



# Grace Early Learning Center

## Parent Handbook

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## **Purpose of the Handbook**

This handbook provides parents with a clear, concise statement of the basic policies, procedures, and philosophy of Grace Early Learning Center. Although the handbook is not intended as a definitive statement on these subjects, it is written to answer the most frequent questions concerning the policies and procedures of the Center. It is important to realize these policies and procedures are formatted as a way to implement our goals in Christian education, as well as to provide a safe, orderly, efficient, and consistent approach to problems. Commitment to our children, parents, and staff enables the Center to run on a smooth and orderly basis.

Grace Early Learning Center reserves the right to make any changes, additions, or deletions from this handbook as situations arise that would warrant such modifications. When changes are necessary, parents will be informed in writing.

## **Introduction to Grace Early Learning Center**

Grace Early Learning Center combines professional care with the love and nurturing of a family to become your child's home away from home. Our program is designed to care for your whole child, and meet their individual spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual and physical needs in a Christian atmosphere.

Located on 62 acres of land, Grace Early Learning Center is a state of the art facility featuring a child-centered program and qualified teachers and caregivers.

We thank you for choosing Grace Early Learning Center for your child's care and commit ourselves to maintaining high standards for you and your family.

## **Open-Door Policy**

The administrative staff of Grace Early Learning Center maintains an open-door policy. You are welcome to visit at any time during operating hours. If you would like to meet with the Director, please call ahead to make sure she is in the office and that she can clear time to speak with you.

You are also welcome to visit your child's classroom. Please keep in mind that it may be hard for your child to see you come and go in the middle of the day. Children have the expectation that they are being picked up when they see their parent come into their room. Also, be please mindful that our Center-wide naptime is from 12:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. Please try to avoid picking up during these hours.

## **Operating Hours**

Grace Early Learning Center is open Monday through Friday from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. We are open year-round with the exception of the holidays listed below. Also, please note the inclement weather policy as, in extreme cases, the weather can affect the days or hours the Center is open.

## **Holidays**

The following holidays will be observed so that the staff and children of the Center may spend these times with their families. Some holidays will fall on a weekend. If the holiday falls on a Saturday, we will be closed the Friday before. If the holiday falls on a Sunday, we will be closed the Monday after. Observed holidays include:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July
- Labor Day

- Thanksgiving and the day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
- 2 In-Service days (training for employees) to be announced

If a holiday falls on your child's scheduled day, you are still responsible for the tuition payment of this day as it is built into tuition. These days may not be substituted for other days.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

Grace Early Learning Center may open on a one or two hour delay, or be closed in the rare instance where traveling in inclement weather would pose a safety risk to you, your child, or our staff. Additionally, if severe inclement weather occurs during the day and hazardous travel is predicted, the Center may close earlier than 6:00 P.M.

Should the weather cause a problem with the building, such as lack of heat, water, or air conditioning, the Center would not be open until such problem was resolved. These types of closings are highly unlikely.

In the rare instance that the Center closes, opens late, or closes early, the information will be announced on local television channels, as well as be posted on Grace Early Learning Center's Facebook page. An e-mail announcement will be sent to all parent e-mail addresses on file. In addition, parents can sign up for text alerts via the Remind App.

### **Pick Up/ Drop Off Policy**

Children must be released to a teacher and may not be dropped off without an escort. All students are required to be dropped off no later than 10:00 A.M., unless the Director or teacher has been notified of a later drop off time due to an appointment or other extenuating circumstance.

Children thrive on routine. For this reason, we ask that, whenever possible, your child is dropped off at about the same time each day. By doing so, your child will enjoy time with his/her friends and participate in regular morning activities.

Your child will only be allowed to leave with persons whom you have listed on your child's registration form. If someone needs to be removed from or added to that list, an amended form must be put in your child's file. There can be no exception to this rule. For the safety of all of our children and to protect our staff, we must insist that the person picking up your child is listed in their file in the Director's office.

Any person other than a parent or guardian of the child must show their ID to the teacher before a child may be released. The teacher must then confirm that the person who is picking up the child is on the approved list for that child.

## **Late Pick Up**

The Center closes at 6:00 P.M. If your child is not picked up by 6:30 P.M., we are required by law to call Family Services. If you have had an accident, or are in another unavoidable situation, you must call the Center and speak with administration. You must then contact the people whom you have listed on your child's enrollment form and make arrangements for them to pick up your child.

## **Absences**

While not a requirement, please let us know if your child will not be attending the Center when expected either due to illness or a personal day. Our staff cares deeply for your child and appreciates being notified if they should not expect him/her that day. To maintain the teacher to child ratio, we are not able to allow children to substitute days in the events of illness or vacations.

## **Parent Visits**

Parents are welcome to visit the Center at any time, but keep in mind that it may be difficult for a young child to cope with separating from a parent for a second time during the day. Children typically assume they will be picked up from the Center any time they see their parent. It is difficult for them to understand that, although you are leaving, they are expected to stay.

Please keep in mind that although custodial parents are welcome to visit the Center at any time, it is not an appropriate place for others (a non-custodial parent, grandparent, etc.) to visit your child. Please schedule 'visits' away from the Center.

Anyone who spends extended time in a classroom is required to have a medical exam, references, and a background check on file.

## **Curriculum**

A quality curriculum is the difference between being a learning center and a daycare center. We have carefully selected and blended our curricula to create a rich environment conducive to learning, kindergarten readiness, and Christian character development that will last a lifetime. These curricula, in combination with our exercise, nutrition, rest and play programs allow us to nurture your whole child- mind, body and spirit.

As a part of a Christian education, we emphasize strong character and individual responsibility as we lead each child on a journey to become spiritually strong, self-disciplined individuals. Your child will receive the love, warmth and guidance of Christian care givers, while receiving the eternal belief of Biblical lessons and character building exercises.

Our faith-based early childhood education curriculum is Essentials/Sunlight Kids. This curriculum is designed to engage children in developmentally appropriate activities while fostering Christian values.

We use Zoo Phonics to enhance your child's reading readiness. The Zoo Phonics methodology fully involves your child's eyes, ears, mouth and body as they learn phonemic awareness, the alphabet and how to decode (read) and encode (spell/write).

We also use Handwriting Without Tears. This curriculum draws from years of innovation and research to provide developmentally appropriate, multisensory tools and strategies for our students. The program follows research that demonstrates children learn more effectively by actively doing, with materials that address all styles of learning.

### **Christian Environment**

Grace Early Learning Center offers Christian care and education from Christian caregivers. Biblical principles are used in our every day lives (i.e., praying before meals, discussing Jesus' teachings in our behavior and actions, treating one another with love and respect, etc.). Our Christian curriculum and environment will, when combined with your influence, help your child develop a strong Christian foundation that we pray will follow them all the days of their lives and help influence others for Christ.

### **Staff Training and Qualifications**

Our Center is staffed by professionals, students and volunteers with varying degrees of education and experience. At least one teacher in each classroom has their CDA certification and/or a minimum numbers of years of experience. The CDA is a certificate earned by the successful completion of prescribed child development courses, observation hours in a Center, and the passing of a comprehensive examination. All staff members receive training prior to employment, as well as on-going training to develop and strengthen their skills. All staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid. All adults, including staff, students and volunteers have criminal and Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) background checks on file with the Director. Student workers, interns, and volunteers who supplement the staff and assist with the implementation of the program are not required to have the same high level of training.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

We encourage parents to become involved with the program in some of the ways that are listed here. Some of the options include: reading to children, sharing a special interest or talent (music, art, cooking, etc.), helping with our fundraising efforts, donating items, etc. We realize that our parents are very busy working and/or going to school. We encourage your involvement, but also

do not want to overburden you with high expectations, so it's up to you as to how involved you would like to become with the program.

### **Classroom Transitions**

Children transition from one classroom to the next based on age and milestone achievement. It's an important time for children and as such staff works to ensure your child eases into the new classroom. For all children under the age of three, classroom transitions take place over a full week so that, by Friday, your child has spent most of the day in their new room and come the following Monday, they will be accustomed to their new environment. When possible, we will try to move children in groups of two or more. However, if your child has to move alone, know that they are moving into a classroom with former classmates who have transitioned before them. Also, please note that your children see the staff members throughout their days. They are not moving into a stranger's room. For all children that are over the age of three, classroom transitions will take place on one day that will be designated by our Administration. You will receive notification from the Center explaining the details of this process and when your child will be scheduled to transition to the next classroom.

Children enrolled in the Center part-time will follow the same transition schedule. This transition schedule can be modified upon request at the discretion of the Director.

Parents will be informed of upcoming transitions via a parent letter being sent home with your child.

### **Volunteers**

We believe that, whenever possible, having additional adults to spend time with our children benefits all. Grace Early Learning Center is blessed to have volunteers from Grace Christian who donate their time to read books, go for walks, and sing songs with the children. Sometimes these adults only drop in every few weeks. They are familiar to your children, even though they may not be to you.

### **Meals and Snacks**

One of the most basic requirements of any day care program is to provide adequate nourishment for each child. The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides guidelines for food preparation and service. Meals are available to all enrolled children.

The Center administrators and cook work hard to provide meals and snacks that meet and exceed the nutritional requirements of the Federal Food Program.

The Center serves breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack to all children who are enrolled during the times those meals are served. Please ensure your child arrives before meal time or

after having already eaten as it is very difficult for our staff to feed one child after the class has moved on to other activities. Meal and snack times are posted on the bulletin board in your child's room.

Parents are invited to join their child(ren) at a meal time, but you must notify the classroom teacher at least one day in advance to be sure we have an adequate amount of food. We are, of course, required to serve the children first.

Food from home is NOT allowed to be brought into the classroom. If your child requires a morning snack or drink before arriving at school, it MUST remain in your car or can be thrown out upon arrival. If you wish to pack your child's lunch you must obtain approval from the Director.

**We are a nut free facility.**

### **Food Substitutes**

We are required by the Division of Child and Family Services licensing and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to provide all of the required meals throughout the day for children enrolled in our program. This means that parents are NOT allowed to restrict their child's diet while they are at the Center based on a child's disliked or presumed allergies. We do, however, allow food substitutes based on medical, personal, and religion reasons as explained further.

Any child requiring a special diet due to medical reason MUST fill out our form regarding food allergies and intolerances. Specific foods to be avoided must be listed on this form and it MUST be signed by a medical doctor. The parent must then list an appropriate substitute for that food. Unless we have a doctor's note your child will be served all of our food components, including milk.

**Please Note:** According to the CACFP, soy milk is not considered a creditable source of milk. To be credited, milk must be pasteurized and meet state and local standards for fluid milk. All milk should contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the FDA. Soy milk is creditable only if used as a substitution because of medical or other documented dietary needs. A statement signed by a medical doctor must be on file for a child being served soy milk.

### **Family Provided Supplies**

Depending on the age of the child, parents are asked to provide some personal supplies. Infants, for instance, will require diapers, wipes, rash ointment (optional and require a signed medication authorization form), and formula and/or breast milk. The list of supplies your child will need will be given to you prior to your child's first day at the Center.

All children must have two sets of clothing in their cubbies. We will send home reminders as the seasons change so parents can update the clothing according to size and climate.



All children, above the age of 1 year old, are required to wear shoes always while attending our Center. It is recommended that shoes are closed-toed and do not have open backs. Additionally, children need to be dressed weather appropriately because of outdoor play time. Please send your child with a seasonally appropriate coat because they will have outdoor play time, weather permitting.

### **Fees and Payment Policy**

Tuition is due MONDAY of each week. Tuition will be automatically drafted out of your account Monday of each week that your child is enrolled in our Center. If a check is returned due to non-sufficient funds, there will be a \$28 fee assessed to your account. This information is indicated on the "Authorization Agreement for Direct Payments" form provided to you at the time of enrollment. You may choose to pay weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.

If tuition is NOT received by WEDNESDAY, a late fee of \$5 per day will be assessed and a written note will accompany the child home. If payment is not received by the following Wednesday, your child will be disenrolled from the Center.

If you are in a situation in which you are not able to make your childcare payments, please speak with the Director. It is never our wish to terminate a child's enrollment in the Center. We are all working together for the good of your child. Communication is key in these situations.

Tuition fees are based upon enrollment, not attendance. Fees must be paid whether the child is in attendance or not.

We do not offer a sibling discount. However, we do offer a discount to those who prepay tuition. If 6 months of tuition is paid in advance, we offer a 2% discount. If 12 months of tuition is paid in advance, we offer a 3% discount.

### **Enrollment Fee**

A non-refundable enrollment fee of \$50.00 is charged at the beginning of a child's enrollment. This charge is per child and is a one-time fee. If there is a wait list at the time of your enrollment application, the enrollment fee will be processed to add your child to the wait list.

### **Supply Fee**

A recurring yearly supply fee of \$50.00 is due the first week of September. This supply fee is used to support your child's teacher in effectively and creatively implementing the curriculum in the classroom. By having this money available, your child's teacher can add dimension to your child's learning experience.

If your child is enrolled between January 1-July 31 a supply fee of \$25.00 will be assessed at the time of enrollment. If your child is enrolled between August 1-December 31 a supply fee of \$50.00 will be assessed at the time of enrollment.

## **Fundraising**

Fundraising is often a topic that makes parents feel uncomfortable. After all, you are paying for your child's care, so you may question why you should get involved in fundraising. While you pay for your child's care, we make every effort to provide a facility and experiences for your child that will leave a lasting impression on him or her. We want your child to leave the Center not only ready for kindergarten, but with a thirst for knowledge and a fascination with discovery. Creating such a program is costly. Therefore, from time to time, we may participate in various fundraising programs. We encourage you, as parents, to support us so we can all enhance the education of our children.

## **Medication Administration Procedures**

Whenever possible, parents need to administer ALL medicine to their children at home. Many medications can be administered twice daily, which means it can be taken at home rather than at the Center. Always check to see if this is possible for your child's medical condition.

If medicine MUST be administered at the Center, the following policy applies.

Medication that needs to be given to a child by a teacher MUST be in the original, labeled, doctor prescribed bottle. Over the counter medication may ONLY be administered if we receive a signed note from your child's physician with the following information: child's name, name of prescribed medication, explanation of condition requiring medication, date, and dosage.

Medication will be kept in a locked box in the child's classroom.

A "Medication Administration" form must be filled out and signed by the parent daily. This applies to creams and ointments, as well.

Fever-reducers, such as Tylenol, CANNOT be administered by our staff for the purpose of reducing a fever, and should not be given to a child for that purpose just prior to attending our Center. Please inform your child's teacher if your child is on any kind of daily medication.

## **Immunization Records**

Our Center requires all enrolled children to have a physical examination signed by physician. An up-to-date record of immunizations is also required. A medical form with all of the above information MUST be on file before a child will be allowed to attend the Center. The immunizations must be kept current or the child's enrollment will be terminated. This a legal issue, and not one that we are permitted to bend on.

You are required to provide us with a new copy of your child's immunization record upon expiration. The expiration date must be included on the form. Immunizations must be on a Kentucky form and be signed by your child's physician.

Please contact the Director should you need a Medical Exemption Certificate.

### **Illness Policy**

Please keep your child home if he/she has been ill during the night or in the morning and has active symptoms as listed below. Your child will be sent home from the Center when exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

- a. Diarrhea- stool frequency exceeds 2 stools above normal during the day or if causing accidents
- b. Persistent cough- interrupting or interfering with their participation
- c. Fever- 100.4 degrees or higher (must be fever free WITHOUT medication for 24 hours before returning)
- d. Vomiting- more than twice in 24 hours (child must have gone 24 hours since last time they vomited)
- e. Unexplained rash
- f. Chronic earache- this does not include ear infection currently under treatment
- g. Scabies, head lice, and other insect infestation- child must be knit-free before returning
- h. Strep Throat (24 hours on medication before returning)
- i. Pinkeye/conjunctivitis (24 hours on medication before returning)
- j. Any other contagious diseases (TB, impetigo, chicken pox, whooping cough, mumps, hepatitis A, measles, rubella, shingles, herpetic gingivostomatitis, etc.) unless otherwise directed by a doctor
- k. Any general symptoms that keep them from participating in regular activities

It is not our intent to allow children who are truly sick to stay at the Center, but it is also not our intent to exclude children who are only mildly ill. We rely on parents to make good decisions regarding your child's health, so please do not send your child to the Center if they are sick. The staff will assess and monitor the health of all children in the Center and will need to decide if a child is too ill to attend. Please provide teachers with accurate information about your child's health so they can make the best decision for the welfare of your child, as well as the other children in the Center.

We understand it can often be difficult to determine the seriousness of the situation when a child is not feeling well. We tend to look for signs of a child getting better verses feeling worse. We encourage you to consult with your physician, as well as our staff, to help you determine if your child is too sick to attend.

Every situation is different, but we use three criteria to determine if a child needs to be excluded:

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in our daily routine and activities.
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than the childcare staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
3. A fever is accompanied by any of the symptoms or conditions previously listed.

If a child becomes ill while at the Center, the parent(s) will be notified immediately by phone. It is imperative for all parents to provide us with accurate contact and scheduling information, so we can access you during the day. If a parent cannot be reached, we will contact someone on your emergency list. If we determine your child is too ill to stay, parents are expected to pick up their child within one hour, or sooner for a child with a high fever.

We will sometimes notify you of a low-grade temperature or incident of vomiting or diarrhea with a courtesy phone call or e-mail. In this case, your child will be allowed to remain at the Center- so long as they do not exhibit signs of worsening symptoms.

Please notify the Center if your child has a communicable illness such as chicken pox, pink eye, strep throat, ringworm, etc., so that we can post a note informing others of their exposure to the illness. As always, your child will never be named by name.

If your child has been placed on antibiotics, they must be on medication for 24 hours before they are considered to be non-contagious. It is safe for your child to return to school after he/she has been on antibiotics for 24 hours. They must be fever and Tylenol free.

### **Injuries and Emergencies**

Our teachers work hard to shadow the children in their care to prevent injury, but occasionally children may get a bump or bruise. In these cases, the child's injury will be evaluated by the teacher and appropriate first aid will be administered. Often the remedy consists of washing the area with soap and water, applying an ice pack or bandage, and some TLC. In cases where additional first aid is required, you will receive a call to let you know about the situation. Any accident or injury will be documented, and a copy of the report will be signed by the Director, and will also need to be signed by the adult picking up the child. A copy of the report will be sent home with the child and the original will remain in the child's file.

### **Preferred Hospital Form**

In the case of a severe injury (anything requiring first aid beyond the capabilities of the Center), emergency personnel will be called first. Parents will be called next. If parents cannot be reached, calls will be made to the individuals listed on your Emergency Information card. A staff person who is familiar with your child will accompany your child to the hospital and wait until you or an emergency contact person arrives.

## **Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting**

In everything we do the care and welfare of the children in our Center is our primary concern. From time to time information will be sent home with children in an effort to educate the public in the prevention and detection of child abuse. This information is available upon request at any time.

The staff of Grace Early Learning Center is required, by law, to immediately notify the local children's protection agency if there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

## **Discipline and Challenging Behaviors**

Our staff uses only constructive and positive techniques when disciplining. These include redirection, anticipation, modeling, natural consequences, elimination of potential problems and teaching children to resolve conflicts on their own in an appropriate way. It is our staff's responsibility to teach children the proper behavior and not punish the child for undesirable behavior. Removal from the group will be used in severe situations (hurting someone, persistent disruptiveness) or when the child needs to gain control and observe the positive interactions of others. If a child displays an unprovoked act of aggression (biting, hitting, kicking, etc.) toward another child or staff member, s/he must be picked up within 30 minutes of our phone call.

If a child demonstrates consistent aggressive behavior or discipline problems there will be documented observations done by the teachers and all of our procedures will be followed. When we feel we have exhausted all of our abilities to control the behavior, we will require a parent teacher conference to discuss the situation and/or behavior. At that time there will be a follow-up meeting set for two weeks later to discuss any progress, alternatives, etc. If behavior has not improved or has gotten worse, and if the teacher and director feel it is necessary, a professional referral will be recommended. This will be done only after we have exhausted all our abilities and it is in the best interest of the child to receive outside help. If a referral is made, the family will be given two weeks to seek professional help. If professional help is not sought during that time, alternative childcare arrangements must be made. If professional help is sought and no improvement in the child's behavior is observed, then alternative childcare arrangements must be made.

No child will be punished by corporal punishment or verbal abuse. Children may not be yelled at, spanked, or threatened to be spanked while at the Center.

The following behaviors are prohibited at the Center:

- Corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching or other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest, or use of the bathroom
- Abusive or profane language
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment

- Any form of emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child

It is also our policy to handle discipline situations that may arise with the children while they are at the Center, according to our stated philosophy. If a parent has concerns regarding another child's behavior, we ask that you discuss your concern with the appropriate teacher. Under NO circumstances should parents approach a child or his/her parents in an effort to deal with the situation themselves. Such actions are considered inappropriate and detrimental to the Center as a whole. Please speak with the classroom teacher or Director if any such issue should arise.

### **Biting Policy**

It is not out of the ordinary for young children between the ages of 10 and 30 months of age to go through a period of biting. Biting occurs for a variety of reasons. Some of the most common reasons young children bite are due to: teething, a lack of ability to communicate, frustration, being overly tired or overly hungry, and/or need for more attention. It is highly likely that all children between these age ranges will either bite or be bitten at some point (often more than once) while in a child care setting.

On the other hand, it is required by the Department of Social Services Child Care Licensing Division that GELC maintain a safe and healthy environment for ALL children in care.

Our teachers and administrators work closely and quickly to extinguish the undesirable behavior by following these guidelines for children who have been identified as having a biting habit:

- If your child bites 2 times (if the skin on the other person is not broken) on any day, then your child will be sent home for the remainder of that day.
- If at any time skin is broken due to a bite, then the child will be asked to go home immediately.
- If a child has been required to leave the facility for the above-mentioned reason twice within a five-day period, a parent/teacher/director conference will be held. During this conference, a formal plan of action will be developed.
- After the parent/teacher/director conference, if improvement is not seen, the parent will be required to temporarily withdraw the child from the Center.
- After the temporarily withdrawn child returns, if improvement is not seen, the child will be required to disenroll from our Center.

This is not something that GELC likes to do and please know that this would be a last resort.

Some things that GELC will do to minimize biting are:

- Shadowing the biter so that s/he is always near the providers or within arm's reach.
- Providing lots of language such as "biting hurts" and "we use our teeth for food"
- Provide either a teething ring, soft toy, etc. for those who need something to chew on.

- Provide supportive information to parents who are worried about their child biting and offer suggestions of how to stop the biting habit.

## **Communication**

We value our relationship and communication with parents, as we serve as partners in the care of your children. We encourage you to let us know anything that might help us work with your child- a move, developmental or medical needs, the birth of a baby, divorce or separation, death in the family, a new pet, etc. All are examples of information that can be helpful to us. Teachers will share information with you about your child's day. Although we want you to be aware of certain situations and behaviors your child may be exhibiting at the Center, we don't expect you to "fix" it or punish your child. We will handle the situations that arise, but want parents to be aware of what we are doing in the classroom as it pertains to your child.

A monthly newsletter in your child's classroom is distributed to provide information concerning Center curriculum, policies, announcements, and general information about young children. We also try to inform you of church events. Please read these newsletters so you can remain informed about Center policies and procedures.

Confidentiality of information is a very important aspect of our program. Sometimes we encounter situations such as a parent who expresses a concern about another child's behavior. This typically happens during parent conferences. Although we understand your concern for the welfare of the your child, we cannot discuss detailed information about other children and families with you. Please keep in mind that children develop at very different rates and it is not realistic to expect all children to 'behave' that way you expect them to. What is disturbing to one parents may not be as upsetting to another. As professional staff, we have to decide what behavior is unacceptable and beyond what is considered typical for that age. Please know that we are always working with individual children and families, but we cannot disclose this information with you. Parents need to be assured that we don't discuss their child's development or progress with others, so this applies to your child, as well.

Only staff who have a 'need to know' will receive information that is deemed confidential. It is very rare that we share family information with student workers or volunteers unless safety is an issue. Only professional, full-time administrative and teaching staff will have access to your child's file. Children's assessment records are kept in each child's file which is stored in a locked cabinet in the Director's office. Only teachers within your child's classroom will review your child's assessment information.

## **Cubbies**

Every child has a folder and cubby located in their classroom. Please check these areas daily for artwork, projects, Center information, teacher communications, soiled clothing, etc. Please

remember that folder pockets are for staff use only. If a parent wishes to distribute information or invitations, they must first receive permission from the Director.

### **Parent Conferences**

Parents are invited to speak with classroom teachers or the Director at any time concerning Center matters or your child's development. It is best to talk directly to your child's teacher if you have concerns regarding your child or your child's classroom. If you have concerns about a staff member, Center policy, or procedure, please speak to the Director.

We strongly encourage all parents to sign up for a conference at the designated time during fall and spring conferences. A parent conference **MUST** be held whenever a parent, teacher, or Director feels it is necessary. Failure to meet with the Center staff regarding your child's well-being could be grounds for dismissal.

### **Child Assessments**

Your child's teacher will complete a Brigance Early Childhood Screening on your child within 90 days of enrollment. The Brigance Early Childhood screens skills that are critical predictors of school success, including physical development, language, academic/cognitive, self-help, and social-emotional skills.

Brigance Early Childhood Screenings are conducted three times a year, and progress reports are sent home to parents after each screening.

### **Parent Concerns**

As a childcare center we are a community of children, parents, and staff all interacting and sharing our lives together. In a community, people work closely together and hopefully interactions are positive, helpful, kind, and understanding. Yet it is to be expected that from time to time, people will experience some conflict, concerns, and difficulties.

We recognize that parenting is one of the most difficult, intense, and rewarding experiences in your life. We want you to share your thoughts, hopes, and dreams for your child. You want what is best for your child, and we know it is your job to advocate and protect your child.

As a staff, it is our goal to offer your family the best child care services possible. In our to meet our goal, we need your input, your suggestions, your questions, and your concerns.

When you have a concern please remember:

- Teachers want the parents to feel very satisfied with the care their child is receiving.
- You should talk to the teachers directly whenever possible. If you feel comfortable, ask your child's teacher first about any concern regarding your child or their classroom.



Teachers prefer that you talk to them directly, but they do understand if you would prefer to talk with the Director.

- Please realize that if you have a concern with a teacher, the Director will need to investigate and talk with the teacher directly about your concern and deal with the issue in a straightforward manner so that the teacher can improve her performance and/or correct any mistakes.
- Be assured that teachers do not hold a grudge against your child after you have expressed a concern. We would not hire anyone at our Center who would react in such an inappropriate manner. Actually, after expressing your concern, your child's teacher will be more conscientious about your issue and try to improve.
- Sometimes, we cannot make changes you may request due to other restrictions. However, we ALWAYS want to hear your suggestions. We promise to consider them seriously and respond to you in a timely manner.

### **Withdrawal**

If you withdraw your child from Grace Early Learning Center or decide to decrease your child's schedule, a two-week notice is required. You will be charged childcare fees for the two weeks of care whether or not your child is in attendance.

### **Birthdays and Special Occasions**

Parents are welcome to bring a special snack for the child to celebrate his/her birthday. We ask that you keep the snack nutritious, such as fruit, fruit popsicles, muffins, etc. 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 or we, regretfully, will have to turn it away.

If you choose to bring in cupcakes, we ask that they have white icing.

Please ask your child's teacher, in advance, for the number of children who will be in attendance on the day you wish to bring a snack. You are also 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 keep in mind that although we are happy to share in the excitement of your child's birthday by sharing a special snack and singing to your child, this is not an appropriate setting for a party. In fairness to all, we want every child to have a similar birthday experience in the classroom, so we ask that celebrations be kept simple. Please do not bring decorative cups, napkins, plates, or goody bags. If you wish to have a birthday party for your child, plan to do this somewhere separate from the Center or you may contact the Church to see if the facility is available for a party during hours/days when the Center is closed. If you intend to invite children from the Center, we can provide you with names and addresses (given parent permission). You

may also distribute your birthday invitations through the children's take home folders with the Director's permission.

Although we appreciate a parent's kind gesture to bring in treats every now and then, we ask you refrain from doing this for several reasons. According to state and federal regulations, we are responsible for the food provided to the children while they are at the Center. It's also important to be respectful of the wishes of other parents who do not want their child receiving 'treats' on a regular basis, or whose child may have a food allergy that exclude him/her from being able to enjoy treats. We, therefore, limit special treats or snacks to your child's birthday or last day at the Center.

### **Toilet Training**

Toilet training takes place in our two-year old rooms. Once your child transitions to one of these rooms, they will start making scheduled trips to the toilet with a teacher and also be observed for cues and asked if they need to use the toilet. At no time will a child be forced to use the toilet if they refuse. Nor will a child be kept from using the toilet if they ask to go. Toilet training continues until children are three, at which point the vast majority of children will have completed this important milestone. For those children who may continue to need toilet training, our staff will work with the children until they are independent in the bathroom.

We recognize that some parents may want to start toilet training before the second birthday and some may believe that the second birthday is too soon. We hope that you will support your child's teacher in their efforts and continue the toilet training practices at home. We want to work with you as a partnership for the well-being of your child. Toilet training is an exciting and important milestone in your young child's life and, just like you, we want your child to be successful.

### **Tuition Assistance Programs**

Parents needing tuition assistance should speak with the Director to get contact information for the area coordinator of the Child Care Assistance Program. S/he will determine your eligibility based on family size, work schedule, and income. Funding is typically available for low-income families and single parents.

Those who are receiving a state subsidy must adhere to all rules established by the Center and the Kentucky Department of Human Services. Parents need to make sure paper work is completed in a timely manner and deadlines cannot be missed. If we provide any childcare that was not approved by the subsidy program, the parent(s) will be responsible for paying the full cost of care. Anyone with poor attendance will be dropped from the subsidy program because this negatively affects our reimbursement. You must also make your subsidy caseworker aware of any changes in your class or work schedule, as this will affect your eligibility for childcare.

and payments. Again, parents are responsible to cover the use of any hours that are approved by the state.

Military tuition assistance is also available for those serving in the U.S. Army or U.S. Army National Guard. Please see the Director for more information.

### **What we need from parents:**

- Read the bulletin boards, notices and newsletters that are sent home. Important information is shared with you on a regular basis.
- Give your child time to adjust to childcare before leaving them here. Parents can help set a positive tone for the rest of the day by taking a few minutes in the morning to greet the teachers and help involve your child in an activity.
- Value staff members and show them common courtesy. Caregivers are more than just babysitters. We employ teachers who have training and education in child development. Show respect for their position as an important part of your child's development.
- Focus on your child when you pick him/her up. Take time to greet staff and your child and see if there is anything the teacher wishes to communicate before you leave.
- Pay your childcare fees on time. We are providing a valuable service and deserve prompt payment.
- Be respectful and support Center policies. It is a big job for our staff to enforce all policies at all times. We need your help to uphold those policies so our time can be spent with the children instead of reviewing policies with family members.
- Make sure your children follow Center rules. Please don't allow them to run away from you, race you in the hallways, climb on furniture, etc. Your child's safety and well-being is our primary concern.
- Make sure your child is wearing appropriate clothing. Children will get dirty in childcare. It is not realistic to send them in their best clothing and expect teachers to keep them clean. Make sure clothing is easy to remove (i.e. if your child is in the process of toilet training do not send them in overalls). All children must wear shoes with back support. No flip-flops or open back sandals will be permitted.
- Keep a sick child home. The state mandates health regulations to prevent the spread of infectious illnesses. Although it may seem inconvenient at times, these rules also keep your child from being infected by others as well. It is up to you to have a back-up plan for a child who cannot attend.
- Address concerns in a respectful way and to the appropriate person. Please do not speak negatively about staff members to others and seek to resolve your concern with the appropriate staff member.

- Try to minimize your child's time in childcare. We are here to provide a service to you and your child when you need us. However, most children have had a full day after 8-9 hours and need to re-fuel emotionally by spending time with their family. As a Christian organization, we encourage you to maximize the time you spend with your child.
- Communicate with teachers about what's going on at home.
- Make sure children get a good night's rest so they are ready for their busy day.
- Pick children up before the Center closes at 6:00P.M. Our staff needs to get home to their families, too.
- Most importantly, pray for our Center, our children, and our staff. We look to God every day as our strength and ask that you remember us and our facility in your daily prayers.



## Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the Grace Early Learning Center Parent Handbook that is located at [www.graceearlylearningcenter.com](http://www.graceearlylearningcenter.com). I understand that the contents of this handbook give me reasonable expectation of how the Center is operated and whom I should speak with if I have any questions about the Center policies and procedures.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_