

# Family Handbook



Revised 6/25

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## **Our Mission**

The mission of Cathedral Early Learning Center is to focus on the Catholic formation of students as young disciples of Jesus Christ. It is our mission to prepare these early learners for higher education by challenging their developing minds and nurturing their spirit while guiding them with faith.

## **Our Philosophy**

Cathedral Early Learning Center strives to provide quality childcare for children. We believe in providing programs that truly enhance the spiritual, emotional, social, physical, and intellectual growth of young children. We can do this through the efforts of our staff who are dedicated to upholding our high standards and who, most importantly, love children.

Cathedral Early Learning Center is operated as a ministry of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

**Most REV. Erik Pohlmeier**  
Eleventh Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine

**Deacon Scott J. Conway**  
Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of St. Augustine

**Rhonda Rose**  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of St. Augustine

**Audra R. Smith**  
Director of Early Learning

**Jill Valley**  
Director of Cathedral Early Learning Center

**Peggy Woods**  
Business Manager of Cathedral Early Learning Center

## *A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR*

We are delighted to welcome you to our learning center. You and your family are encouraged to visit the center prior to the first day of enrollment to give your child an opportunity to meet teachers, become better acquainted with the learning environment, and ensure a smooth transition.

This handbook describes our program, policies, and the myriad of practical details that go into making each school day a success. Please review it and sign and return the last page. You are welcome to keep this handbook for reference since it will answer many of your questions.

On behalf of our staff, thanks again for allowing us to become a part of your family and entrusting us with your child's care and education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Valley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill Valley  
Director

## Section 1- Parent and Guardians' Rights and Responsibilities

We believe that parents have rights and that their concerns are important.

- Parents have the right to know that their child will be physically and emotionally safe at school.
- All children will be treated fairly regardless of race, creed, national origin, economic status, gender, or age.
- In addition, you will be treated with courtesy by members of the staff.
- Parents have the right to participate in two parent-teacher conferences a year to discuss their child's school progress and welfare.
- All parents and guardians have a right to visit the school and classroom.
- Parents are welcome to approach staff members with concerns.
- Parents have the right to information regarding the academic program and the right to inspect their child's record and respond to any statement.
- Parents have the right to be informed of and to appeal school policies.

*Parents responsibilities:*

- Be involved in your child's education and learning.
- Set goals with the teachers and share in decisions about your child's care.
- Share information about the child and home that may affect behavior.
- Discuss problems and concerns with the teachers.
- Follow the child care program's policies and reread the contract and parent manual regularly.
- Keep your child home when sick.
- Read to your child and spend time talking and playing together.

## Section 2- Classroom Practices, Curriculum, and Policies

**Dress Code:** We request that children arrive at the center in comfortable, easy-to-laundry clothing. While we make every effort to protect clothes, children can experience accidental spills during planned activities.

- In case of accidents, we request every child keep two changes of clothes at the center. Label each item with the child's first and last name and place the items in a sealed bag.
- For safety reasons, we do not allow open-toe shoes, flip flops, or sandals with no back either in the classroom or during outdoor activities.
- To ensure the safety of all children and staff, we require that children's nails be kept trimmed and clean to prevent accidental scratches and injuries.

**Labeling Children's Personal Items:** Parents and guardians are asked to label their child's personal items with their child's first and last name. This includes sheets, clothes, and cups.

**Food:** *Due to known and unknown nut allergies of our students, CELC is a nut-free school. For the safety of the children, foods with nuts will not be permitted in our classrooms. Please be sure to check all the ingredients in your child's lunch, as well as snacks, to ensure you comply with this new policy.*

**Daily Food and Snacks:** Each child's family supplies nutritious snacks and lunches for their child each day. Place snacks in a Ziploc bag labeled "am snack" and "pm snack" with your child's first and last name. If you provide juice for snack time, please label the containers "am" and "pm" with your child's first and last names. We will gather together, say grace, and eat our midday meal together. Ensure your child has a nutritious breakfast prior to drop off, include foods from each food group in lunches, and exclude food that needs to be heated, glass containers, soda, and candy.

According to mandatory guidelines from the Department of Children & Families, your child's lunch must include at least one appropriate portion from the different food groups (meat or protein, fruit or vegetable, dairy, and grain). Refer to [www.choosemyplate.gov/life-stages](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/life-stages) for information regarding nutritional lunches, and be sure to include foods from each of the fruit, vegetable, proteins, grains, and dairy food groups. These foods should be ready to eat (i.e., oranges peeled, whole foods pre-cut). Lunch will be a special part of our day. Lunches should be brought in lunch boxes. The child's first and last name should appear on all items. PLEASE, NO GLASS CONTAINERS, NO SODA, AND NO CANDY. Please feed your child breakfast before bringing him/her to school. We ask that you do not send breakfast with your child in the morning.

We ask that your child does not come to school eating food.

**Special Celebrations:** You will be provided a Food Related Form. There will be occasional celebrations in which food will be available to your child. Please complete and return the form to the center so we are aware if your child should not be allowed to participate, or has any dietary restrictions or food allergies.

Homemade foods are not allowed for special celebrations. All foods brought to the center for special celebrations must be in a store-bought package or container, unopened, with the ingredients listed on the packaging.

**Toys from Home:** Personal toys are not to be brought to school. Periodically, we allow children to bring toys to share, and your child's teacher will inform you about "Show and Tell" days.

**Curriculum:** Teachers implement a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate curriculum and plan specific activities that promote exploration, discovery, and school readiness. Emphasis is placed on foundational literacy skills, language development, scientific and mathematical reasoning, creativity, and collaboration. The curriculum is engaging and based on best-teaching practices. Interactive games, books, art, and music enhance the acquisition of new skills, and Catholic values and prayer are integrated throughout the day.



**Screening and Assessments:** Parental consent forms for screening are distributed on your child's first day of school. Screening is a process to determine whether or not a child has any developmental concerns that may require further evaluation and follow-up. Screenings conducted at the center may include vision, hearing, speech/language, nutrition, dental, and overall development. Parents will be informed in writing of the screening results.

- At home activities may be recommended based on the result.
- If further evaluation or services are needed, parents will be referred to the appropriate agencies or to their personal pediatrician.
- Additional screenings and parent conferences will be utilized to follow up on screenings that resulted in referrals to outside agencies.

### **Screening Procedure:**

- Parental consent forms for screening are distributed on your child's first day of school. Teachers will obtain a copy of the consent form before administering screenings. This copy will be kept in the child's portfolio.
- Parents will be informed in writing of the screening results either through a letter sent home by the center's director or through written documentation of a teacher conference where results were shared.
- In order to prevent the misidentification of children documents within the portfolio will include children's first and last name and date of assessment.
- Summary sheets of all children screened will be given to the director.

Children in need of follow-up will be highlighted on the summary sheets.

The director will review the screening tool for each child identified as in need of follow-up.

- The director will re-score the instrument to ensure accuracy of scoring.
- The director will review the results with the parent and may rescore the instrument based on parental input.

### **Assessment Procedure:**

- Within 45 days of the start of the school year, teaching staff will do an initial assessment for each child using an approved developmental checklist or assessment instrument.
- Based on parent information, screenings, and initial observations, goals will be made for each child.
- The ongoing assessment of each child will be recorded and updated at least twice during an academic year. When outcomes are achieved, new goals will be established.
- Assessment results will be shared with parents during Parent-Teacher Conferences at least twice during the school year. Optional letters with results may also be shared.
- Children at every age level will be assessed using ongoing child observations and portfolio assessments to develop individualized learning goals.
- Daily, teaching staff conduct teacher-directed small group learning centers that focus on individualized goals.

**Student Portfolios:** Each child has a portfolio that includes a sampling of their progress. Depending on the age of the child, these samples may include literacy and numeracy assessments, artwork, dictation, writing samples, pictures, anecdotal notes, photos, etc. Portfolios for toddlers may also include copies of daily notes, growth charts, and other developmental checklists. Portfolios are shared with parents during scheduled parent conferences. At the time of a child's transition to the next class, the teacher will pass the portfolio to the upcoming teacher. When a child transitions to kindergarten, the teacher sends the portfolio home.

**Take Home Activities:** Although teachers do not assign homework, they may periodically send home suggested activities to enhance learning.

**Teacher Conferences:** All parents and guardians are invited to attend scheduled conferences to review their child's progress and to collaboratively set goals. Conferences are scheduled two times a year for toddlers and preschool children. Other conferences may be scheduled by a parent or teacher as needed.

**Transitioning from Class to Class:** If it becomes necessary during the year to move a child up to the next class, the center will strive to make as smooth a transition as possible. The child will transition slowly over the course of a few days, and parents will be informed.

**Transitioning to Pre-Kindergarten 3 and 4's/VPK:** Students transitioning from our 2-year-old program into our Pre-Kindergarten 3 Program must be 3 years old on or before September 1 of the school calendar year and fully potty trained. Students entering our VPK Program must be 4 years old on or before September 1 of the school calendar year and fully potty trained.

**Transitioning to Kindergarten:** In May or June of each year, the center will provide activities to aid in the smooth transition of preschool children to kindergarten. These activities may include one or more of the following: the distribution of kindergarten registration and transition packets, a graduation ceremony, and a mini-workshop for parents.

## **Section 3- Attendance, Absences, and Pick-up Policy**

### **Arrival:**

- Students must be dropped off no later than 9 a.m.
- Please call in advance if your child will be late due to an appointment (doctor's note required for entrance).
- Those who do not gain entrance for the day due to tardiness will still be responsible for their full regular monthly tuition.
- Families will be met by a staff member at the center's front gate.
- Parents who wish to speak to a teacher are kindly requested to schedule a conference.

- Please leave cell phones in vehicles to give your child full attention in the transition from home to school.
- Do not leave children unattended in car, parking lot, or street.
- Turn off engine while not in vehicle.
- Adhere to school postings.
- Abide by Florida laws regarding car seats.

**Attendance:** The center opens at 6:45 a.m. During the school year, all programs begin at 9:00 a.m. Please have your child at the center by 8:45 a.m. so he or she is signed in and settled for the day by 9:00 a.m.

**Attendance Policy for VPK:** Children must arrive in the VPK classroom no later than 9:00 a.m. and participate in VPK activities until 12:00 p.m. Parents must call the center if a child is going to be late or absent.

- If a child is absent for five consecutive instructional days, she/he will be dismissed from the VPK program.
- Absences and tardiness may be excused under “extraordinary circumstances” if appropriate documentation is provided.

These include:

- Hospitalization of the child.
- Illness of the student, parent, or guardian that requires the ill person to remain at home.
- Death of a member of the student, parent, or guardian’s immediate family. • Court ordered visitation.
- Parent or guardian’s military deployment.

A child may not miss more than 26 days per year for illness. A child may not miss more than 35 days per year regardless of circumstances. Parents must complete and sign an attendance verification form each month. These forms will be distributed on the last instructional day of each month and must be signed and returned to the office the same day.

Children who do not meet attendance requirements will be terminated from our VPK program.

**Vacation:** Children can take one week’s vacation each year after completing one full calendar year. Tuition will be charged at 1/2 the normal rate for that week. Written notice is required at least one week prior to the planned vacation.

**Special Requests:** Special requests must be submitted in writing and may include, but are not limited to, health issues, family situations, alternative pick-up person, early pick-up time, or any other issues the center should be aware of to best meet the needs of a child.

**Absences:** Parents are requested to notify the center if a child will not be in attendance that day and the nature of the absence. This notification assists the center in tracking illnesses and supporting children.

**Illnesses:** Parents are requested to notify the Director if their child has a communicable disease so that parents of children in the classroom/center may be notified. Only information about the communicable disease will be shared, and the center will follow the center's Confidentiality Policy and Procedures. The center conducts a health check on each child upon arrival to the classroom. A child will be sent home if staff deem the child is too ill to attend or is contagious.

**Termination/Withdrawal:** The center reserves the right to terminate childcare services at any time, with or without cause. Childcare services may be terminated for willful destruction of property, if the child poses a threat to the safety and welfare of other children in care, physical or verbal abuse by the parent toward the center's staff, insufficient funds, and refusal to follow center policies.

Two weeks' written notice is required from parents who withdraw their child from the center. Parents are responsible for any fees if proper notification is not provided. Any past due balances are due on the last day of enrollment. Balances remaining after 30 days will be referred to the center's collection agency.

In the event a child is absent for two consecutive weeks, without proper notification to the office, the child will be considered withdrawn from the program and the reserved classroom space will be filled. All tuition and any related charges are due and payable during this two-week period.

To re-enroll, normal registration and supply fees will apply, and the child will be considered for enrollment upon space availability.

**Pick-up Policy:** Pick-up is at the front gate of the center. Parents or authorized adults are responsible for supervision of the child once the child has been signed out of the center and must walk their child to the car. Parents are requested to handle any center business (payment, conferences with director, etc.) prior to checking the child out of the center.

**Late Pick-up Fees:** A late fee of \$10.00 and an additional fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed for children who are not picked up by closing time at 5:30 p.m. (12:00 p.m. for not wrap-around VPK students). Services can be terminated if this continues to be an issue. If a child is not picked up by 6:00 p.m., and every attempt to reach an authorized adult has failed, the center will be forced to contact the sheriff's office to report child abandonment.

**Authorized Pick-up/Emergency Pick-up:** Only authorized people listed on the Authorized Persons for Pick-Up Form are permitted to have access to a child and remove a child from the center. The following procedures apply:

- Parents are required to complete the Authorized Persons for Pick up and Emergency Form at time of enrollment. Only people listed on this form will be permitted to remove the child from the center.
- Persons on the authorized list who are unfamiliar with staff will be required to show proof of identification with a picture I.D.

- Individuals must be at least 18 years of age in order to sign a child in or out of the center.
- Changes/updates to the Pick-Up List must be made on the original registration form located in the office.
- In an emergency, the center will contact the parents first. If the center is unable to reach the parents, the staff will call the people listed on the form until someone is reached. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that an authorized person is available to pick up the child on time.
- If a parent or authorized adult appears to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, the staff will attempt to contact the other parent or authorized adult on the pick-up list. The center does not have the right to deny the parent access to their child, but the staff will contact the police immediately if the center is not able to contact the other parent or authorized adult to pick up the child.

## **Section 4- Open Door Policy**

The center maintains an open door policy and enrolled children's parents and guardians are granted access to the center without prior notice. In situations where there are custody or domestic issues, the following will apply:

- The center must be provided with the most recent certified copy of a court order and any amendments to the order (i.e. custody, restraining, or protection orders).
- The center will follow court orders.
- If there isn't a copy of a court order or a copy has not been provided to the center, then both parents will have equal access to their child. By law, the center may not deny a parent access to a child without a court order.

## **Section 5- Parent/Guardian Participation and Volunteering**

As a CELC parent, you are expected to take an active role in the education of your child, and we require families to volunteer a minimum of 10 hours per school year. A volunteer agreement form will be included in the registration packet. This requirement does not apply to parents of VPK non-wrap students; however, your volunteer hours are appreciated. Parents are encouraged to volunteer in their child's classroom. In order to volunteer around the children, parents must complete a Protecting God's Children class and be live scanned by the Diocese (please see the office for instructions). If volunteering and not supervised by a CELC staff member, the volunteer must also be livescanned by the Department of Children & Families. Parent volunteering may include being invited to share information about their job, hobby, or culture; assist in classroom events; and read to children, etc. All volunteers are required to sign in at the front desk before proceeding to the classroom.

The Discipline Policy (see Section 9), Standards of Conduct (see Section 9), and Visitor Policy (see Section 6) apply to volunteers.

Siblings of children in the program may not attend when a parent is volunteering in a classroom.

**Parent Surveys:** We are interested in feedback. Anonymous parent surveys are distributed at least once per year. Responses enable the center to better serve children and families.

## **Section 6- Visitor Policy**

All volunteers and visitors are required to check in at the front desk, obtain permission for visitation, and a visitor's pass. Visitation by a non-enrolled child unaccompanied by his/her parent(s) or legal guardian is prohibited unless prior approval has been granted by the center's director.

Because staff, children, and parents should at all times feel that the school and work environment is safe, all visitors shall comply with the center's policies while on campus and conduct themselves in a manner that is not disruptive, threatening, or abusive.

- Any parent, volunteer, or visitor who is disruptive, threatening, or abusive will be asked to relocate to a location in the facility where children are not present and where the matter can be discussed and resolved professionally.
- If the person refuses to relocate or continues to act inappropriately, the person will be asked to leave the premises. If the person refuses to leave, staff will notify appropriate law enforcement personnel. Should the person subsequently return to the property and again act in a manner that is disruptive, threatening, or abusive, or if the initial incident is so extreme that the teachers are concerned about the person returning to the facility, the person will be informed in writing that he/she may be prohibited from returning to the center.
- Any person who believes that he/she was wrongfully asked to not return to the property must first leave as requested, but may subsequently appeal the decision in writing to the center's director.
- A final decision will be made and the person will be notified in writing if they may return to the property and under what conditions, if any.
- Notwithstanding the above, center personnel shall always have the authority to notify appropriate law enforcement should any person or property violate criminal statutes.
- Only individuals with legal authority to do so shall be allowed to question a child on the property without the consent of the child's parents or legal guardian.

## **Section 7- Health & Safety**

**Child Health Services:** The center is required by the Department of Children and Families to have on file for each child a physical and an immunization record. **You must submit current Physical Examination – Form 3040 and Immunization – Form 680 prior to your child's start date, and are required to update prior to expirations throughout the year.**

**Child Health Emergencies:** In the case of accidents and incidents, staff will contact parents/guardians and complete an incident report which staff and parents/guardians

sign. It is very important that you make sure that your child's teacher is aware of changes in phone numbers or emergency contacts. Please keep this information up to date. A signature on the registration form giving the center permission to have your child transported to the hospital and be seen by a physician is required before entrance

**Child Accident Procedures:** We take all precautions to ensure the safety of your child while under our care. In the event a child is hurt at our center, the following procedures will be followed:

- An accident report will be filled out by the child's teacher and depending on the type of injury, the parent may be called.
- The parent will be asked to review the accident form and provide a signature. A copy will be given to the parent.

**Medication Administration:** All medication administered by the center staff must be authorized by the child's parent or guardian by first completing an Administration of Medicine form.

- Only medicine that has been prescribed by a doctor may be administered at the center. All medicine must be in the original container.
- If non-prescription medication is to be given, a note from the physician, stating the name of the medication and the dosage instructions must be attached.
- Staff will inform parents/guardians immediately of any noticed side effects or changes in behavior.
- Medication will be stored in a locked secure area inaccessible to children.
- *NO MEDICATION MAY BE PLACED IN THE CHILD'S CUBBY/BOOKBAG OR LEFT UNATTENDED IN THE CLASSROOM.*

Parents are strongly encouraged to give all medications at home. If this is the case, please notify your child's teacher so that any behavioral changes and/or allergic reactions may be noted.

**Conditions of Short-term Exclusions:** A child will be placed on short-term exclusion, which may include non-admittance, when the illness and/or injury is contagious and/or poses a significant health and/or safety risk to other children and staff.

**Notification of Illness:** Parents/guardians are encouraged to inform staff if their child becomes ill from a communicable disease and of any other health/safety concerns. If a child appears to have a communicable disease, teaching staff should isolate the child away from the other children and immediately contact the child's parent/guardian. Children will not be allowed to return to the center until all symptoms have ceased. Depending upon the condition, children may not be allowed to return to the center after being sent home with a fever or vomiting for 24 hours, or without a physician's authorization.

**Parents/Guardians will be asked to immediately pick up their children if the following signs, symptoms, or conditions are present:**

- Fever AND sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability, or confusion. Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100° F or higher.
- Diarrhea - runny, watery, or bloody stools
- Vomiting
- Severe coughing - child gets red or blue in the face or makes a high-pitched whooping sound after coughing
- Eye discharge - thick mucus or pus draining from the eye, or pink eye
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Ear discharge
- Untreated infected skin patch(es)
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool and yellowish skin or eyes • Head lice (including nits)
- Conditions that commonly require parameters from a physician detailing when a child may return include, but are not limited to, chicken pox, strep throat, scabies, impetigo, meningitis, and Hepatitis A
- Child is irritable, continuously crying, or requires more attention than staff can provide without jeopardizing the health and safety of the other children • Any other unusual signs, symptoms, or conditions

**Dietary Restrictions and Allergies:** Please discuss any special dietary needs for your child with the director. Parents of children with severe allergies should contact the director for further guidance.

Modest accommodations will be made for children with food allergies and cultural requests.

**Confidentiality of Records:** The Center maintains the policy that all records of children and families are confidential.

## Section 8- Tuition and Fees

**Tuition:** *\*Tuition rates are based on classroom placement, not chronological age. Classroom assignments are determined by multiple factors including the child's developmental readiness, space availability, and Florida Catholic Conference standards.*

Current tuition rates are posted on the website and at the front desk. Fees are based on reserved time. There will be no reduction in the basic rate, which remains the same regardless of attendance, holidays, emergency closings, teacher training, and vacations.

**Multiple Child Discounts:** The center offers a discount of 10% to the oldest student for families with more than one child enrolled in our center. This applies to full-time, year-round enrollment only. This excludes VPK students.

**Registration Fees:** A \$200.00 non-refundable registration fee is payable at the time of enrollment and is billed annually.



**Supplies:** The center requires parents of nonVPK and VPK wrap-around students to provide the student's supplies. Additionally, a supply list specific to the teacher will be provided. Both lists will be provided before your child's first day.

**Checks and Returned Check Fees:** Checks are accepted if drawn from a local bank and the date on the check is the same date the check was written. Postdated checks will not be accepted. In the event your check is refused for payment or returned, there will be a Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) fee assessed in the amount of \$40. Once a check is returned for NSF, checks will no longer be accepted as a form of payment at the center. In addition, child care will be suspended until all fees are paid in full.

**Late Payment Policy:** Monthly tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month and is considered late if not paid by the 15th of the month. If your tuition is not paid in full, a late fee of \$25 will be added to your invoice. Every week that the tuition remains unpaid, a \$10.00 fee will be applied to your account. If fees continue to go unpaid, your child will be placed on a DO NOT ACCEPT list.

**Holidays:** The following are paid holidays recognized by the Center. Tuition does not change for weeks that include holidays. New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Dr. Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. A holiday schedule is posted in all classrooms and at the front door.

**Emergency Closing and Inclement Weather:** If the threat of a natural disaster such as hurricane, tornado, flooding, etc. is imminent, we will follow the Diocese of St. Augustine Superintendent's policy for closure. Once the storm passes and is out of the area, we will assess the center for damage and re-open as soon as possible. The following steps must be confirmed before opening the center:

- The center must have power, water, and any physical damage must be repaired.
- There must be available staff in the center to provide appropriate and required staff-to-child ratio.

Parents are responsible for childcare tuition even in the event the center is closed due to natural disaster.

## **Section 9- Behavior Management**

Behavior management is the guidance of children's behavior with the goal of helping them make good decisions, exercise self-control, and develop interpersonal skills. The management technique to be used in any particular situation will be based upon consideration of the situation and the individual child.

**Strategies:** Below are strategies used at the center that parents are encouraged to practice at home.

1. Plan ahead to prevent behavior problems. Anticipate problems that may occur and provide intervention or directions in advance. (Ex: Limit number of children in centers. Have activities prepared so children do not have to wait.)
2. Establish clear and simple rules that are age-appropriate. Consistent reminders help reinforce limits. Rules should be stated in a positive way. (Ex: If a child is running, say, "Please use your walking feet. Running feet are for outside", instead of "Don't run!")
3. Be a model for the desired behavior. Treat all children with respect and politeness. (Ex: The teacher has a leaky paint container in her hand. She needs to get to the sink. She asks the children who are in line at the sink if she could please use the sink out of turn, rather than simply cutting in front of the children. They agree, and she remembers to thank them.)
4. Help children to learn problem-solving skills. Give them the language they need to communicate feelings and needs to others appropriately. Work with them to come up with solutions to conflicts.
5. Give hugs and caring. The key to discipline is establishing a nurturing relationship with each child. Children need to know they are accepted and loved no matter how they behave.
6. Reinforce positive behavior. Remember to focus on the specific behavior you wish to see repeated. (Ex: "Jessie, you have worked so hard to put all the blocks neatly on the shelf. Fantastic job!")
7. Overlook small annoyances. Sometimes when a behavior is overlooked, not reinforced by attention, it disappears. Unless the behavior is aggressive and someone is in danger of getting hurt, the teacher/caregiver might be wise to let the children work out the problem on their own.
8. Offer positive alternatives to negative behavior. If a child's behavior is unacceptable, suggest alternative choices. (Ex: If a child is throwing blocks, the teacher intervenes by telling the child that blocks are for building. If the child wishes to throw something, he/she can throw a bean bag or a ball.)
9. Re-direct or divert the child. Substitute an appropriate activity for the unacceptable one. Some behaviors that are inappropriate are temporary, or situation specific. In these cases it is best to alter the environment by redirecting the child to another activity. (Ex: Two children who are good friends have begun to get irritated with each other. Intervene before things get out of hand by engaging them in a new activity.)
10. Help children see behavioral consequences. Since young children are self centered, it is hard for them to see beyond their own needs. Help them to move from thinking only of themselves to thinking of others by analyzing the consequences of their actions. Discuss their behavior in a non-judgmental way and encourage them to think about its impact on people, objects, and events.

11. Provide renewal time. When a child is too upset to talk or listen, it may be necessary to remove the child from the situation for a period of no more than 2 minutes. The teachers stay with the child to discuss what happened and to help the child regain composure.

### **Discipline Procedures:**

1. There will NOT be any identified space, or chair, reserved for “time out”. Children are not to be isolated indefinitely due to behavior problems. Time out may be used only if stipulated in an individual child’s behavior plan by a licensed mental health consultant.
2. The use of physical force with children is prohibited. This includes pulling by the arm, grabbing children by the arm/shoulders/neck, hitting, pushing, shoving, etc.
3. Children will not be threatened with physical punishment, or with a phone call to parents.
4. There will be no name-calling, belittling, or comparison to other children.
5. Children will not be denied food, water, or any other basic need as a means of discipline.
6. Children will not be denied rest as a means of discipline.

In the event a child is exhibiting extreme challenging behavior, follow the Behavior Intervention Procedures:

- Provide renewal time.
- When a child is too upset to talk or listen, it may be necessary to remove the child from the situation for no more than 2 minutes. The teacher is to stay with the child in the classroom to discuss what happened and to help the child regain composure.
- If necessary, the child may be removed from the classroom if two staff members are available to remain with the child at all times.
- If the child is unable to regain control within 30 minutes, the parents or authorized persons may be contacted to pick up the child.

**Biting Policy:** Research suggests young children may bite others due to exploring, teething, frustration, attention, or mimicking behaviors. We try to answer the who, why, where questions to help us gauge our approach to each biting incident.

Our action plan after a bite happens is to:

1. Attend to the bitten child by comforting them and cleaning the area with soap and water, followed by applying an ice pack to the area.
2. Remove the child who did the biting away from other children explaining that biting isn’t acceptable. (ex. “We don’t hurt our friends!” “Biting hurts!”)
3. Parents of both children will be notified.
4. An incident form will be completed for each child to be signed by the parent or guardian and kept in each child’s student file. We do not disclose either child’s name on the other’s form.

We understand that biting in young children is often common in early childhood development. However, it is our responsibility to ensure the health and safety of every child in our care. With that understanding if your child bites, you will be contacted to pick up your child if the following incidents occur:

- If your child bites another child causing a break in his/her skin.
- If your child has bitten another child leaving a mark or a bruise more than once in a day.
- If your child has bitten another child leaving a mark or a bruise more than once in a week. A meeting with the director and teacher will be scheduled to form an action plan.
- After three or more incidents, parents are asked to pick up their child and keep him/her home for that day and the next day.
- Upon returning, if the student continues to bite, the student may be withdrawn from the early learning center.

Tuition Policy: There will be no reduction in the basic tuition rate, which remains the same regardless of attendance, holidays, emergency closings, teacher trainings, vacations, and student behavior.

**Standards of Conduct:** The center has guidelines of acceptable conduct that all parents, volunteers, and visitors must abide by while on premises. It is expected that all parties will follow these guidelines and sign this form. We strive to provide a safe learning environment for all children. Volunteering in the classroom is strongly encouraged and “Standards of Conduct” must be adhered to at all times.

- Respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family. Refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.
- Follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members.
- Supervise children at all times. Children will not be left alone or unsupervised while under the center’s care.
- Use positive methods of child guidance. Any use of corporal punishment and emotional or physical abuse is prohibited. Methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as a punishment or reward, time out, or the denial of basic needs are prohibited.
- Refrain from the use of any threatening physical contact or verbal abuse towards individuals connected with the program, other parents, or volunteers.
- Refrain from smoking on the premises and during all center or parent activities. The center adheres to a "Smoke-Free Environment."
- Refrain from illegal activities while on the premises or in attendance at center activities. The center prohibits theft, firearms, alcohol, explosives, and illegal substances on the premises and during all center or parent activities.
- Refrain from harassment. Any cause of disharmony of any kind will not be tolerated.

## **Section 10- Child Abuse and Neglect**

The Center is obligated to report suspected child abuse and neglect (sexual, physical, emotional). Under Florida Law, cases of possible child abuse and neglect are reported immediately to the Department of Children and Families. The abuse hotline is 1-800-96-ABUSE.

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## Section 11 – Receipt of Parent Handbook



*(This page remains on file in the center.)*

I have received a copy of the Cathedral Early Learning Center Handbook and agree to abide by the policies.

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

Parent's Signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Director's Signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_