

ST. MARY'S SUNSHINE CENTER, INC.

PARENT HANDBOOK



Our Philosophy

Children are active learners. They learn through daily interaction with others as well as exploration and discovery of their environment. With guidance and supervision, children should be given the freedom to explore their world. A child's environment and activities should allow them to be challenged, yet offer feelings of success when tasks are completed. Children's daily activities require stability and structure; however, the day's activities should be flexible to allow for spontaneous learning activities. Daily activities should also be based on children's interest, engage their curiosity and allow for creativity and self-expression.

Play is a necessary part of an early childhood program because it offers children opportunities to use materials and learn at their own pace. Through play children develop problem solving and social skills. They are given the opportunity to safely explore, expand their minds and create within their environment.

Teachers should model appropriate behavior and provide guidance which allows children the opportunity to encounter and overcome each new challenge.

The Parent's Handbook is designed to answer questions regarding center policy and classroom practices. Please review this handbook carefully. If there are any questions, please contact the Director.

Welcome to our Center!

This handbook is written for all staff at the St. Mary's Sunshine Center. The organization, philosophy, policies, and procedures regarding the children and staff employment are outlined on the following pages. Staff is expected to comply with all that is contained in this handbook.

Who we are and how we started...

The St. Mary's Sunshine Center, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The center was originally started as part of St. Mary's Hospital. It was part of a grant. When the grant ended we moved and separated from the hospital. The property and business of the Corporation is managed by the Board of Trustees, who are elected from the membership. A parent's registration fee includes a membership fee payable to the Corporation. There are ten trustees who serve for a period of two years. Generally, the Board of Trustees hold monthly board meetings, which are open to the parents and staff, unless personnel matters are being discussed. Personnel matters are discussed in closed sessions.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a developmentally appropriate program for all children that nurtures the whole child and respects each child as an individual, instills positive self-worth and a love for learning.

Changes in policies & procedures

Polices & procedures are changed or updated as the Board of Trustees deems necessary for the operation of the Center. Revised or replacement Parent Handbooks are posted and copies available upon request.

Hours of Operation

The Center is open year-round, Monday through Friday, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Parents are expected to have their children signed out and out of the building by this time. Late fees are assessed after 6:00 p.m.

Calendar

The Center will be closed on New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. The Center will be closing at 3:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. Parents will be given a one week notice of any change in holiday hours.

Should a scheduled holiday fall on a Saturday, the Center will be closed the Friday before the holiday.

Should a scheduled holiday fall on a Sunday, the Center will be closed the Monday after the holiday. The Center will be closed for one professional training day per year. Parents will be given 60 day notice prior to this closure.

Visiting Our Center

For the safety of our children and staff the front center door is locked at all times. Children have access to the building from the playground area only during recess times. This prevents access from the outside but allows evacuation if necessary. Access to the building can be obtained through the front door by ringing the outside bell. Photo ID is required when visiting our center.

In addition, to enhance the protection of students and staff, the Center employs discretely located cameras (without sound monitoring) in all classrooms, playgrounds, the parking lot and general areas (excluding bathrooms).

Volunteer Policy

Student volunteers must be middle school students working towards "Student Learning Hours" and college courses. Volunteers can attend the Center no more than 24 hours per week unless approved by the Director. Volunteers are required to sign in and out when visiting the center.

Enrollment & Financial Policies

The Center welcomes and encourages you to visit the Center prior to your child's first day. This will give you and your child the opportunity to meet your child's teacher and classmates.

The following forms must be completed and returned prior to your child's acceptance into care:

- Emergency Card
- Immunization Certificate
- Health Inventory
- "All about My Child" form
- Parent Agreement
- Acknowledgment of Quality Care booklet

****NO child will be accepted without the above-completed forms, no exceptions. ****

The remainder of your deposit is refunded upon your child's withdrawal from the Center, provided the center receives at least a two-week written notice and there are no charges on the account.

Tuition is charged on a bi-weekly basis, and is due every other Friday. Full tuition is charged for weeks in which the Center is closed due to holiday or other reasons. Staff members do not accept tuition payments. Payments should be placed in the locked deposit box outside the Director's office.

Checks should be made payable to St. Mary's Center. There will be a \$30.00 fee charged for any returned check or declined credit/debit card. Accounts with returned checks, twice in a twelve-month period, would result in cash payments only being accepted. Credit/debit cards will be charged \$10.00 per transaction. There is no charge for ACH transactions.

The Board of Trustees reserves the right to increase tuition as necessary for the operation of the Center.

St. Mary's Sunshine Center is not responsible for post-dated checks.

Additional Fees

If your child requires personalized services due to health care needs (Ex. additional staff, etc.); your tuition rate may be increased to cover the cost of these additional services.

Late Payment

A late payment fee of \$5.00 per day is charged if payment is not received by close of business Monday, following a tuition due date. If Monday is a holiday, payment must be received by 10:00 am Tuesday to avoid late fees. Third party checks are not considered paid until received by the center. Parents are responsible for ensuring checks are received by the tuition due date. The center has the option to immediately dismiss a child if tuition payment is more than one week late.

Late Pick-up

The Center closes at 6:00 p.m. and parents are expected to have children picked up and out of the building by that time. Late fees are assessed for every minute families remain in the building after 6:00 p.m. The charges are as follows:

6:01 p.m. - 6:15 p.m. \$25.00 per child (1 to 15 minutes)

A charge of \$25.00 will be added for every additional 15 minute interval.

Our Procure system and camera monitors will be used to determine late fees.

Late fees will be billed to the parent on a weekly basis and must be remitted with the next tuition payment.

Parents and/or guardians will receive three warnings prior to their child being dismissed. The policy is instituted per quarter in the following manner:

First late pick-up	Verbal warning issued to parents
Second late pick-up	Written warning to parents
Third late pick-up	Board Notified
Fourth late pick-up	Child/Children dismissed

Withdrawal/Dismissal

A two-week written notice to the Director is required when a parent withdraws a child from the Center. This will guarantee the refund of your security deposit.

The Center reserves the right to dismiss a child immediately if: 1) the parent fails to pay tuition, 2) the child is not satisfactorily adjusting to the program, or 3) the child's behavior is deemed a threat to the well-being of other children enrolled in the Center or staff.

Arrivals and Departures

Children are brought into the Center by an adult and are received by a staff member in their classroom. Parents are responsible for signing children in and out daily through our Procure system.

Only persons authorized on the emergency card will be allowed to remove a child from the Center. The Center staff must be notified in writing, ahead of time, if someone other than those authorized on the registration form will be picking up the child. In the event that such advance notification is not possible, the parent is responsible for notifying the Center personnel by telephone as soon as possible of the change. A return phone call may be placed to verify the initial call to the Center. All persons are required to present photographic identification, such as a driver's license, before leaving the Center with a child to verify the parent's notification.

Family Involvement and Conferences

Family involvement is important to strengthen parent/teacher relationships. We value their opinions, diversity, and partnership. A child's development is directly correlated to the impact of their home and school life and how these two worlds interact. We team together for a consistent and cohesive environment in which a child can feel secure for exploration, learning, and self-esteem building. On a daily basis Parents are welcome to discuss questions or concerns with teachers. We ask that this not be done in front of the children. If you need to contact a teacher we suggest calling and leaving a message for that teacher and they can call when they are not in the classroom. Conferences are held twice per year to discuss children's development. This will be done after yearly assessment. This can be done by phone if requested.

Through classroom welcome letters and newsletters, monthly Center calendars, flyers, and personal contact, we invite family members to:

- ◆ participate in special celebrations, events, and field
- ◆ trips keep abreast of classroom activities and Center
- ◆ needs share family stories or professional talents
- ◆ collaborate with staff on their child's development
- ◆ support fundraisers to benefit our Center become a
- ◆ member of the Board of Trustees attend workshops
- ◆ held at the Center
- ◆

Family member are welcome to visit our center provided they are listed on the child's emergency contact card. A photo ID is required and visitors are required to sign in. Parents should feel free to contact their child's teacher or the Director if there are any concerns or questions.

Our Classrooms

All classrooms incorporate curriculum that is based on scientific research and approved by the Maryland State Department of Education for preschool learners. Infants, Toddlers, and Twos use The Healthy Beginnings Curriculum. Our Three year old room uses Little InvestiGator Club Just for Threes Program[®]. Our Four year old room uses The InvestiGator Club Prekindergarten Program[®]. Our Five year old room uses the Kindergarten curriculum by Houghton Mifflin. These developmentally appropriate resources provide children with the foundational skills they need to succeed as lifelong learners. These programs are very "hands-on" and build on children's abilities and strengths.

Each classroom is set up for exploration and growth. With educational value and developmental milestones in mind materials and equipment are readily available to children. Children's interests, culture and language are also considered when choosing materials and creative activities for each classroom. Classroom activities and materials supports children of all abilities. Materials are rotated to add variety and change.

Teachers are given time weekly to create developmentally appropriate activities which complement the curriculum. Differential instruction is used to ensure that children's needs are being met. Results of assessments are used when planning activities.

Children are sometimes faced with learning challenges or special needs. Lesson plans and schedules are personalized to include any accommodations and modifications needed for children. The children's interests are also taken into consideration when lessons are planned. Additional activities are developed to enhance the curriculum. Weekly lesson plans and daily

schedules are posted in each classroom. Information provided through an IEP or IFSP is kept confidential and used only for the purpose of planning and accommodating children's needs.

Physical activities are incorporated into daily classroom schedules. Structured physical play, as well as, child directed physical play is important in the social, emotional and physical development of children of all ages. Physical activities also help to build self-esteem. Our goal is to provide ample opportunities for developmentally appropriate and challenging activities.

If any room modifications are necessary these changes are done prior to the child entering the classroom. If any outside services are necessary, we will work with parents with referrals, schedules, etc.

Several factors are used to determine children's classroom placement and advancement. Age, development and availability are all considered. Any questions regarding this procedure should be discussed with the Director.

Assessment

It is required by the State of Maryland that each child must be assessed within 45 days after entering care. Parents are asked to complete an ASQ-3 questionnaire. Center staff also complete an assessment. Results of the assessment will be shared with parents if there are any questions or concerns. Ongoing assessments are completed as a part of select curriculum units. Anecdotal observations and checklist are used to record important mile stones of development. We use Kaymbu to document events and captivities. These are recorded in each child's individual portfolio.

Transitions

A transition form is completed by the teachers and shared with the Director and parents. Transitions are sometimes difficult for children and families. We will do our best to assist parents when these transitions occur.

Screen Time Policy

There is no screen time for children under the age of 2. Allowing a maximum of 30 minutes total per week of educational and age appropriate screen time (DVD, iPad, Video and Television). Policy allows for no more than 15 minutes of educational computer time per day. No screen time TV, Videos, iPad and Videos during meals and snacks.

Emergency Procedures

In an emergency situation where medical attention is deemed necessary by either the parent and/or Center Crisis Team member, 911 will be called immediately. A Staff member will

accompany the child in the ambulance and will remain at the hospital until a parent or caregiver arrives. Center staff will not in any case transport a child by personal vehicle.

Parents are responsible for providing the names and telephone numbers of at least three persons who can be contacted, during the day, in case of sudden illness or building emergency. Parents will be contacted immediately if there is a building emergency affecting care (power outage, flooding etc.). **It is imperative that these emergency phone numbers be kept up-to-date at all times.**

Fire drills are conducted on a monthly basis. Staff and children evacuate the building as they would if a real fire were to occur. Disaster drills are periodically done. Copies of our disaster plans are available upon request.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, parents should contact the Center for a recorded message before bringing their children to the Center. The Director and one Board Officer (president, Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer) make the determination to close or delay the Center. However, factors like local government and business closings are factored into this decision. Please remember our primary concern is the safety of our staff and children, but also considering the needs of our clients, the parents.

While every attempt will be made to make a decision the night before, if that is impossible, the determination will be made no later than 6:00 am. This information will be available through our answering service. Notifications will be sent through email and bulk text messages. If it should be necessary to close the Center during business hours, parents will be contacted to pick-up their children. Parents or the emergency contact will be advised of the time that the Center will be closing. All efforts should be made to have your child picked up by this time.

Morning snack will not be served if there is more than an hour delay in opening.

Snacks and Lunches

Hot lunches are available for purchase through the Center. The amount of \$20.00 per week is added to the bi-weekly tuition payments. Deductions are not made for absences. If your child is participating in the hot lunch program you must call the Center no later than 10:00 if your child is coming in late but you still wish for them to receive lunch that day. Children may also bring a nutritional ready to eat lunch from home. We are unable to heat or refrigerate lunches. An ice pack should be placed in lunches. Parents are also urged to use a thermos to keep foods warm. Due to Office of Childcare regulations the center will provide all beverages for meals and snacks. We will serve 1% milk for children 23months and older and whole milk for children under 24 months. Milk is served with lunch unless we have a note from the child's physician. Lactose free milk can be substituted without a doctor's note. **Please do not send in juice boxes or other beverages.** These items will be sent back home. The Center provides morning and afternoon

snacks. If a child requires a special diet due to allergies or other restrictions, the parent is responsible for providing food. A statement from the child's physician is required. Parents must provide all formula, baby food and all other food and juices for bottle fed infants. Milk & juice is provided by the Center for cup fed babies only. **Due to Child Care Regulations all bottles must be premixed. We are unable to fill bottles.**

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing for participation in all activities, such as climbing, painting and playing in the sandbox. It is recommended that shoes with slippery soles, flip flops, open toe sandals or cowboy boots not be worn for safety reasons. An emergency change of clothing including shirt, pants, underwear, and socks is to be kept at the Center. These clothes should be replaced in accordance with changing seasons and growing children. Under NO circumstances will one child's clothing be used on another child. "Center Extras" will be used when a child does not have appropriate extra clothes.

If cloth diaper are used, rubber pants are required to be worn over the diaper. This includes all in one brands such as "Bum Genius".

A sheet and blanket should be provided for naptime. Full size pillows are NOT permitted due to Child Care Administration regulations. A "travel" size pillow is optional. **All items must fit in a bag that can be hung up. It is imperative that all clothing and bedding be clearly labeled with the child's name.**

Toys from home

We discourage parents from allowing children to bring in any toys from home. This tends to create chaos in the classrooms. However, toy guns, knives, swords and other weapon toys, as well as whistles, balloons, money and any toys that go into the mouth are not are permitted at all. A favorite nap time toy may be brought from home. Please label all items brought in with the child's name. **The Center is not responsible for lost or broken toys.**

Positive Behavioral Practice

Each teacher is responsible for promoting self-control and appropriate social behavior by practicing positive methods to redirect children's inappropriate behavior. Staff works with children to resolve conflicts and help communicate their needs and challenges. Staff encourages reflection on behavior, frustrations and problem solving choices. Methods for guiding children in appropriate behavior include but are not limited to the following:

- use of clear directions
- communication of age appropriate, positive expectations, consequences and choices
- modeling appropriate verbal responses to conflicts
- provide acceptable choices

- Help children find appropriate works and actions to express feeling
- providing challenging activities or redirecting to alternative activities • communicating with the parents regarding the behavior

Incident Reports are sent home for inappropriate behavior. Behavior Logs are also kept when necessary.

St. Mary's Sunshine Center reserves the right to use photographs & video recordings of children in published material and as necessary for behavior observation.

Injury Reports

For serious injuries such as a bump on the head with a bruise or swelling, possible sprain, bite that breaks the skin, bleeding, etc. staff will inform the Director. The Director or designee will contact the parent if necessary. Appropriate first aid treatment will be administered. Staff will complete an injury report for all injuries that would be of concern to parents as soon as possible. After Director or designee and parent have signed the form it will be kept on file by administration.

Asthma and Allergies Accommodations

St. Mary's Sunshine Center is recognized as an asthma and allergy friendly center by the Maryland Department of Education Our Lead teachers have completed Asthma Training to help us better understand and accommodate the needs of children with asthma. Our Lead teachers have also received medication administration training and are knowledgeable of nebulizers and inhalers. A personalized menu is completed for children with food allergies. If a child requires a special diet due to allergies or other restrictions, the parent is responsible for providing food. Individual food bins containing food brought in is stored in our kitchen area. Children's allergies, food and environmental, will be posted in the classrooms and kitchen. We ask parents to be aware of fur brought in on coats, jackets and linens as we have several children with allergies to pet dander. This fur very easily transfers to others. As a new child transitions into the classroom, staff will check the information provided by the parent for allergies and add the child's name to the list. This information is updated and passed on at the transition meeting.

Illness Procedures

Children should **not** be sent to the center if they are ill. Parents will be contacted to remove their child from the Center immediately when that child shows signs of illness. Arrangements should be made to have children picked up within one hour. These signs include, but are not limited to 1) a temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher; 2) listlessness; 3) vomiting; 4) breathing difficulties; 5) diarrhea; 6) change in skin color; 7) excessive colored discharge from nose, ears, sores or eyes; or 8) change in general mood or appearance. Children who have a colored discharge

from their nose for more than 24 hours will not be permitted into care at the Center. Children with diarrhea that cannot be contained within the diaper/clothing, or contains an irregular foul odor possibly indicating a stomach ailment, will be removed from care immediately. Children may return when bowel movements return to normal. Any child who exhibits a spreading rash will be removed from group care until the rash is diagnosed by a physician and is determined to be non-contagious. A physician must provide determination of contagious state. If a child has been suspected of having or has been diagnosed with **any** contagious illness (i.e. impetigo, chicken pox, pink eye etc.) he/she must have a doctor's note stating they are no longer contagious. **Children may return after 24 hours only if they have received the required doses of medication for contagious illness.** Children who have been determined to have head lice must be treated and be nit/egg free before returning to the Center. All children associated with the child will be checked and the infected child will be rechecked in 7-10 days after treatment. These cases will be treated as discreetly as possible. Children will not be permitted at the Center if they are unable to participate in normal daily activities. This includes classroom activities and outdoor play. School age children should not be sent to daycare when they are too ill to be sent to school.

Children must be illness/fever free (without medication) for 24 hours prior to returning to the Center. The Director, other administration, or teachers would be happy to clarify any questions you have regarding our illness policy. Using all of these factors the Director or designee has the final decision of notifying the parent regarding the child's illness.

Administration of Medication

Designated staff members may administer medication only if a Medication Order Form is completed. This form contains the child's name, parent's signature & date signed, identity of the medication & dosage for the child, dates on which the medication is to be administered, time to administer the medication or the conditions for which the medication is to be administered.

Prescription medication must be labeled by the pharmacy or physician with the child's name and the expiration date. At least one dose of a prescription medication, including topical ointments, must be given to the child at home prior to the administering that medication.

Written instructions must include child's name, dosage, and times or conditions in which medication should be given. This excludes acetaminophen and topical ointments. The Center will discard or return any medication that has reached the expiration date or is no longer being administered.

The amount, date, and time of administration, as well as who administers the medication to the child in the center, will be recorded in the child's personal records. Prescription medication may

only be administered according to a licensed health practitioner's written instructions or the instructions on the label of the medication.

Birthday Parties

We look forward to celebrating birthdays with the children and their families. If a parent would like to bring a special treat for such an occasion, please make arrangements with the child's teacher in advance. We encourage food items such as fruit muffins, fruit/vegetable bread, granola bars, fresh fruit, frozen yogurt, Go-gurt (or other fun yogurts), and other nutritious foods. **We strongly discourage cupcakes, cake, and other sweet food that has little nutritional value for the children.** Due to licensing regulations, birthday treats **must be store bought**. Any food brought in for a birthday snack must arrive unopened, as it was packaged by the bakery or store where it was purchased. You are welcome to join your child during this snack time. Please remember that, due to safety reasons, we cannot light birthday candles in the Center. Please do not bring goody bags or any other party treats.

Child Abuse & Neglect

By law, all suspected cases of abuse or neglect must be reported to the appropriate authorities. If a staff member suspects that a child is being abused, they will notify the Director immediately. The staff member and the Director will then notify Social Services.

Off-Site Care

The Center will not be held liable for injuries or damages to staff or children when employees are hired by parents to provide child care (or for any other reason) at their home or other site outside of Center business hours. Once a child has been signed out and exited the Center building the Center is no longer liable for employee actions. Parents must provide a written permission for an employee to transport their child. The Center will not provide car seats for use by parents or employees.

In the event that a child has missed the school bus, a parent will be contacted for staff permission to transport their child to the school. Every effort will be made to secure the child in a proper seat restraint. The Center will not be held liable for injuries or damages during transport.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual Harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual Harassment is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in regard to any Parent or Staff Member of the Center. All parents and Staff are expected to avoid any behavior that might be interpreted as sexual harassment. Any parent who believes that they have been harassed sexually, should report the problem to the Director immediately. The report will be investigated and remedial action will be taken where needed.

4/13/2016