available online at www.eccpreschool.com).
 6. **Child Questionnaire:** This form provides valuable information to your child's teacher about your child's temperament and interests.

7. **Cultural Diversity Questionnaire:** This information gives your teacher and the school an idea of your family's cultural traditions and how they may be shared in the school community.
8. **Parent Interest Survey:** This is an opportunity for parents/guardians to be involved at ECC in the classroom and in the school community at large. There are lots of opportunities!
 - **Medication Authorization Form:** There are circumstances that make it necessary for a child to receive medication while attending school. Trained child care providers can give prescription and nonprescription medication under certain circumstances with **prior written permission** from the child's parent/guardian and doctor. These circumstances can include prescriptions for an illness, severe allergies requiring an EpiPen®, or over-the-counter medicine for allergies and pain. You will find this form on the ECC website, or you can request a Medication Authorization Form from the office. This form must be filled out correctly, signed by both the parent and the child's doctor, and returned to the office. Prescription medicine must be in the container labeled by the pharmacy with the child's name and dosage, and at least one dose of the medicine must have been given at home prior to coming to school. Nonprescription medications must be in the original container labeled with directions for dosage.
 - A parent must provide a medicine spoon or cup for administering medicine.

Positive Discipline Policy

ECC is committed to providing a safe and positive learning environment for all children. The school's behavior policy encourages children to develop social skills that reflect many of ECC's values, including self-control, respect for others, and a positive self-esteem.

Teachers model appropriate behavior and guide positive interactions among children and adults. Nurturing these social skills is a central component of Creative Curriculum®, and it helps children grow as successful, lifelong learners.

ECC's commitment to an age-appropriate and play-based curriculum ensures that activities are child centered and promote positive social interactions. Teachers carefully craft the environment, communicate and enforce clear boundaries and expectations for behavior, and use nonverbal cues and/or redirect a child's behavior to foster success.

When a problem arises, the teacher relies on modeling appropriate behavior, teaching peacemaking skills, and presenting stories or scenarios that reinforce the desired behavior. Children learn to make suitable choices and develop techniques for regaining self-control when they feel frustrated. Instructive and individually appropriate consequences help to strengthen the child's self-control and self-esteem.

When a child experiences a particularly challenging time, the school encourages parents and teachers to work together and develop appropriate strategies. If a specific circumstance needs attention, the teacher will follow these procedures:

1. The teacher will observe and document a child's behavior.
2. The teacher will discuss the child's behavior with a parent and inform him or her of learning-based strategies the teacher will implement. The teacher will discuss options with the director.
3. The teacher will follow up with the parent about how these strategies are influencing the behavior.
4. If concern persists, a conference will be held with teacher, parent, and director to discuss options to help the child further develop appropriate social skills.
5. Staff members will make reasonable effort to work with the child and his/her family to resolve behavioral concerns. At any time, an individual plan of action may need to be implemented, depending on the severity of the concern. If needed, there is opportunity for teachers and the director to seek support from outside resources. The plan may include removal of a child from the classroom and/or calling the parent to take the child home. Repeated severe problems may result in ECC excluding a child from attending ECC.

Behavior Policy Specific to Biting:

Biting can happen in a preschool situation, especially with young children who do not have the verbal skills to express their feelings. Children's feelings can be related to many environmental factors, as well as internal emotions, such as frustration, tiredness, overstimulation, seeking attention, and so forth. In line with ECC's overall behavior policy, teachers try to create a positive, peaceful, and nurturing environment that encourages children to maintain self-control. ECC has a biting policy, which parents can request from the office at any time.

What to Bring

Please remember to label each item that your child brings to school (lunch box, backpack, coat, sweater, hat, mittens, boots, etc.).

Dress

- Your child should be dressed for active and participatory play. ECC does not want a child's creativity hampered because he/she is wearing clothing that should not get dirty.
- Your child should wear sturdy, protective shoes (no sandals or Crocs®), which will

enable him/her to run, climb, and ride bikes with ease.

- Children go outside most days, so please dress your child appropriately.
- In the winter, hat and mittens are needed every day. Snow pants and warm boots are important whenever there is snow on the ground.

Extra Clothes

In school, at all times, each child should have at least one set of seasonal clothes that fit – pants, shirt, underwear, socks — which should remain in the child’s backpack. In addition, each child must have a change of clothes in their My Important Stuff (MIST) bag for emergencies.

Backpack

At ECC we encourage children to be independent. Therefore, we strongly recommend a backpack that is easy for your child to manage when putting away his/her own things. Each day your child needs to bring a backpack, clearly marked with your child’s name, to hold his or her lunch box, extra clothes, art, treasures, and important communication. Backpack should be brought daily.

Inside the bag please include: at least 1 set of extra clothes (including socks), 2 pairs of underpants, and an extra pair of shoes. If your child is not potty trained, please also include at least two clean diapers and wipes. There is a new regulation that requires teachers only use one wipe per wipe so be sure to include enough wipes. Please be sure to label anything you send to ECC with your child!

Please be sure to check the contents of this bag each night so that you can find important notes, view art projects, and so forth.

Emergency Care Kit for Each Child

In preparation for the unlikely occurrence of an emergency, please make sure your child’s teacher has the necessary components of an ECC Emergency Care Kit for each child, including:

- a MIST bag (*see below*)
- a complete change of seasonal clothes that fit in the child’s backpack

Please make sure to turn these items into your child’s teacher by Parent Orientation. The change of clothes and MIST bag will be returned to you in June. If you are enrolled in more than one class, please be sure that you have a MIST bag for each class. If you are planning for your child to participate in the summer program, please make sure to turn in a MIST bag to the teacher on the first day your child attends the summer program.

MY IMPORTANT STUFF BAG (MIST)

Each child will need to have a MIST bag at school. The MIST bag will be a support during an emergency*, so you can fill it with “important stuff” that will comfort and reassure your child. This bag will be kept in the

class MIST backpack. The bag should be a gallon-size Ziploc bag, labeled with the child's name, and should include comfort items, such as:

- a family photo
- soft toy like a beanie baby
- cards or coloring activity
- book
- seasonal clothing, including a change of underwear and socks that fit in the bag

Please make sure the Ziploc bag is sealed shut with the items inside.

*Please see the ECC Emergency Plan on our website at www.eccpreschool.com for more information on ECC's emergency procedures.

Food at ECC

NO NUT POLICY

We ask that parents of all children not send any food or food product that lists peanuts and/or tree nuts on the ingredient label. ECC has adopted a **"No Peanuts or Tree Nuts at School"** policy. We ask that parents carefully monitor foods being packed in lunch boxes to ensure that no peanuts, peanut oils, or other nuts or nut oils are among the foods selected (allergy-wise, coconuts are considered a fruit and are okay). ***Food labels/ingredients may change over time, so it is always recommended that you read the label before purchasing snacks. Please read labels carefully to make sure the products are nut free. This includes labels that read "May contain traces of peanuts/nuts," "May contain traces of almond," "Manufactured in a plant that processes peanuts," and so forth.*** Rule of thumb: if in doubt, make another choice.

In classrooms where children have potentially life-threatening sensitivities, ECC may consider additional safety measures and address the situation on a room-by-room basis. **Food and baked goods need to be store-bought only and not prepared at home.** Food sent to ECC for special occasions (birthdays, class parties, etc.) must be free of all nut ingredients and a list of those ingredients given to the teacher.

For those who need more information about reading an ingredient label, review information on the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis website (<http://www.foodallergy.org/section/about>). Parents of children with allergies are asked to provide a supply of safe treats to be used in lieu of store-bought and bakery-prepared items. Talk with your child and help him/her understand that food sharing is not allowed. This is a preventative safety measure to reduce food allergy exposures. Hand washing and tabletop washing are additional risk-reduction measures that are used at ECC. Parents can help by ensuring adequate hand and face washing at home before

arrival at school.

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT ECC IS USED BY OTHER GROUPS! Although we can monitor what parents and staff bring into the center, we cannot guarantee that no nuts will be brought in by other groups when the center is closed. These groups are notified of our policy, but we cannot monitor it.

PEANUT-FREE/TREE NUT-FREE SNACK LIST

Thank you for your consideration and support in keeping the food-allergic children safe from having a life-threatening allergic reaction at school.

Please avoid snacks that contain the following: peanuts, peanut flour, peanut oil, or peanut butter or other nuts. This list includes snacks with almonds, filberts, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nut, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, and walnuts. Coconuts are okay.

Food labels/ingredients may change over time, so it is always recommended that you read the label before purchasing snacks. Please read labels carefully to make sure the products are nut free. This includes labels that read “May contain traces of peanuts/nuts,” “may contain traces of almond,” “Manufactured in a plant that processes peanuts,” and so forth. When in doubt, make another choice.

Kellogg’s, Keebler, General Mills, Betty Crocker, and Quaker Oats brands are excellent at clearly labeling allergens on the box. Examples of clear labels include: CONTAINS PEANUT AND EGG INGREDIENTS.

Healthy snack alternatives include:

FRUITS/VEGETABLES

- Any fresh fruit (apples, oranges, bananas, grapes, pears, plums, clementines, strawberries, melons, berries, etc.)
- Applesauce cups (and assorted variety fruit flavored applesauce)
- Raisins, Craisins, and other dried fruits
- Fruit cups (peaches, pears, oranges, pineapple, fruit cocktail, fruit blends, etc.)
- Fresh vegetables (baby carrots, celery sticks, grape tomatoes, cucumber slices, broccoli, pepper strips, etc.)
- Vegetable dips

CHEESE/DAIRY

- Yogurt in individual cups or tubes
- String cheese or other cheeses (1 oz.)
- Drinkable yogurt or smoothies
- Cottage cheese

GRAINS/ SEEDS

- Sunflower butter is a great alternative and makes great PB and J!

Crackers:

- Triscuits, Wheat Thins, Vegetable Thins (all flavors)
- Ritz crackers/dinosaurs/sticks
- (NOT Ritz bits or sandwiches)
- Town House, Club, Toasteds crackers
- Cheez-Its, Cheese Nips, Better Cheddars
- Saltines, oyster crackers
- Wheatables, Air Crisps, Munch'ems, Keebler Snack Stix
- Kashi Tasty Little Crackers (TLC)
- Breton/Dare brand crackers
- Goldfish crackers
- Graham crackers, graham cracker sticks
- Teddy Grahams or Teddy Graham character brands
- Bug Bites crackers
- Goldfish graham snacks
- Animal crackers (Austin Zoo, Barnum)
- Vanilla wafers
- Pirate brand snacks (pirates booty, smart puffs, etc.)
- Snikiddy brand snacks (fries and puffs)

Cereals:

- Cheerios (NOT Honey Nut or Frosted)
- Chex (Rice, Corn, Wheat)
- Corn Flakes
- Crispix
- Kashi (Go Lean Crunch, Good Friends, Cinnamon Raisin Crunch, Heart to Heart) cereals
- Kix
- Life
- Wheaties
- Other unsweetened cereal without nuts

Other snack ideas:

- Small bagels (Lenders or Thomas brand) with cream cheese (no nut type)
- Popcorn
- Pretzels (most all brands, but some Snyder's products are not peanut/nut free)
- Nutrigrain cereal bars/yogurt bars
- Special K Bars (NOT Honey Nut)
- Special K Snack Bites
- Fig Newtons (all flavors)

- Rice cakes (NOT Quaker brand, not nut free)
- Quaker Quakes (mini rice cakes)/Mini Delights (all flavors safe)
- Potato Soy Crisps
- Muffins – mini or regular – Hostess and Kroger brands (any kind but banana nut)

LUNCH

Parents should send lunch if their child is staying for Afternoon Adventures. Please label your child's lunch box clearly with your child's name on the outside of the lunch box. Lunches are stored in the school's refrigerator until lunchtime. Please use thermoses to keep food warm, if necessary. ECC will not heat food for lunch.

ECC encourages parents to promote good eating habits by sending in nutritious items for lunch. Please pack a relatively small lunch, with no candy, and no more than one small dessert.

ECC offers milk at this meal.

Please send two paper towels or cloth napkins in the lunch box, one to be used as a placemat and the other as a napkin.

SNACK

Parents will provide a small daily snacks served during the morning program. Snacks will be refrigerated as necessary.

BIRTHDAYS AND CLASS PARTIES

Simple birthday snacks may be provided by parents to recognize children's birthdays. Please set a date with the teacher one week in advance. Less notice may result in a date other than your first choice. This time is necessary to assess the safety of all children who use your child's classroom, primarily with regard to life-threatening allergies. Be prepared to tell the teacher the snack that you would like to serve so that other parents can send a safe alternate treat, if needed. Snacks provided by families must be store bought and should be small portions (one cookie, mini-muffin, doughnut hole, etc.). Store-bought foods provided for birthdays must be preceded by a complete list of ingredients, submitted to the teacher at least two class days before the food is served.

Each class will have its own distinct way, determined by the teacher, to honor birthdays. We ask that parents not distribute favors, goody bags, or paper goods. Also, ECC will not be able to distribute birthday party invitations. This includes parents putting invitations in cubbies.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. Advance planning is vital to the safety of our children and to smooth daily classroom procedures.

Arrival and Dismissal

- **Never leave your child alone inside or outside of the building. Do not leave any child unattended in a vehicle.**
- For the safety and security of children and church members, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville has asked that families not bring their dogs to the church grounds during arrival and dismissal.
- The main entrance to ECC will be locked daily from 9:30 am to 12:15 pm and 12:45 pm to 2:45 pm.
- These procedures are subject to change based on the Covid-19 regulations in place.

Arrival:

- The teachers will be ready to start class at 9:00 am. You must escort your child to the front door and make sure that the teacher knows that your child has arrived.
- Attendance sign-in: Upon arrival, please record time and initials on your classroom attendance sheet (required by MSDE).
- Early arrival: If you arrive early for your child's class, please wait outside to allow teachers to prepare for the class. Teachers will welcome your child into the classroom when preparations are complete.
- Late arrival: Please be considerate and try to arrive on time. Frequent late arrivals are disruptive to the class and your child's school day. When you arrive late, please go directly to your child's class to sign in on the posted attendance sheet.

Dismissal & Pick-Up

- Attendance sign-out: Upon arrival, please record time and initials on your classroom attendance sheet (required by MSDE).
- It is important that all children be picked up on time. Our staff members have responsibilities both before and after class sessions, so it is important that parents be mindful of dismissal times in order for our school day to go smoothly. It is also upsetting to your child when he or she is unexpectedly the last person in the class to be picked up.
- Late pick-up: Please keep ECC's phone number, (301) 424-8065, programmed in

your cell phone in case you are running late so that the teacher can let your child know that you are on your way. If you are late picking up your child, you will be charged a dollar a minute. Payment will be due upon arrival to office.

- Early pick-up: Be sure to follow the regular attendance sheet sign-out procedures—time and initials on class attendance sheet.

Authorized pick-up:

- Anytime someone other than the typical pick-up person picks up your child, please let your teacher know.
- If your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent or the “persons authorized to pick up child” (listed on your child’s *Emergency Form*), you must provide written notification via note or email (email to bailey@eccpreschool.com only please) to ECC in each instance. Give the person’s full name and inform this person that ECC will require proof of identification before releasing your child.
- In the event of an emergency, a parent may call the office to give verbal permission for his or her child to go home with someone else. You will be asked to verify information on the *Emergency Form* in order for us to be assured that ECC staff is speaking to the parent.
- ECC wants to ensure each child’s safe transition from ECC’s care to an authorized adult at dismissal time. Following MSDE training guidelines, staff members are encouraged to observe the state of the adult picking the child up from ECC. In the event that a staff member believes the adult picking up a child is authorized but is angry/disgruntled or if the staff member has reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking a child up is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or is physically impaired in any way and may endanger a child, the staff member may have cause to refuse to release the child. If so, the staff member will request that another adult be called to pick up the child or call the numbers listed on the child’s *Emergency Form*. (Excerpt taken from the Emergency Preparedness Training and Information for Child Care Providers MSDE training booklet.)

Parking Lot:

- ECC’s entrance road into the school is one way; always exit the parking lot to the left.
- ECC parents should **park in the back parking lot closest to our building.**
- You may not park, even for a short period of time, in the spaces along the side of the building. These spaces are reserved for church visitors and employees only.
- Special arrangements can be made if you need handicapped parking.
- **Drive slowly** through the parking lot. There are children and parents who may be walking through the church or school parking lots.
- Drivers of large SUVs should be especially careful, since small children can be very hard to see and they can dart around quickly in a parking lot.
- **It is against the law to leave unsupervised children in your car in the parking lot**

at any time.

Early Drop (Early Birds)

Families can drop off their child starting at 8:15 am on the days when the child is enrolled in regular classes.

- Reservations and cancellations for Early Birds must be made at least 24 hours in advance, unless your child is sick.
- If you plan to use Early Birds on a regular basis, please contact the office to make arrangements.
- Two-year-old children may participate when they have adjusted to their morning class.
- You will receive a monthly invoice for these services.
- Fees will not be prorated.
- An assigned staff member will supervise your child until school begins at 9:00 am.
- On days with a delayed opening, due to inclement weather, Early Birds will begin at 9:15 am.

Afternoon Adventures

Afternoon Adventures is a tuition-based enrichment program that extends a child's day until 3:00 pm two, three, or five days per week. Children will explore many topics through literature, science, and art. Children enrolled in Afternoon Adventures will take a rest time to transition from their morning class to the afternoon activities. They have the opportunity to rest quietly. Children are not required to sleep, and may choose to look at books, listen to a story, or participate in quiet activity on their mat. This rest period allows them time to relax before beginning the afternoon activities.

Illness

- Germs spread quickly in a preschool environment. All children and staff stay healthier when sick persons stay at home. Common sense must prevail in the case of colds, which can range from a mild case of sniffles to a full-blown sinus infection or deep cough.
- We use the EMERGENCY FORM to contact parents or another designated adult if your child develops symptoms of illness while in class. We will isolate your child in a comfortable, supervised place until he/she can be picked up.
- If one or more of the following symptoms is present in your child, we will call you to pick up your child from preschool:
 - temperature higher than 100°F
 - loss of appetite

- nausea or vomiting
- red, pink, or crusted eyes
- stomach ache
- earache
- diarrhea
- rash/infection of skin
- pale or flushed face
- headache
- thick or greenish mucus from nose
- cough
- loss of energy/decrease in activity/falling asleep
- sore throat

IF YOUR CHILD IS NOT WELL ENOUGH TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE DAILY SCHEDULE, PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME.

24 HOUR RULE: ANY CHILD WHO HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF ILLNESS IN THE PREVIOUS 24 HOURS MAY NOT ATTEND CLASS.

- **Fever free:** A child should be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- **Antibiotic timeline:** A child should be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school
- **We strictly observe this health department regulation for children (and staff) to protect the health of everyone at ECC.**
- **Parent must notify the office immediately if a child:**
 - Is diagnosed with any **communicable diseases** including strep throat, pink eye, lice, pinworms, or any other of the diseases common to a school environment. The notification is important so that ECC can inform the parents within your child's classroom to be on the lookout for symptoms. Please remember that ECC will not release the name of the child or family involved. We simply post "There has been a case of ____ reported"
 - Has any **allergies** or if you have any concerns about any aspect of your child's health.
 - Is taking **medication**, as medicine may affect your child's behavior.
- If a child is absent for three days or more due to illness, the parent must provide a written statement from the physician stating that the child is well enough to return to school.
- Unless we receive a doctor's note requesting a child to stay indoors, we expect every child to participate in outdoor play.

Head lice sometimes occurs in school because it is contagious and easily passed from child to child. You may want to look online for more information and to find examples of what lice look like in order to check your child's head correctly (www.cdc.gov/lice/head/treatment).

- Please inform us immediately if your child has lice. We are required by licensing to follow certain procedures regarding the cleaning and removal of materials (dress-ups, etc.) within a classroom with lice.
- We also reserve the right to implement additional procedures, such as head checks, if a persistent lice problem was to occur. Please get into the habit of routinely checking your child's head. If all parents check heads regularly, we can avoid any outbreaks in the school.

Continuity of Operations Plan for Influenza (COOP)

The ECC Continuity of Operations Plan for Influenza (COOP) is implemented by ECC staff and parents in the event that influenza develops into a pandemic in Montgomery County. All parents/guardians of children enrolled at ECC have responsibilities to assist in the plan's successful implementation. ECC's internal preventive and responsive procedures, as well as parents' responsibilities, are outlined in ECC's Emergency Preparedness Plan (which can be found on the ECC website or ask the office for a personal copy).

Inclement Weather Policy

School closing and delays are made to assure the safety of our children.

You must make your own judgment about driving in hazardous weather situations. If bad weather begins and you wish to pick your child up early, please feel free to do so.

ECC follows the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) calendar, with a few exceptions. An up-to-date calendar can be found on the ECC website.

The decision to close because of snow or other emergency is in accordance with the MCPS. In the event of snow or other emergency, please note the following:

- IF MCPS IS CLOSED, ECC WILL BE CLOSED.
- IF MCPS HAS A DELAYED OPENING:
 - ECC will open late at 10:00 am
 - Early Birds will begin at 9:15 am
 - Morning classes will dismiss at the regular time, and Afternoon Adventures will be held as scheduled.
- IF MCPS CLOSES EARLY DUE TO SNOW OR OTHER EMERGENCY, ECC WILL CLOSE EARLY, and Afternoon Adventures will be cancelled.
- **ECC reserves the right to close regardless of the MCPS decision, because local power outages, snow removal, or other circumstances may affect our ability to operate during inclement weather. An effort will be made to leave a voicemail message on the school answering machine and to contact parents through**

email.

How to Know If Schools Are Closed

School closings are communicated on local radio and TV stations (MCPS cable channel 34). In addition, MCPS website will have up-to-date information (<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/>).

Parents should get into the habit of turning on the radio every morning during the winter months. Sometimes, you will wake up to a beautiful morning, only to find out that school is delayed because of an unseen sheet of ice that covers everything.

Every effort will be made to send an email on the parent listserv by 7:00 a.m. Please make sure your email address is up-to-date for important notifications.

Emergencies

ECC has an emergency preparedness plan that provides guidelines for a wide range of unlikely emergency situations from a naturally occurring weather condition to a terrorist attack. The ECC Emergency Preparedness Plan is posted on the ECC website at www.eccpreschool.com and in the school's hallway. ECC educates parents about the emergency plans at Parent Orientation at the beginning of the school year. The safety of the children and staff is always the school's primary concern.

MSDE requires that staff members take emergency preparedness training and maintain an emergency preparedness plan for the school. Staff undergo emergency training every year, and the school runs two emergency evacuation drills in addition to monthly fire drills with the children.

Types of Emergencies

The types of emergencies that ECC prepares for include fire and explosions, severe storms, flooding, winter storms, earthquakes, unexpected utility failures, hazardous and radioactive materials, terrorism and other potentially violent situations, medical emergencies, and family/community concerns and/or violence.

Notification of Emergency Situation

ECC regularly monitors weather emergencies with a NOAA Alert Radio, and will listen to Emergency Alerting System stations on the radio – WMAL 630 AM and WTOP 103.5 FM for instructions if an emergency were to arise. The school will follow directions broadcasted on those stations. ECC office staff are also registered with the Montgomery County and Rockville Alert systems.

ECC recommends that parents sign up for Rockville Alert and Montgomery County Alert.

Both systems send out alerts in an emergency that is city or county wide. Please go to the following websites to sign up:

<https://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov/index.php?CCheck=1>

<https://alert.rockvillemd.gov/index.php?CCheck=1>

Communication With Parents of an Emergency Situation

ECC will communicate with parents during an emergency through either a text message sent to cell phones and/or a phone call from a member of ECC staff and/or email. If possible, staff will leave a message on the ECC voice mail and/or a sign on the door.

Emergency Phone Contact Information for Each Child

ECC maintains emergency phone and email lists to notify parents of any unexpected events, such as a school closing or an evacuation. The *Emergency Preparedness Information Form* and the *Emergency Form* will be supplied during the enrollment process. These forms must be completed and returned to the office before the child's first day of class. It is important, if possible, that parents provide an emergency phone that can receive text messages. If your phone cannot receive text messages, please let ECC know so that the school can make other arrangements for reaching you. It is important and the responsibility of the parent to notify the office of any change in emergency contact information immediately upon the change.

- The ***Emergency Preparedness Information Form*** includes at least one out-of-area contact and information for three local emergency contacts.
- The ***Emergency Form*** includes the name and phone number of the child's local physician. The preschool has the right to call the physician or other emergency personnel in case of emergency. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep emergency information up to date.

Shelter and Evacuation Sites and Plans

ECC is prepared for an emergency shelter-in-place or evacuation. In case of an evacuation, parents will be notified by text, email, or phone call. Please see our Emergency Plan for our evacuation locations and other important details. You may also request a printed copy from the office if you are unable to access the version online.

Screen Time Policy

ECC believes in the value of learning through play as well as strengthening and supporting growth of social emotional skills. As a part of our program, screens can be used in the classroom at the discretion of the teacher to support learning to show short videos for no more than 30 minutes per week. Screen time includes the use of television, computers or tablets. Students do not use tablets or computers in the classroom independently. ECC's Mission and Vision supports building relationships and community without the distraction of screens in the classroom.

Field Trips

- Field trips can be an important enriching experience for our children. Teachers plan trips appropriate for their class that will provide a well-rounded experience.
- Information and permission slips will be sent home in school bags each time a field trip is planned. In order to attend a field trip, each child needs a signed permission slip and/or payment of any necessary fee.
- Each parent will drive his or her child directly to and from the field trip destination and remain with their child for the duration of the field trip.
- Any child in the class who requires any type of emergency medication (for allergic reactions, etc.) should be accompanied by one of his/her parents who will bring the child's necessary medication for the field trip.
- No siblings may accompany you and your child on the field trip. A sibling is a distraction for the chaperoning parent and for the group and can present a liability for everyone.
- For each field trip there must be adults with CPR and First Aid training. A First Aid kit and Emergency Forms will be taken on the trip.
- Cell phones must be turned off while driving and should only be used for emergencies on field trips.

Playground

ECC families are welcome to use the playground after school when there are no classes outside. Families are asked to leave the playground when morning and afternoon classes come outside. It is important to respect the fact that the children who are attending ECC in the afternoon have paid for the privilege of using the playground and outdoor play area. We appreciate your understanding and suggest you use the play area at Welsh Park during these times.

Whenever parents are on the playground with their child or other children, parents are responsible for supervision of their own child or children after school hours. Please do not leave a child or children alone or unsupervised on the playground at any time.

ECC asks that all children, under the supervision of their parents, abide by the same guidelines that we use during the school hours while using the playground with their children after school hours. These guidelines include:

- Children must have closed-toe shoes on the playground—sandals and crocs are not safe on the sharp wood chips. (During school hours, be sure you are sending in appropriate play shoes to be worn on the playground, too!)
- The slide is a “down” slide, so children should be going feet first—on bottoms or stomachs. No head first. Children should slide to the bottom of the slide and move out of the way for the next person and should not be standing on or jumping off the slide.
- Absolutely no tree climbing. This includes trees between the parking lot areas.

- No climbing on top of the house--“the climber is for climbing” is the language we use during the school day.
- Playing in the bushes is not allowed.
- If your child is on the playground, you need to be with him/her to make sure that he/she is following these rules and that you are enforcing them to support our teachers during the school day.
- The bikes and other toys from the shed are for use of the children during school hours.
- It is important that the children have consistent rules for both school and non-school hours to ensure their safety during the school day. This way, they have a clear understanding of what is acceptable and manageable in a group care situation such as ours.

ECC reserves the right to prohibit the use of our playground during all hours of operations, 8:15 AM – 3:00 PM.

Board of Directors

The ECC Board of Directors is responsible for determining ECC's mission and vision, approving the annual budget, fundraising, hiring and evaluating the ECC director, recruiting and orienting new board members, and setting major policy and other responsibilities required for the smooth operation of the school. Between five and eleven members comprise ECC's volunteer board. Most are current ECC parents, but anyone with an interest to serve is encouraged to attend a board meeting and submit an application. Meetings are held monthly. Parents, teachers, staff, and interested community members are welcome to attend and observe to learn more about ECC. A copy of the bylaws and monthly minutes are available for review upon request, as well as job descriptions for the board positions of president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. Agendas for upcoming meetings are posted at the school and emailed to parents and staff. Parents can contact the board at board@eccpreschool.com.

Volunteer Opportunities

ECC encourages parents to become involved in the preschool. Teachers regularly include parents in special celebrations and welcome parents who want to share special talents with the class. ECC also asks that parents share their talents and time to help make the school the special community it is. Here are some ways you can help:

- Class representative/room parent
- Fundraising
- Parent directory

- School beautification
- Outreach/marketing
- Graphic design
- Sewing
- Library support

Fundraising

ECC holds fundraising events to earn money for specific improvements or classroom equipment. These fundraisers will be outlined in written communication. We request that families participate in these events and, in so doing, promote community spirit and financially support our high-quality program.

Some of our past fundraisers have included:

- **Fall Festival**
- **Giving Tuesday**
- **AmazonSmile**
- **Family Photos**
- **Silent Auction**
- **Charleston Wrap**
- **Pennies for the Playground**
- **Restaurant Nights**

Please feel free, in lieu of participating in the fundraising events, to make a one-time tax-deductible donation to the Early Childhood Center. We will be happy to provide you with all the necessary paperwork to submit with your annual taxes.

Tax Identification: The Early Childhood Center’s federal tax ID number is 52-0956983.

Asbestos Management Program

In October, 1986, the U.S. Congress enacted the ASBESTOS HAZARD EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT (AHERA). Under this law, comprehensive regulations were developed to address asbestos problems in public and private elementary and secondary schools. These regulations require most schools to inspect for friable and non-friable asbestos, develop asbestos management plans that address asbestos hazards in school buildings, and implement response actions in a timely manner.

These regulations assign schools many new responsibilities. Our program for fulfilling these responsibilities is outlined in our asbestos management plan. This plan contains information on our inspections, reinspections, response actions, and postresponse action activities, including periodic surveillance activities that are planned or are in progress.

You can review this plan during normal business hours. If you have any questions about reviewing our management plan, please contact the office by calling (301) 424-8065.

Parent Handbook COVID Addendum

In light of the unique and difficult challenges and concerns posed by the recent COVID-19 public health crisis, Early Childhood Center (“ECC” or “We”) has amended its Parent Handbook for 2021-2022 to implement the enclosed policies. All other provisions of the Handbook shall remain in full force and effect.

We understand that this is an unprecedented time for our community and we will be making reasonable efforts to ensure the safety of our staff, children and families, including through the introduction and enforcement of these new policies. We will continue to monitor the situation and may add to, or modify, any ECC policies, including these, as we believe may be necessary and appropriate.

Although we are seeking to make reasonable efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19, you should be aware that the novel and highly infectious nature of the disease and the limited availability and effectiveness of detection and countermeasures, necessarily limit our ability to detect or to prevent the spread of the disease. Accordingly, we are not in a position to offer assurances about the effectiveness of our response. **As a condition of your child’s enrollment at ECC, all parents and guardians will be required to sign the enclosed Release and Waiver, which includes acknowledgment of this Parent Handbook COVID Addendum.**

Public Health Emergency Closures

While we hope that it will not become necessary, there may be instances when it will become necessary for the school to close as the result of a public health emergency, such as the COVID-19 outbreak. Among other things, such circumstances may include instances when ECC is required or believes it to be in the best interests of the ECC and its staff and attendees to close ECC in order to comply with the orders, directives or recommendations of Federal, state or local government or health authorities or when ECC determines that closure is required or advisable to address a confirmed or suspected outbreak amongst ECC staff or children.

Please be advised that, in the event that the Early Childhood Center must close for any period of time due to a public health emergency, refunds will only be issued in conformity with our Business Continuity Plan. However, in some instances, tuition for those periods may be credited as a donation as we are a nonprofit 501(c)(3).

The circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic are rapidly changing. We reserve the right to adopt additional instructions, restrictions and guidelines (“Guidelines”) pertaining to COVID-19 as, in our view, may be necessary or required to protect our safety and that of others.

COVID-19 Symptoms or Exposure

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have identified the following as common symptoms of COVID-19 (check [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for the latest information):

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Chills or shaking chills
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Congestion or runny nose

Families must promptly notify ECC in the event that any member of a child’s household(s) has tested positive for COVID-19, is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or is known or believed to have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Following such event, under no circumstances should the child or any other member of the household enter the school (including picking up or dropping off attendants) until the recommended period of self-quarantine has been completed or it has been otherwise confirmed by a qualified doctor that no members of the household are infected with COVID-19. ECC will work directly with any affected or potentially affected families to provide direction and guidance as when the child may return to school. Such requirements may change based on the most recent guidance from the CDC and other authorities.

In addition, children may not come to school if they or any member of the household are experiencing fever or symptoms of COVID-19 or any other contagious illness. Children may return only when they (or the affected member of their household) are fever and symptom free for not less than 72 hours. In certain cases, a child may be able to return sooner than 72 hours if they can provide medical evidence satisfactory to ECC that they have no risk of being contagious and will not constitute a hazard to ECC or members of the ECC community.

Release and Waiver

THIS IS A RELEASE. PLEASE FULLY REVIEW IT CAREFULLY. BY SIGNING IT, YOU ARE AGREEING TO GIVE UP ANY RIGHTS YOU OR YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE TO SEEK RECOVERY FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER (ECC) AND INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH ECC RESULTING FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

The undersigned acknowledges that we have received and reviewed the 2021-2022 COVID Addendum in the Early Childhood Center (“ECC”) Parent Handbook and Business Continuity Plan and that we understand and agree to abide by these policies. We specifically acknowledge and agree to ECC’s policy on refunds in the event of closures for public health emergencies.

In consideration for our child(ren)’s continued enrollment at the Early Childhood Center and receipt of services from the Early Childhood Center we further agree to release and protect ECC as follows:

- We acknowledge that allowing or permitting our child(ren) and/or members of our family to enter ECC or the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville (“UUCR”) property and/or to participate in ECC programs is done voluntarily, at our sole risk.
- On behalf of ourselves and our child(ren) attending ECC, we hereby forever release, waive, discharge and covenant not to sue the Early Childhood Center, UUCR, their respective officers, staff, employees, volunteers, agents and representatives (“Releasees”) from and against any and all liabilities, claims, demands, suits and other causes of action of any kind or nature, regardless of when or how incurred, including, but not limited to, any and all claims of negligence and claims arising out of, or related to any loss of property or health or personal injury, including death (“Claims”), that our child or any member of our family may sustain from contracting, or being exposed to COVID-19, as the result of, of in any way related to, our child(ren), any member of our family or any third party entering ECC/UUCR property or participating in Early Childhood Center programs.
- We acknowledge that, in addition to the amendments to the ECC Parent Handbook, from time to time ECC may communicate instructions, restrictions and guidelines (“Guidelines”) pertaining to COVID-19. We agree to follow and to cause our child(ren) to follow any such Guidelines for our own personal safety, the safety of our child(ren), as well as the safety of others. We understand that failure by us or our child(ren) to follow the Guidelines may result in the discontinuance or suspension of our ability to attend ECC/UUCR property or participate in ECC programs without refund.
- We understand and agree that we are not relying on ECC to have arranged for or to carry any insurance of any kind for our benefit or the benefit of our child(ren) relative to our entering ECC/UUCR property or participating in ECC programs. We understand that we are solely responsible for procuring any and all necessary or desired insurance (including medical insurance) for ourselves and our child(ren).
- We agree to fully inform any individual that we may ask or direct to enter the ECC/UUCR property (including without limitation any individual picking up or

dropping off a child at our request) of the contents of this Release and Waiver and to procure their agreement to the same.

- We agree to indemnify and hold each of the Releasees harmless from and against any and all Covid-19 related Claims (including costs and attorney fees) made by us, our child(ren) and/or any individual picking up or dropping off our child(ren), to the full extent that those Claims are connected in any way to the representations we have made in this Release and Waiver, our or our child(ren) entering ECC/UUCR property and/or our or our child(ren) participating in ECC programs.
- We acknowledge and agree that this Release and Waiver shall be binding on our family members, heirs, assigns, personal representatives and anyone else entitled to act on our, or our child(ren)'s, behalf.
- We agree that if any portion of this Release and Waiver is found to be void or unenforceable, the remaining portions shall remain in full force and effect.
- This Release and Waiver shall remain effective regardless of any decision not to continue to enroll our child in the Early Childhood Center.
- This Release and Waiver shall be governed by the laws of the State of Maryland.

By signing below, we acknowledge that (a) we have read and fully understand the foregoing Release and Waiver; (b) we are 18 years of age or older; (c) we are the legal guardians of the minor child(ren) identified below; (d) the information provided is true; and (e) of our own free will we consent and agree to all of the foregoing on behalf of ourselves and our minor child(ren) identified below.

	Parent / Guardian #1	Parent / Guardian #2
Signature:	_____	_____
Name:	_____	_____
Date:	_____	_____

Please note that both parents/guardians must sign this form except in the case of single parent families. A completed form must be returned to the office prior to your child's first day at the Early Childhood Center.

MINOR CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

_____	_____
Name	Age
_____	_____
Name	Age
_____	_____
Name	Age

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