



Parent Handbook

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St. Paul's Early Learning Center

MISSION STATEMENT

Our purpose is to serve the families of our church and community who desire a Christ-Centered early learning experience for their children. We will work in partnership with families who have the primary and most critical role in nurturing their children. St. Paul's Early Learning Center (SP-ELC) provides a quality, safe, caring, Christian environment where each child can develop Spiritually, Socially, Emotionally, Physically, and Cognitively.

SP-ELC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors consists of the Director, Operations Director and five non staff members. They meet quarterly to discuss financial, communications, human resources and other subjects pertaining to the efficient and successful operation of the SP-ELC.

AGES, DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

SP-ELC is licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services of Illinois. Inspections occur regularly to ensure that licensing standards are met. The center enrolls children 6 weeks old through age 12. The center is licensed for 151 children. Children will be placed in rooms according to similar age groups.

Our center is open Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. all year round.

Day Care Classrooms

- The **infant** room is for babies ages 6 weeks to 12-14 months.
- The **infant/toddler** room is for children 12/14 to 24 months.
- The **two-year-old** room is for children who are 24 to 36 months. Children do not have to be potty trained to be in this room.
- To move to the **three-year-old** room, a child must be at least 3 years old and be *potty trained*.
- Children must be **four** to be in the fours room.

When the time comes for a child to transition into a new room the parent, teacher, and Director will discuss the child's development and emotional maturity. All decisions will be made in the child's best interest.

School-age Program

This program is for children enrolled in elementary school. Children can attend the school-age classes until they *complete* their 12th year, or enter middle school, whichever comes first. Our center offers before and after school care, care for days out of school, and summer care.

PERSONNEL

Having a team of highly qualified Christian professionals, dedicated to the teaching and nurturing of young children is of the highest priority for SP-ELC. Our staff meet all requirements as stated by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services standards for Day Care Centers. Staff have completed the required medical examination and have the childcare credentials required for their position. They have CPR and First Aid certifications and receive yearly continuing education training. Staffing levels are set according to program enrollment levels.

CURRICULUM

We engage our children in programming and curriculum that cover the following areas of development: gross and fine motor skills, self help skills, spiritual growth, language and cognitive development. Teachers post a weekly lesson plan in their classroom and share a information about upcoming events and other notices on the ELC facebook page.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

1. A pre-enrollment conference and classroom visit is required before admittance to determine that SP-ELC is the best environment for the child.
2. A \$50 per family non-refundable registration fee is required to reserve their spot. Current tuition rates are available from the Director.
3. Enrollment is on a first come first served basis for all children who meet the age requirements.
4. Upon enrollment each parent will receive a parent handbook.
5. Each child must have a copy of their birth certificate, completed a physical exam, a record of immunization including a Hepatitis B, a TB test, varicella (chicken pox) vaccine or proof of having had chicken pox, and a lead screening. The physical must be dated within the six months prior to the date of admittance unless transferring from another licensed center when it must be dated within the last 2 years.
6. All necessary forms must be accurately completed, signed, and returned to the SP-ELC office prior to admittance. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure all changes or updates to information are communicated to the SP-ELC office.
7. If a court order is in place dealing with custody of the child, a copy of the full ruling must be on file at the Center. If no permanent or temporary order in place with respect to child custody, then both parents have equal rights.
8. SP-ELC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.
9. No child will be dismissed from the center unless or until every effort has been made to help the child to conform with the rules through a cooperative effort on the part of the staff, parents, and Director.

WAIT LIST

When Classes are full, a wait list will be established according to the date that the registrations are received. The Director will contact the parents on the wait list when a place opens up. Applications must be received within a week along with any applicable registration fees, otherwise the place will be offered to another person on the wait list.

FEES

1. Weekly tuition must be received on the first day of attendance. Tuition is billed on Monday and must be paid by end of day on Friday, a \$15 late fee will be charged for payments received after this deadline.
2. No child shall attend the center for more than 10 hours daily, unless there is a serious emergency that has been reported to the center office. If 2 late situations, or more than 10 hours daily attendance, occur in any given 30-day period, could result in termination of enrollment.
3. If a child is left at the center after 5:00 p.m., a late fee of \$15 for every 5 minutes will be charged. The Director or teacher will try to contact a parent or specified emergency contact, if no one can be located then the Decatur police department will be contacted after 45 minutes.
4. A \$35 fee will be charged for every payment returned by the bank for non-sufficient funds and must be replaced by cash.
5. Full tuition will be charged for the following legal holidays:

New Years Day	Good Friday
Memorial Day	Fourth of July
Labor Day	Thanksgiving Day and day after
Christmas Eve	Christmas Day (no tuition)

The Center will be closed on these dates. If the holiday falls on **Saturday**, we will be closed on **Friday**. If the holiday falls on **Sunday**, we will be closed on **Monday** unless otherwise notified.

6. Families are allowed five vacation days AFTER every six months of consecutive attendance. These must be taken in the same calendar week and children are not expected to attend. Vacation days cannot accumulate past one year.
7. First Child in a family will pay full tuition, second and third child receive a 10% discount and additional children will pay full tuition.
8. If your child participates in a field trip, a fee may be charged to cover costs.
9. A financial statement will be given out at the end of each month upon request.
10. If your account becomes past due, you may forfeit your child's position at the center. Please contact the Director as soon as possible if you have a problem with payment.
11. When a child is withdrawn from the center, the center must be given one week's written notice. Any tuition balances must be paid in full within 2 weeks after the withdrawal date, otherwise the account will be turned over to a collection agency. The parent will then be responsible for all applicable fees and court costs.
12. All families must enroll in automatic payments through Tuition Express. You may use a checking or savings account, or credit/debit card to set up your payment. Families must be registered for automatic payments by 2 weeks after their child's start date.
13. If the center is closed for inclement weather, announcements will be made on WSOY radio and WAND-TV stations as SP-ELC. Fees will not be charged for that day but are charged on days the center closes early due to inclement weather.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Upon arrival, the parent must sign their child in on the computer at the designated check-in area, accompany the child to his/her classroom and make sure an adult worker acknowledges their arrival. New parents/guardians will be shown how to check in their child.

All children must be picked up by an authorized adult as indicated on the child's enrollment and emergency forms. Persons will be asked to provide a photo ID, so staff can verify that they are an authorized person. Parents must notify the office when they want to add or delete authorized persons. The welfare of the children is always our primary concern; therefore, no unauthorized persons will be allowed to take the child.

On the first day, plan to arrive a little earlier than usual to allow time for separation. Please help your child get involved in an activity, show where belongings will be kept, and reassure your child that you will return. You are welcome to call at any time to see how your child is adjusting.

Where possible drop off your child by 9:00 am daily. Late arrival times make it difficult for your child to adjust and can disrupt the routine of the classroom.

NEEDS

Clothing and Dress

A change of clothing for each child is required, items should be marked with your child's name and should be appropriate for the season, including shirt, pants, socks, and underwear.

Children should wear comfortable clothing for inside/outside play year-round along with sturdy, closed-toed play shoes that fasten securely on their feet. Children will play outdoors when the "feels like" temperature is between 25 degrees and 90 degrees. Send labeled hats, gloves, etc. when the temperature calls for it.

Nap Time

Please send a blanket and travel size pillow (if desired) for naptime. A soft animal or doll may also be brought to help the child feel secure. Please mark all items with your child's name. These items will be sent home at the end of each week to be laundered. The center is responsible for weekly sanitizing of cots and laundering of sheets.

Toys

Do not send toys or electronic items from home.

We cannot be responsible for any unmarked items.

DISCIPLINE

Children are expected to show respect and kindness to those in authority and other children. A child must behave in a manner that does not disrupt the learning process or threaten their safety or the safety of others. The center uses "time out" method of discipline. Before "time out" is used, the incident will be discussed with the child and the child will be redirected to another activity. If "time out" is needed, the child will be placed in time-out for an appropriate length of time (one minute per year of age). Parents will be consulted if discipline problems persist.

No child will be dismissed from the center unless or until every effort has been made to help the child conform with the rules through a cooperative effort on the part of the staff, Director, and parents.

CLASSROOM RULES

Staff ask you to reinforce these classroom rules in your home and review them when disciplinary issues arise.

- Use quiet voices
- Use walking feet
- Share with others
- Put toys away
- Be gentle with friends
- Use listening ears
- Pray before breakfast, snack or lunch
- Clean up your own space
- Use words instead of your hands
- Listen to the teacher

FOOD PROGRAM

Breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks are provided for all students which are prepared in accordance with USDA food program regulations. Snacks and meals will be served following a regular time schedule which will be posted in your child's room. Monthly menus will be posted outside of classrooms. Each week the menu will be posted in the newsletter.

- **Breakfast:** 8:00-8:45 a.m. Times vary based on the ages of children.
- **Lunch:** 11:00-11:45 a.m. Times vary based on the ages of children.
- **PM Snack:** 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Lunch is provided by Aramark and breakfast and snack are provided through our kitchen. Our kitchen staff is trained in food sanitation. Our food program is subsidized; families are required to fill out paperwork from time to time for record keeping.

Outside food is only permitted for special occasions, religious reasons, or if the child has a medical condition. The proper form must be completed to authorize any departure from the menu.

- **Birthdays: Snacks** purchased from a store may be brought for birthdays. Please notify your child's teacher if you would like to bring in a snack.
- **Parties:** Our classes have parties for holidays. If bringing in food items, please bring store bought items.

HAND WASHING

Children's hands will be washed routinely and frequently with soap and water at the following times:

1. Upon arrival
2. Before and after each meal
3. During bathroom breaks
4. After wiping or blowing nose
5. After outdoor play time
6. At any other time the staff feels it is needed

Staff's hands will be washed routinely and frequently with soap and water, which include the following times:

1. Upon arrival
2. After using the bathroom or helping a child use the bathroom
3. After changing a diaper (gloves are worn during diaper changes)
4. After wiping or blowing their noses or helping a child to wipe or blow their nose.
5. After handling items soiled with body fluids or wastes (gloves will also be worn)
6. After handling or caring for a sick child (gloves will be worn)
7. Before or after eating or drinking
8. Before preparing, handling, or serving food (gloves will be worn)
9. Before dispensing any medication
10. Before and after administering first aid (gloves will be worn)

FIELD TRIPS

Field Trips are periodically planned for children in classes of three-year-old up to school-aged. A permission slip is required for each field trip and may have an additional fee. Occasionally parent help will be needed with field trips. The center provides 14-passenger buses for transportation on field trips.

ILLNESSES

Children need not be excluded for a minor illness unless any of the following exists, in which case exclusion from the center is mandated:

1. Illness which prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.
2. Illness which calls for greater care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
3. Fever over 100.4 degrees (oral/ear); 99.4 degrees (underarm) in the past 48 hours.
4. Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing or other signs of possible severe illness.
5. Diarrhea (more than two incidences).
6. Vomiting two or more times in the previous 24 hours unless the vomiting is determined to be due to a non-communicable condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
7. Mouth sores associated with the child's inability to control his or her saliva, until the child's physician or the local health department states that the child is noninfectious.
8. Purulent conjunctivitis (Pink Eye), until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.

9. Rash with fever of 100.4 degrees or behavior change, unless a physician has determined the illness to be non-communicable.
10. Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
11. Strep throat (streptococcal pharyngitis), until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated and until the child has been without fever for 24 hours.
12. Head lice, until the morning after the first treatment.
13. Scabies, until the morning after the first treatment.
14. Chicken pox (varicella), until at least six days after onset of rash.
15. Whooping Cough (pertussis), until five days of antibiotic treatment have been completed.
16. Mumps, until nine days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
17. Measles, until four days after disappearance of the rash; or
18. Symptoms which may be indicative of one of the serious, communicable diseases identified in the Illinois Department of Public Health Control of Communicable Diseases Code (77 ILL. Adm. Code 690).
19. COVID-19 - If you test positive, you need to be out of school/work for 5 days. May return on day six, if you have been symptom free for 24 hours (without medication). Fever, diarrhea, vomiting!

If your child is absent for any reason, please notify the center office as early as possible. The child may not be brought to the center until they are fever free **without medication** and free of other symptoms for 24-72 hours. If the child becomes ill or injured during the day, the parents will be notified and expected to pick up the child immediately. If parents cannot be reached, the emergency contact numbers will be called in order of preference. Scratches and scrapes which are inevitable when children play, will be treated by washing with water, band aid, and tender loving care. An accident report will be completed by the teacher, signed by the parent, and kept on file in the center office.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

SP-ELC provides an equal opportunity for children who have been diagnosed with special needs to be accepted into the Center as long as it is determined that this is in the best interest of the child.. The staff will make accommodations to the best of our ability in order that the child may fully participate in classroom activities and interact with classmates. For children who have nutritional issues, we will work within the doctor's written recommendations insofar as they do not conflict with the regulations of DCFS and the food program (which does allow variations in menu for medical necessity).

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

Bright Start has been contacted about screening children each fall; as funding and scheduling allow, they are able to provide screening for each child aged 6 weeks to 5 years of age for whom we have a signed consent form.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

In the event of a medical emergency, 911 will be called and an ambulance will be dispatched to the center. The parents will be notified and asked to meet the staff member, who will stay with the child, until the parent arrives at the hospital.

MEDICATIONS

A doctor's note is required for any prescription medication, over-the-counter medication, and diaper ointment to be given by center staff. Medical consent forms must be filled out for any medication given out at the center. Medical consent forms are available from your child's teacher or the office. All medicine needs to be labeled with the type of medication, your child's name, and dosage. For safety reasons, all medications will be kept in the center office.

SAFETY

Children are not to be left unattended in the hallways, parking lots, or in vehicles outside.
The center cannot be responsible for children unless they are left in the staff's direct care.

SP-ELC is a smoke free facility. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the premises.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

In case of an emergency that would require evacuation, the children would be moved to New Beginnings Church of God, which is located at 2606 Route 121 NW, Decatur, IL 62526. Center staff will remain with and care for the children at all times during an event and will bring necessary medications, supplies, contact and emergency records.

Staff and other adults in the center are trained in evacuation procedures for tornadoes, fire, lock downs, and other emergencies during the year and these policies are reviewed regularly.

INSURANCE

SPL-ELC liability insurance coverage extends to all persons on the property and premises owned by St. Paul's Lutheran Church. This includes the center, playground, and parking lot. It covers all children and staff at the Center and at field trip locations.

CONFERENCES

SPL-ELC is committed to supporting parents in their role of nurturing their children. We feel communication is essential between teachers and parents. Parents may request a conference with the Director or teacher if a situation arises that needs to be addressed. Teachers may schedule a conference throughout the year to discuss your child's progress or individual situation. Periodic progress reports may be sent home, these serve as an observation of your child's skill and not as an evaluation. We value hearing about your concerns or questions.

We offer opportunities for you to meet with your child's teacher formally twice a year. These times will be available in the evenings on a sign-up basis. If you are unable to meet during the designated time, you are welcome to contact your child's teacher to set up an alternative time.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We encourage parent participation at our center. Some opportunities include:

1. Special Events: Parents and family members will be invited to special programs at various times throughout the year.
2. Field Trips: On occasion, parents may be invited to accompany a class on a field trip. Parents will be notified, and a permission slip must be signed. There may be an extra charge for field trips. We do not have swimming as part of our program.
3. Lunch: Parents are welcome to eat lunch with their child.
4. No outside lunches may be brought to the center unless a note is provided by the child's physician noting specific dietary needs.
5. Classroom Visits: We welcome parents to drop in at our center. Please be sensitive to your child's separation anxiety when considering the time of day you visit. Visits in connection with drop off and pick up times may be less stressful on your child.
6. Food Donations for Parties: Parents may be asked to donate treats for classroom parties throughout the year. Teachers post sign up sheets for needed items prior to the parties. For safety reasons, all donated food items must be purchased from a store and be in the original container.
7. Facebook: St. Paul's ELC has a closed Facebook group, only accessible by current parents and staff, and upon request only. It is updated regularly with activity and event information. Periodically, we will post pictures of the children that are taken in the classroom. Notify the office staff in writing if you do not want photos of your child posted.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

All personal information pertaining to enrolled children and their families is confidential. The one exception is evidence of child abuse or neglect, which by law, we are required to report.

Release of any personal information will be considered only if requested in writing and then approved by written consent of the child's parent.



SIGNATURE PAGE

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received and read the January 2025 updated copy of the St. Paul's Early Learning Center Parent Handbook and agree to abide by all policies and requirements of the center.

Child's Name

Parent/Guardian Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date