



College of Education &  
Human Development

EARLY LEARNING CENTER

# Family Handbook

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## Table of Contents

Welcome to the University of Delaware Early Learning Center.....	4
Mission .....	4
Vision.....	4
Program Design.....	4
Research at the Early Learning Center.....	5
Enrollment Procedures .....	6
Tuition, Billing and Additional Fees.....	6
Purchase of Care (POC) (State Subsidized Child Care Funds).....	6
Hours of Operation .....	6
Holidays & Days Closed .....	7
Reference Items Available at the Front Desk .....	7
Curriculum and Screening and Assessment of Children.....	7
Staff Qualifications.....	9
Security Measures at the ELC: .....	9
Operational Policies .....	10
Absences.....	10
Accidents: Children.....	10
Allergies.....	10
Arrivals and Departures .....	10
Birthdays & Holidays.....	12
Breastfeeding .....	12
Child Abuse & Neglect.....	12
Closings Due to Inclement Weather or Emergencies .....	13
Clothing .....	13
Communication & Family Involvement.....	13
Confidentiality .....	14
Diapers .....	14
Emergency Contact Information .....	14
Environmental Health & Safety .....	14
Evacuation Procedures.....	15
Expulsion/Suspension Policy (Please see Behavior/Positive Guidance).....	15
Family Style Dining .....	15
Field Trips/Walking Trips .....	15
Health Appraisal (Child Physical) .....	16
Health: Children including Inclusion/Exclusion of ill Children .....	16
Helmets .....	18
Lesson and Experience Plans .....	18
Meals and Snacks .....	19
Medication, Ointments, Sunscreen, and Insect Repellant .....	21
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation ...	21
Non-Discrimination Policy.....	22
Parental/Adult Code of Conduct .....	22
Parent Concerns/Conflict.....	22
Parking .....	23

Positive Guidance/Behavior Supports .....	23
Program Evaluation .....	25
Release of Children .....	26
Schedule.....	27
Security & Safety Measures .....	27
School Age Program.....	28
Sleeping: Children .....	28
Smoking, Alcohol, Illegal Substances & Firearms .....	28
Staff-Child Ratios.....	29
Staff Working for Families.....	29
Supervision of Children.....	29
Toys from Home .....	30
Transitions .....	30
Visitors Under the Age of 16 .....	30
Volunteers .....	30
Weather Policy for Outdoor Learning.....	31
Withdrawal Policy .....	31
Community Resources .....	32

## Welcome to the University of Delaware Early Learning Center

### **Mission**

As leaders of exceptional practices in early childhood education, we celebrate and honor each child and their family to promote optimal development for all. We design engaging environments with children where learning is fostered through play, conversations, and discovery. Engagement and collaboration with the academic and research programs of the University of Delaware and the broader community promotes innovative and reflective practices.

### **Vision**

The UD Early Learning Center is a community of learners where equitable learning experiences instill confidence, resiliency, compassion, and creativity.

### **Program Design**

The UD Early Learning Center provides high quality early care and education programs for approximately 250 children and their families annually while providing a model, data-rich site for observation, clinical placement and research by UD students, faculty, and early care and education professionals from throughout the region. As a University practicum site, the ELC serves students who are studying to enter a variety of fields including teaching, nursing, physical therapy, psychology and more. Hands on learning in a center that provides high quality services is one of the best ways to ensure that new professionals will be well prepared to serve children and families.

The ELC was established as a university-wide research and clinical center in 2004 and operates 11 hours per day year-round. The Center serves up to 300 children ages 6 weeks through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and their families. The population includes families who are UD employees as well as families from the broader community; approximately 30% of the families fall within the federal definition of a family living in poverty and 20% of the enrollment is intended for children with disabilities. The racial and economic diversity of the families enrolled at the ELC reflects the diversity of the state. The Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a distinction held by fewer than 10% of the Centers in the nation.

The ELC has strong partnerships with New Directions Head Start (NDEHS) to support Infants and Toddlers and the Delaware Department of Education to support preschool children through the state Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) program.

### **Philosophy of the Early Learning Center**

Each classroom varies to reflect the developmental level of the child and supports the cognitive development so rapidly happening during this period of life. This is accomplished through the nurturing and supportive environments and responsive teaching of each staff member. The staff believes in helping each child develop to his/her fullest socially, emotionally, physically, creatively and cognitively. Parents/Guardians and other family members are viewed as essential partners in this process.

Using the foundation of the Creative Curriculum as a guide, we view curriculum as everything that happens during our time together with the children. We strive to be reflective in our practices by:

- Planning the environment for learning
- Observing and facilitating as children play and interact with each other
- Designing experiences based on observations and assessment

A vital role for our educators is that of a researcher of the children's interests, development, and growth. With this knowledge and the support of the foundation of the Creative Curriculum, Anti-Bias Curriculum and Emergent/Pre-literacy practices, we develop experiences unique to each group of children. Another critical piece to our learning is the support of social emotional development. We use two different curriculum models: Conscious Discipline and The Pyramid Model.

Educators watch for recurring themes and children's understandings, developmental issues, and underlying questions. Our observations and assessments guide our curriculum, as we create customized opportunities for children to deepen their thinking, represent their understandings, and encounter new perspectives.

The ELC's goal is to nurture within each child a disposition to speak for peace, tolerance, and justice. In our classrooms and programs we are pursuing the four core goals of anti-bias education for young children, as outlined in the book *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards:

- Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities
- Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections
- Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts
- Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions

We recognize that anti-bias work is about more than skin color, so we talk with children about the range of people that make up the broader Newark, Delaware community and the wider world. We take care with the words and beliefs we express. Social problem solving is a present part of our daily lives together. We challenge children to articulate their feelings and support them in working towards mutually agreeable solutions. By emphasizing alternate-perspective-taking, we help children advocate for themselves and recognize the needs of others. Staff engage in ongoing professional development around anti-bias work to challenge our own biases, hone our anti-bias teaching practices, and gain further skill in supporting children's individual identities and home cultures.

The Early Learning Center has established strong partnerships with agencies such as Child Development Watch, Easter Seals, and the Christina School District to meet the needs of children with identified disabilities. These agencies provide on-site physical therapy, occupational therapy, early childhood education therapy, and speech therapy for children with identified needs. Classroom teachers work closely with therapists to ensure that IFSP and IEP goals and objectives are integrated into day-to-day classroom activities and assist therapists in tracking progress. All families have frequent opportunities to participate in classroom and family events at the Center including parent education sessions.

### **Research at the Early Learning Center**

The Early Learning Center is a focal point for interdisciplinary research conducted by faculty and undergraduate/graduate students from academic departments across the University. The emphasis is on translational research, with findings that can be put into practice to directly benefit children and



families. All research that takes place at the ELC is reviewed and approved by the UD Institutional Review Board. Research activities could involve children, families and staff.

### **Enrollment Procedures**

The ELC maintains a year-round, on-going wait list for new enrollments. Families may be placed on the wait list by completing a registration form. Registration does not guarantee your child's enrollment. When an opening occurs for your child, you will be contacted. Once you accept enrollment, you will be sent the necessary forms and paperwork to complete. A \$100 non-refundable deposit is required and will be deducted from your first month's tuition.

### **Tuition, Billing and Additional Fees**

The ELC tuition is due monthly in advance of service by the first of each month. A daily breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack are included in the cost of tuition. Families have several options for making payment:

1. Payment at the front desk by check payable to the University of Delaware
2. Bi-monthly payroll deduction for UD employees
3. ACH online payment <https://primus.nss.udel.edu/casforms/ELC/>
4. Cash payments will be accepted for amounts due of less than \$100.00

Payment will be considered late after the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month and a \$25.00 late payment fee will be assessed on past due accounts on the 6<sup>th</sup> of each month. A check returned for insufficient funds will result in a \$25 fee.

The ELC closes at 6:00 p.m. In the event a child is picked up after closing, the family will be charged a late pick up fee of \$5.00 per child for the first minute and \$1.00 per minute per child for each additional minute. Late pick up fees are due the next business day.

There will be no tuition refund for days missed by children or when a classroom needs to close due to illness. In addition, there will be no tuition refund when the ELC closes for inclement weather or scheduled holidays. There may be additional fees for field trips and special events.

### **Purchase of Care (POC) (State Subsidized Child Care Funds)**

It is the family's responsibility to ensure POC authorization remains current. POC reauthorization must be given to the ELC by the family before the expiration of current authorization. For example, if your POC authorization expires at the end of the month, the ELC must receive the reauthorization before the first of the next month. The reauthorization form must physically be presented to the ELC by the family. If POC expires, you may withdraw your child from the center or pay the full tuition rate.

Parent co-pays are assigned by the state and are due in advance of service. The ELC is obligated to collect co-pays. Families with co-pays will be charged for six holidays allowed by the State: New Years, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas. Any day the center closes beyond the six holidays above will not be billable to POC clients.

### **Hours of Operation**

The Early Learning Center is open Monday – Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Children will be admitted for attendance beginning at 7:00 a.m. All children must be picked up by 6:00 p.m. when the Center closes.

The routines your child develops during the early years will continue throughout their school career. Children are expected to attend every day to benefit from the educational components and routines of our programs. Children must be settled in classrooms by 9:30 am (or 8:30 am if they are eating breakfast). Drop offs after 10 am require notification in advance.

Repeated, unexcused absences or chronic tardiness during this time may result in termination of enrollment.

### **Holidays & Days Closed**

We are closed New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving & the day after, Winter Holiday (usually Dec 24-31). When a holiday falls on a Saturday, we will be closed the Friday before. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, we will be closed the Monday after. On even numbered years, the ELC will be closed on Election Day. In addition, the ELC is closed on various days per year for professional development and for family/teacher conferences (see *yearly calendar for dates*). The Director will determine the dates annually and families will be provided with a yearly calendar in order to make alternate childcare arrangements. Please note, in order to provide the best care for all children, early learning professionals must stay current in their field and be supported through professional development offerings.

### **Reference Items Available at the Front Desk**

The following items are available for your review at the reception desk:

- A copy of *Delacare*, Delaware's childcare regulations;
- Current notices of convicted sex offenders living or working in the area;
- ELC Emergency Plan

### **Curriculum and Screening and Assessment of Children**

#### *Curriculum*

The curriculum at the Early Learning Center for all age groups is designed to support the growth and development of the whole child. Activities are planned for children that stimulate and promote their growth in all developmental areas – cognitive, language and literacy, physical, creative, social and emotional development. The Creative Curriculum® and the Anti-Bias Curriculum support the goals of the Delaware Department of Education's Early Learning Foundations for Infants/Toddlers and Preschool. The Preschool classes are supported by The Creative Curriculum, Anti-Bias Curriculum, as well as Heggerty: Phonemic Awareness and Unlocking Doors to Language and Literacy. Outdoor Learning is also supported through planned and enacted curriculum experiences.

Staff assess children's current levels of development and plan activities designed to foster and support their growth. Our approach is designed to allow children to explore materials and activities so that they construct and discover knowledge, and develop skills through high quality, purposeful activities provided and supported by the teachers. The curriculum guides the development of a daily schedule that is predictable yet flexible and responsive to the individual needs of the children. Teaching staff include the family in curriculum development by seeking their input during parent/teacher conferences and through other means of communication (email, conversations, classroom participation, etc.). Staff implement the curriculum in a manner that reflects responsiveness to the family home values, beliefs, experiences and language. Curriculum is adapted or modified to allow for differences in age and ability and developmental stage. Adaptations for the individual needs of children in the program are not limited to children with identified special needs.

At the ELC, children actively explore and learn about their environments, their peers, their communities, and themselves. Curriculum at the Early Learning Center ensures that there is a strong, emotionally secure base for every child, and then uses children's natural curiosity and play as the foundation from which to support their cognitive, language, social, physical, creative and emotional skill development in order to prepare them for success in school and life. Lesson plans are reviewed by the Directors and are posted in the classroom.

### *Screening and Assessment of Children*

Assessment of children is an integral part of all of the ELC programs.

All staff are required to be trained in the screening and assessment process. This training occurs throughout the year at regularly scheduled professional development days, new staff orientation, through one-on-one coaching and mentoring, and online training modules. Interrater Reliability and Quality Assurance are key factors in our assessment learning process.

Families fill out the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ:3 and ASQ:SE) annually through an online portal. Information is provided in the enrollment packet and then again by email in the Fall. Occasionally, families are asked to partner with teachers to fill in the ASQ:SE more than once per year.

- ASQ:SE-2 is the screener used to support and monitor children's social-emotional growth and development.
- ASQ-3 is the Developmental Screening used to support and monitor children's developmental growth.
- Teaching Strategies Gold is the tool used to record observations daily and the results are shared with families tri-annually for infants and toddlers and biannually for preschoolers.

Teachers and staff use screenings and assessments to identify children's interests and needs; document children's developmental progress and learning; improve curriculum and teaching practices; and to use in referral for additional diagnostic assessments. Teachers use a variety of assessment methods and tools throughout the school year to assess children across all areas of development. Screening and Assessment is both formal and informal, based on observation and interaction with children while they are engaged in activities.

Information gleaned from assessments, along with family goals, serve as the foundation for teacher's planning. Teaching teams discuss assessment results to align curriculum and teaching practices to the interests and needs of the children. Teachers keep assessment information confidential. Parents/guardians are always welcome to request a copy of their child's file.

Teaching staff value effective communication with families and share assessment information with families frequently throughout the school year. This communication may occur through journals, face-to face, phone, or email conversations. Family conferences are scheduled bi-annually for all age groups and are also available at any time upon request.

Based on observation, documentation, and assessment, when teachers suspect that a child may have a developmental delay, this will be communicated to the Leadership Team. The team will collaborate with the family of the child in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner to discuss the concern and recommend that the family request further evaluation through Child Development Watch, the Christina

School District, or another appropriate professional agency. The team will provide the family with contact information for agencies to help support the child and family.

### **Staff Qualifications**

Each staff member is required to hold an appropriate certificate from the DE Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) which substantiates that s/he is fully qualified for the position held. The documentation required to complete the application for the OCCL certificate includes diplomas, college transcripts, training certificates, and staff training records.

Leadership staff must hold a minimum of a BA/BS degree in early childhood education or a related field (MA/MS preferred). Teaching staff must hold an AA degree (BA/BS preferred) in early childhood education or other related discipline, or a non-related degree and a current CDA and job-related experience. All positions require; knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices, ability to provide behavioral management and assessment in a supportive and caring environment, effective written and verbal communication skills, and the ability to work collaboratively with individuals from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

### **Security Measures at the ELC:**

The health and safety of your child is of paramount importance. Some important information:

- All exterior doors are locked. Persons other than staff must enter and exit the building through the front reception area and must show ID if they are not known to the front desk staff.
- Children must be escorted to/from the classroom and the adult who is dropping off/picking up must sign the child in/out.
- Only persons authorized by families will be permitted to pick up a child from the ELC. Authorized persons must be a minimum of 16 years old and will be asked to present identification if they are not recognized by staff. (See section titled "Release of Children.")
- The ELC is equipped with security cameras outside the building. In addition, there are observation booths overlooking all spaces used by children.
- Observation booths are left unlocked. Classrooms may be observed, videotaped, or audiotaped for a variety of reasons. Families or others outside the ELC are not permitted to video or audio tape without the consent of all families.
- All ELC staff are required to have training in first aid and CPR. All full-time staff complete annual blood borne pathogens training. Before working with children, staff must have a criminal background check, including a child abuse registry check and adult abuse registry check. In addition, all staff are required to have a periodic health exam and TB test.
- All UD students, faculty and volunteers who will be in the building a total of forty hours, or five full days or more in a year are required to have a criminal background check, which includes a child and adult abuse registry check.
- Outdoor learning areas are available for each age group and are equipped with age-appropriate equipment and a four – six-foot perimeter fence.
- Classrooms are equipped with age-appropriate furniture, toys and equipment, safety outlets, finger guards on bathroom doors. Each room is equipped with a telephone and has the ability to lock the classroom door from the inside for lockdown purposes.

- Smoke, sprinkler, and fire alarm systems are located throughout the building and tested regularly.
- Fire Drills are practiced on a monthly basis. The University of Delaware Environmental Health and Safety department and University of Delaware Police help to oversee all emergency preparedness activities.

### **Operational Policies (In Alphabetical Order)**

#### **Absences**

If your child will be absent, please contact the UD Early Learning Center at (302) 831-6205.

#### **Accidents: Children**

When an accident or injury occurs to a child during the hours of care, the ELC will take the necessary emergency action to protect the child from further harm and will notify the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) if warranted. The ELC will complete an accident/injury report and give a copy to the parent/guardian.

All ELC staff are required to have training in first aid and CPR. All full-time staff complete annual blood borne pathogens training. If an injury is minor, requiring only a band-aid or ice, staff administers appropriate first aid and completes an accident/incident form. If it is more serious, staff consult with the Leadership Team and call the parent to ask you to pick up the child. If it is determined that the child needs to be picked up and the parent/guardian is not available, another authorized pick-up person will be contacted and asked to pick up your child.

Should a child require emergency medical treatment, we will call 911 and contact the parent (or another authorized person) to apprise them of the situation. If emergency services arrive before the parent, and it is not in the best interest of the child to wait, a staff person will chaperone the child to the hospital, taking with them the child's emergency consent form.

#### **Allergies**

Parents are required to notify the ELC of any allergy to medications, food or the environment. Parents must provide an individualized care plan/medical action plan from the child's health care provider if the child has special health care needs, food allergies, or special nutritional needs. This plan will be placed in the child's file and will be posted in the child's classroom.

The ELC does not serve nuts in order to protect our children with allergies to nuts. Please do not enter the classroom with any foods containing nuts or nut products. Children should not arrive at the center eating food as they arrive. We serve breakfast, lunch and snack with children seated at tables.

#### **Arrivals and Departures**

The ongoing family partnership is supported by daily routines. Families agree to park only in the large lot on the western side of the ELC between the signs with an ELC permit on the car dash. Parking anywhere else – including the small lot at the front of the building and in the fire lane - is not permitted and may lead to a parking ticket from UD Parking Services.

Families and children are greeted upon entry into the building and as they arrive to their classroom doors. Classroom specific procedures are in place to receive families to ensure communication, relationship building and successful transitions between home and school. To promote respectful

interactions and engagement within the ELC community, please be conscious of your use of cell phones and other devices.

The routines your child develops during the early years will continue throughout their school career. Children are expected to attend every day to benefit from the educational components and routines of our programs. Children must be settled in classrooms by 9:30 am (or 8:30 am if they are eating breakfast). Drop offs after 10 am require notification in advance. Repeated, unexcused absences or chronic tardiness during this time may result in termination of enrollment.

### **Assessment Plan**

Assessment of children is an integral part of all of the ELC programs. Teachers and staff use assessment to identify children's interests and needs; document children's developmental progress and learning; improve curriculum/teaching practices, overall program improvements; and refer children for additional diagnostic assessments. Teachers use a variety of assessment methods and tools throughout the school year to assess children across all areas of development. Assessment is both formal and informal. Formal assessments include developmental screeners (Ages and Stages:SE and Ages and Stages-3) and for preschool children phonemic awareness and other pre-literacy tools. Informal assessment is based on observation and interaction with children while they are engaged in activities. Teaching Strategies Gold is used to record observations daily and the results are shared with families twice a year for all children.

Information gleaned from assessments, along with family goals, serve as the foundation for teacher's planning. Teaching teams discuss assessment results to align curriculum and teaching practices to the interests and needs of the children. Teachers keep assessment information confidential. Parents/guardians are always welcome to request a copy of their child's file.

Teaching staff value effective communication with families and share assessment information with families frequently throughout the school year. This communication may occur through journals, face-to face, phone, or email conversations. Family conferences are scheduled twice a year for all children but are also available at any time upon request. Prior to family conferences written child assessments are provided in order to provide an opportunity for families to ask questions or discuss concerns.

Based on observation and assessment, when teachers suspect that a child may have a developmental delay this should be communicated to the Leadership Team, who will collaborate with the teacher to reach out to the family of the child in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner to discuss the concern and recommend that the family request further evaluation through Child Development Watch, the Christina School District or another appropriate professional agency; the Co-Director will provide the family with contact information for agencies that might best serve the child and family.

Teaching staff value effective communication with families and share assessment information with families frequently throughout the school year. This communication may occur through journals, face-to face, phone, or email conversations. Family conferences are scheduled bi-annually for all children, but are also available at any time upon request. Prior to family conferences written child assessments are provided.

The ELC uses both a formal and informal process (adult and child data) to assess the overall health of the program.

Using the Improvement Cycle of Plan, Do, Study, Act, and collects various information through surveys, coaching plans, classroom observations (using various tools) and general feedback from all stakeholders. Through this process, long term and short-term goals are determined and monitored for progress and completion.

## **Birthdays & Holidays**

The ELC values the rich diversity of cultures represented in our classrooms and encourages families to share cultural celebrations. The ELC uses the Anti-Bias Curriculum as its foundation in understanding, learning and honoring cultures, traditions, and beliefs. Every family has special days and certain ways of celebrating. Learning about other cultures is part of discovering how people are unique and yet the same. Children enjoy sharing their own special events and sharing in others' joy. At this center we hope to expose children to the diversity in the world: to help them understand the universality of celebration with foods, music, dance, songs, and stories; and to help them develop a respect for differences. The teachers work with families to develop celebrations which are appropriate to the children's level of understanding, their abilities, their attention span, and the center's nutrition policy.

If you wish to provide a special snack to celebrate a birthday, cultural event or holiday please discuss your request with your child's teacher at least one week in advance. We encourage healthy choices instead of sugary items. The Office of Child Care Licensing regulations require that these foods be commercially prepared and in a sealed container upon arrival at the ELC. None of the ingredients in the food may contain nuts, nut byproducts or prepared in a facility that prepares nuts.

## **Breastfeeding**

The ELC supports breastfeeding. A private, comfortable room for nursing mothers is located near the infant classrooms. Staff coordinate feeding time with the infant's mother. Expressed breast milk is accepted, stored and served; this should be provided in ready-to-feed sanitary containers labeled with the infant's name and date the milk was expressed. It will be stored in a refrigerator for no longer than 48 hours (no more than 24 hours if the breast milk was previously frozen). Staff gently mix the milk (no shaking).

## **Child Abuse & Neglect**

The Early Learning Center will provide each employee with written information governing the reporting provision of the Delaware child abuse and neglect law(s) and regulations. Each employee is required to read and sign a statement clearly defining child abuse & neglect and outlining the employee's responsibility to report all incidents of child abuse or neglect according to State Law at time of hire and each subsequent year. The ELC will report any suspected or alleged incident of child abuse or neglect to the Division of Child Protective Services through the Child Abuse Reporting Number (800-292-9582) and will cooperate fully in the investigation of any incident.

As required by Delacare, the Early Learning Center will not employ or retain in any capacity any person whose child or children are removed from his/her custody because of abuse or neglect; nor will the Center employ or retain in any capacity any person convicted of any offense defined as sex abuse in Delaware Code, Title 11, Chapter 85, Subchapter IV, Subsection 8850.

### **Protocol for suspicion of neglect or abuse by a parent, guardian, or other adult:**

In the event an employee suspects abuse or neglect of a child by a parent, guardian, or other adult, the employee should immediately contact a Co-Director to discuss their concerns. The Co-Director will assist the employee in contacting the Division of Child Protective Services. The ELC will not discourage, inhibit, penalize, or otherwise impede any staff member from reporting any suspected or alleged incident of child abuse or neglect.

### **Protocol for reporting an ELC staff member for suspicion of neglect or abuse:**

Any suspected abuse or neglect of a child by an employee or volunteer of the ELC must be immediately reported to a Co-Director. The ELC will immediately report the suspected abuse or neglect as required

by Law and take remedial action to protect children from harm. Subsequently, the person suspected of abuse or neglect shall a) have no direct contact with any child, or b) be reassigned to other duties that do not involve contact with children, or c) be placed on Administrative Leave by the Director and/or the ELC Human Resources liaison, until the investigation of the incident has been completed. The ELC will take disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment as required by Delacare Rules #138-140 and by Law, against any staff member who commits an act of child abuse or neglect.

### **Closings Due to Inclement Weather or Emergencies**

The Directors of the Early Learning Center will work with the UD Office of Public Safety to determine appropriate actions during inclement weather.

If the University of Delaware is closed, has an early dismissal or delayed opening, the Early Learning Center will follow the University of Delaware's schedule. On rare occasions, even when the University is open, the ELC may have a delayed opening or early dismissal depending on the weather conditions. This ensures that staff are in place to greet children and that all children, families and staff can safely travel home in the afternoon.

Closures and early dismissals will be communicated by:

1. Email thru Constant Contact
2. On our voice mail message. Call 302-831-6205 for message.

Any time there is a chance of inclement weather, be sure to check for updates prior to leaving home.

### **Clothing**

Children should come dressed appropriately for active, messy play. To ensure their safety, all children should wear shoes that will protect them and stay on their feet while running and engaging in play activities. Except in extreme conditions, children will go outside daily and should be dressed appropriately. Layers and warm outer clothing, including hats, gloves and boots should be provided during cold, wet or snowy weather conditions. Hats for sun protection as well as sunscreen should be provided by the parent to protect your child during sunny weather conditions. Sunscreen should be labeled with your child's name and signed in on your child's medication log. (*see Medication policy*)

Each child needs at least one change of clothing at the ELC. For children who are still in diapers or who are learning to toilet, it is recommended that two or three changes of clothing be available (including socks, underwear and if possible, shoes). Please be certain all clothing is labeled.

### **Communication & Family Involvement**

The ELC staff strive to form and sustain strong reciprocal relationships with every family. We have an open-door policy and encourage parents to be involved in their child's experience at the ELC. Methods of communication used at the Center may include one-to-one contact, telephone calls, notes, daily reports, memos, newsletters, information boards, email, journals, and parent conferences. Should you require a translator, please let your teacher know. Please talk with your child's teacher to identify the preferred avenue for communication for each of you.



**Confidentiality**

All information about you, your child(ren) and your family is strictly confidential. No child or family information will be shared with other agencies or individuals unless authorized by parents or legal guardians. The exception is that we are legally required to notify authorities of possible abuse or neglect. All child files, including all medical documents, are kept in a locked filing system, centrally located behind our front desk. These files are accessible for review by the child's parent/legal guardian, administrators, teaching staff and regulatory authorities.

**Diapers**

Families provide diapers and wipes for their children. Please send a full box of diapers and wipes labeled with your child's name. Staff will inform you when you need to replenish your supply.

For the comfort of the child, children who are wet or soiled will be changed upon discovery. Staff will check diapers no less than every two hours, upon awakening and will refer to the diapering procedure posted at all changing stations for appropriate diapering procedures. Soiled clothing will be placed in a sealed bag and returned to the parent at the end of the day. To protect the health of all children, soiled clothing will not be cleaned in the center's washing machine.

Cloth Diapers: When using cloth diapers, the diaper must have an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit. (This means parents must provide ample outer coverings since they cannot be used twice at the center). Cloth diapers that are soiled are placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing) that can be sealed – such as a Ziploc bag. This bag will then be placed in another bag and put in the child's diaper bag in the cubby. Soiled diapers are to be removed by parents daily from the center. Bags cannot be reused unless they are disinfected at home by parents using soap & water, then a bleach water solution rinse (1 part bleach: 10 parts water) and air-dried.

Diapers and wipes will be provided for families enrolled in New Directions Early Head Start (NDEHS), and pull ups are provided for children in the Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP).

**Emergency Contact Information**

It is important that the center have accurate contact numbers for the parent/guardian and emergency pick-up people. If you change home/cell/business phone number, please contact the center immediately. It is also important that you notify the center of any change in address or place of employment as it occurs. You will be asked to review the information on file annually to confirm that it is accurate. It is expected that you will respond to a call from the ELC as soon as possible.

**Emergency Response Plan**

The ELC reviews and updates the Emergency Response Plan annually. It is located at the front desk and is available upon request.

**Environmental Health & Safety**

The Early Learning Center is inspected annually by the Office of Child Care Licensing, UD Occupational Health and Safety and fire inspectors from the City of Newark. Fully working fire extinguishers and fire alarms are installed in each classroom and are tagged and serviced annually. Fire alarms are tested monthly during evacuation drills. Smoke detectors and the carbon monoxide detector, located in a separate mechanical room, are interconnected into a fire alarm control panel, which is constantly attended by the University on campus. The ELC facility including the outdoor learning area is entirely smoke free.

### **Evacuation Procedures**

Evacuation routes are posted in each classroom. In the event of an emergency (real or drill), staff must evacuate their area, take provided written listing of all children present and their emergency contact information, and meet in the designated safe area. The ELC has periodic unannounced fire/evacuation drills. All children, staff, families, and visitors who are in the building when the drill is occurring are expected to participate. For details see ELC Emergency Plan.

### **Expulsion/Suspension Policy (Please see Behavior/Positive Guidance)**

The ELC will support all children, including children identified and supported with an IEP/IFSP, and work with outside agencies and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to support children's continuation in their current placement. A child's enrollment will not be terminated for challenging behavior unless it is a last resort option in cases that include: 1.) a determination of a serious safety threat; and only after 2.) a detailed progression of intermediate interventions for the child has been implemented and documented through a Behavior Support Plan and Team.

### **Family Assistance and Support**

When a family requires assistance to support their family, we provide a list of community services to guide them and offer help along the way. This list can be found at the back of the Family Handbook.

### **Family Style Dining**

Classroom staff will guide the children during mealtimes using the family style dining model. Children will be encouraged to participate in: setting the table, serving appropriate (those not requiring staff assistance) foods to themselves and cleaning up. Staff will: eat with the children and model portion control by putting the appropriate serving size on their own plate (following the Child and Adult Care Food Program) meal pattern requirements. They will also encourage children to develop independence and self-help skills that match their current developmental levels, set a good example by demonstrating a positive attitude toward all foods served and sit at the table with the children to encourage conversation and language development. Adults are encouraged to eat healthy food when eating with children. According to our CACFP guidelines, children will be served full servings of each meal component at every meal. Children are welcome to additional servings if available.

### **Field Trips/Walking Trips**

Families will be informed of any field trip requiring transportation. Transportation for such trips, when needed, will be provided by contracted buses. Buses are not equipped with child safety restraints. The Office of Child Care Licensing permits us to transport preschool age children using this type of school bus as long as parents have been notified and have given permission.

Family members are encouraged to volunteer on field trips. Infants and toddlers do not take field trips to destinations which require formal transportation. All ages enjoy using the walking trail. Preschool and School Age children also take extended walking trips to explore their local community. Teaching teams take a head count and record on their child tracking forms who is present before during and after any trip. Teachers also take their sign in sheets, child tracking forms and first aid kits with them.

## **Hand Washing**

All ELC Employees, children (independently or with staff assistance) and volunteers are expected to observe hand washing routines, regardless of glove usage, with soap and running water (rubbing hands together for at least 10 seconds) followed by the use of single service towel to dry hands at the following times:

- Upon arriving for work and before departure
- Before/after preparing, handling, serving, or eating meals
- Before/after using a sensory table with other children
- Before/after caring for a child who may be sick and/or administering medication
- After contact with body secretions such as blood, fecal matter, urine, vomit, nasal secretions
- After toileting or diapering children or self
- After removing gloves
- When moving from one group to another that involves contact with infants and toddlers
- After playing in a sandbox
- After playing outside
- After handling garbage or cleaning product
- After handling animals or their equipment, or after coming into contact with an animal's body secretions

## **Health Appraisal (Child Physical)**

In accordance with childcare regulations, within one month following admission, the ELC must have on file a health appraisal - completed within the last 12 months before admission - which includes immunization records indicating recommended immunizations for the child's age. Health appraisals must also include results of lead tests at twelve and twenty-four months of age as required by Delaware law. Health appraisals are to be updated within 13 months. If your child does not have Delaware department of health recommended immunizations, we must have a note from your child's physician or clergy. Religious or medical exemptions are permitted with appropriate documentation. Please reference [www.dhss.delaware.gov](http://www.dhss.delaware.gov) for further information.

## **Health: Children including Inclusion/Exclusion of ill Children**

Upon arrival, each child will be observed for common signs of communicable disease, physical injury or other evidences of ill health.

The Early Learning Center may not permit a child who has symptoms of illness listed below to be admitted or remain at the center. The child may only return when the symptoms are gone- following the guidelines below - or - with documentation from a health care provider, stating the child has been diagnosed and the illness or symptoms pose no serious health risk to the child or to other children.

The symptoms for exclusion must include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Temperature of 100° or higher without medication even if there has not been a change in behavior for infants four months old and younger;
- Temperature of 101°F or higher without medication accompanied by behavior changes or symptoms of illness for children older than four months;
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness, such as unusual tiredness, uncontrolled coughing, unexplained irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs;

- Diarrhea; two or more times of loose stool during the past 24 hours, or if diarrhea is accompanied by fever, exclude for 48 hours after the symptoms end;
- Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, medication, or hard stools;
- Vomiting; two or more times in the past 24 hours, or one time if accompanied by a fever until 48 hours after the symptoms end or until a health care provider determines the vomiting is not contagious and the child is not in danger of dehydration;
- Ongoing stomach pain (more than two hours) or off-and-on pain due to a fever or other symptom;
- Mouth sores with drooling;
- Rash with fever or behavior change;
- Purulent conjunctivitis “pink eye” (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge), until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment;
- Scabies, until 24 hours after starting treatment;
- Pediculosis “head lice” or nits, until 24 hours after starting treatment;
- Tuberculosis, as directed by DPH;
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment and sores are dry;
- Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment;
- Varicella-Zoster (Chicken pox), until all sores have dried and crusted (usually six (6) days);
- Shingles, only if sores cannot be covered by clothing or a dressing; if not exclude until sores have crusted and are dry;
- Pertussis, until completing five days of antibiotic treatment;
- Mumps, until five days after onset of glandular swelling;
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after onset of jaundice, or as directed by DPH;
- Measles, until four days after arrival of rash;
- Rubella, until seven days after arrival of rash;
- Herpetic gingivostomatitis (cold sores), if the child is too young to have control of saliva;
- Unspecified illness if it limits the child’s comfortable participation in activities or if it results in a need for greater care than can be provided without comprising the health and safety of other children.

The Center will report any reportable communicable disease to the Division of Public Health in accordance with Division of Public Health procedures. The Center will not permit a child with a reportable communicable disease, as specified by Division of Public Health to be admitted to or remain at the Center, unless written documentation from the child's physician states the child has been evaluated and presents no risk to the child or to others; or the Center has reported the Division of Public Health and they have advised the child presents no health risk to others.

When a child has been diagnosed as having a reportable vaccine-preventable communicable disease, all children who have not been immunized against the disease will be excluded from the Center in accordance with Division of Public Health procedures.

If a child who has already been admitted to the ELC manifests any of the illnesses or symptoms specified here, the Center will remove the child from the group of well children to a separate area until the child can be picked up by a parent/guardian or authorized pick up person; or a licensed physician indicates verbally or in writing that the illness/symptoms pose(s) no serious health risk to the child or to other children. While a child is cared for in the separate room/area, the ELC will ensure that the child is supervised and the child's individual needs for rest, comfort, food, drink and appropriate activity are met.

### *Health Screenings*

Health Screenings, such as vision and hearing screenings, are required per the child health appraisal at time of enrollment.

### **Helmets**

The DE Office of Child Care Licensing regulations state that a helmet is only necessary when riding a bicycle with wheels greater than 20 inches in diameter – which exceeds the wheel diameter of the tricycles used at the ELC - therefore the Center does not require children to wear safety helmets for using tricycles. Helmets are required and available for children when riding scooters with handles. Should a parent wish to bring in a labeled helmet for their child they may do so.

### **Immunizations**

The University of Delaware Early Learning Center complies with the following Delaware Office of Child Care Licensing Regulations pertaining to immunizations:

- A. A licensee shall ensure that within one month of starting care, each child's file has a health appraisal that includes an immunization record. A health care provider shall have conducted this health appraisal within the last 12 months. A licensee does not need a child's health appraisal if other federal or State laws, such as specified in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, require the center to admit a child without one. Health appraisals and immunization records must be updated every 13 months.
- B. A licensee is not required to update health appraisals for children in grades kindergarten or higher after receiving one completed after the child began kindergarten or a higher grade.
- C. A licensee shall ensure a child whose parent/guardian objects to immunizations on a religious basis or whose health care provider certifies that the immunization may be harmful to the child's health will be exempt from the immunization requirement.
  1. A notarized statement or documentation from a health care provider is required for this exemption.
  2. A licensee shall place this documentation in the child's file.

Based on these regulations, there may be children enrolled who are not immunized due to legal exemptions. Federal laws mandate that health-related records be kept confidential, therefore, ELC staff persons are not at liberty to respond to specific questions pertaining to immunizations of children within classrooms beyond explaining that the Center adheres to the Delaware Office of Child Care Licensing Regulations and Delaware State law. Medical experts indicate that an immunization rate of 90% or above provides a solid basis for "herd immunity". The immunization rate at the ELC historically and currently exceeds 95%.

When a child has been diagnosed as having a reportable vaccine-preventable communicable disease, all children who have not been immunized against the disease will be excluded from the Center in accordance with Division of Public Health procedures.

### **Lesson and Experience Plans**

Lesson and experience plans are to be completed on a regular basis and submitted to the Co-Directors for approval. Please check with the Co-Director for specific age group timelines. Per OCCL guidelines, plans must be posted in the classroom for families to view.

## **Meals and Snacks**

Classroom staff at the ELC participates with the children in family style dining to support home living skills and socialization. Children are encouraged to serve themselves and eat the food presented but are never forced. We encourage children's good health by serving nutritious meals & snacks and by teaching proper hygiene including hand washing and tooth brushing.

Our meals and snacks meet the current United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Delacare meal pattern requirements based on the age of each child. The ELC does not serve peanut or tree nut products.

The menu is developed by the ELC Nutrition team. Copies of the monthly menu are posted on the ELC website [www.elc.udel.edu](http://www.elc.udel.edu) as well as on each classroom parent board and are available in the main reception area. We understand that hectic schedules sometimes lead to eating meals or snacks on the run, but we respectfully request that your child not arrive at the center with food in hand. Breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack -- for children who are old enough to eat table food -- are included in the cost of your tuition.

### *Schedule for Meals:*

*Infants:* (for those who are eating table food):

Breakfast 8:15am – 8:45am; Lunch 11:15am – 11:45am; Afternoon Snack 3:00pm

*Toddlers:*

Breakfast 8:30am – 9:00am; Lunch 11:30am – 12:15pm; Afternoon Snack 3:00pm

*Preschoolers:*

Breakfast 8:30am – 9:00am; Lunch 11:45am – 12:30pm; Afternoon Snack 3:15pm

*School Age:*

- Before and/After Care: Breakfast 7:15am – 7:40am; Afternoon Snack 3:30pm
- Full Day: Breakfast 8:30am-9:00am; Lunch 12pm – 12:30pm; Afternoon Snack 3:00pm

Regulations require that meals be served within a limited time after leaving the kitchen to ensure proper temperatures, therefore, children must be present within these time frames in order to be served.

### *Infant Specific*

- Bottles for infants may not be made of glass even if the manufacturer states it is shatter-proof.
- Infants unable to sit are held for bottle-feeding. All others may sit or are held to be fed. Infants do not have bottles while in a crib or eat from a propped bottle at any time.
- The ELC encourages and supports breast feeding. A breast-feeding room is located near Infant room 5 in Newark.
- A bottle can be used for feeding for up to one hour but cannot be put back in the refrigerator or reheated. Unused portions of formula or breast milk shall be discarded after one hour.
- Throw out all formula/breast milk left over in bottles once the child has finished eating (or after one hour), rinse the bottle and place it in the child's cubby. Dirty bottles are all sent home to be washed and sanitized for the next day.

*Formula and Baby Foods* -- For children not yet eating table food – formula and baby foods are included in the price of tuition. The ELC provides one brand of formula; families may provide alternative formulas and/or breast milk based on their infant’s needs. Families are responsible for providing sterilized plastic bottles. Teaching staff offer children fluids from a cup as soon as the families and teachers decide together that a child is developmentally ready to use a cup. The ELC provides Sippy cups for older infants and toddlers.

#### *Exceptions to the Scheduled Menu*

If substitutions to the menu are necessary due to allergies or other medical reasons, food intolerances, religious restrictions, or organic and vegetarian lifestyles, it is the responsibility of the family to provide substitutes. When food and beverage substitutes are provided from home, please ensure that these are healthy and nutritious including: dairy products such as milk, cheese, and yogurt; protein such as meat, fish, chicken, eggs cheese, and beans; fruits and vegetables; grains such as bread, cereal, pasta and rice and 100% fruit juice – no sugar added.

All foods and beverages brought from home must be in unbreakable, single-serve containers that maintain the food or beverage at the proper temperature and are labeled with the date as well as the child’s name. These items should be placed on the food prep counter in your child’s classroom upon arrival. Microwaves are never used to heat children’s food or beverages.

#### *Food for Birthday Celebrations*

Please consult with your child’s teacher prior to bringing in food. Delacare regulations require that any food that is brought to be shared be in commercially prepared, factory-sealed containers with the ingredients listed. The ELC requests that all food be free of peanuts, nuts, or nut byproducts. Most celebrations take place in the afternoon so please limit the snack to a small portion since children will soon be going home to eat dinner.

### **Medical and Dental Management Procedure - Physician Ordered**

The University of Delaware Early Learning Center is an inclusive community that aims to support and welcome children with medical conditions and to provide all children with medical conditions with the same opportunities as others in the program.

At the ELC, we understand that medical conditions should not be a barrier to development and learning, so we will ensure that all staff understand their responsibility of care for all children in the event of an emergency and feel confident in knowing what to do daily in care of the child. Teaching staff obtain certification in Medication of Administration through the Office of Child Care Licensing.

This ELC understands that certain medical conditions are serious and can be potentially life threatening, particularly if ill managed or misunderstood. Therefore, we will ensure that all staff understand the common medical conditions that affect children in the program and assure all staff receive the necessary training.

The ELC will consult closely with families and with permission, all community health providers who support each child’s medical care plan.

The ELC understands the importance of providing feedback to those involved in the development process and is committed to acknowledging input and providing follow-up to suggestions put forward. Families and staff of the ELC will annually review the medical health plan and policy.

Families will be informed of the ELC medical health plan and policy during enrollment and can access this plan in the family handbook.

Staff will review the plan and policy annually and participate in training to support each child's individualized care plan.

Staff are aware of the most common serious medical conditions at the program, and they understand their responsibility to care for children in the event of an emergency. All ELC staff are required to obtain a First Aid and CPR certification and teaching staff complete the online Administration of Medication training offered through the Office of Child Care Licensing. Staff who work directly with children in the program receive training and know what to do for the children in their care with medical conditions. Training is reviewed each year for all staff working directly with a child with medical conditions.

Medical care plan forms are completed by the family and in collaboration with the family's physician or health care provider. After being received by the program, they are reviewed by the Co-Director and classroom staff for clarity. If questions arise, the Co-Director will work with the family to help support the plan. The plan is then implemented by the classroom staff with support from the Leadership team. The plan is regularly monitored by classroom staff and the Co-Director to assure the steps taken are benefiting the health and wellbeing of the child.

### **Medication, Ointments, Sunscreen, and Insect Repellent**

The ELC strictly adheres to the guidelines set forth in the Administration of Medication self-study guide which is available on-line at <https://kids.delaware.gov/occl/pdf/administration-of-medication-selfstudy-guide-en.pdf>. Only those employees who have an Administration of Medication certificate will administer medications to children. When dropping off medication, parents should give it directly to a teacher or classroom assistant so that it can be secured. Medication must be kept in a location that is secure and not accessible to children. Any medications that need to be refrigerated will be stored in a closed container that is separate from food in the refrigerator located in the laundry room.

The Early Learning Center cannot give medication on an as needed basis. Medication must be in its original container and have proper labeling including the child's name and instructions for giving the medication. If it is a prescription, the medication must be in the prescription bottle with the child's name on it. If the medication states, "under a certain age (for example 6), consult a physician", then the Early Learning Center must have a note from the doctor stating that it is okay to give that particular medication to the child and how much is to be given. Parents/guardians must sign in medication (on the medication log) - indicating what is to be given (name of medication), how much is to be given (parent must provide an appropriate measuring device so that the exact amount can be measured and given), route the medication is to be given (ex: by mouth) and when (time). All paperwork required by the State will be maintained by any person administering medications. Medication that is expired cannot be given.

For sunscreen and diaper ointment families must sign on a monthly basis. Sunscreen should be sent home and updated on a regular basis (dependent on expiration date). Sunscreen needs to be replaced because it loses its SPF strength. Spray sunscreen may not be used on infants and toddlers. If parents request application of insect repellent, a medication form should be used as described above. The bottles should be labeled with the child's name. Insect repellent should not be used on children younger than two months.

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation**

To earn and maintain accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) the Early Learning Center Newark completes an extensive self-study process, measuring the program and its services against NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and more than 400 related Accreditation Criteria and successfully passes an on-site monitoring visit by NAEYC assessors every 5 years. National accreditation is currently held by about 10% of centers in the country.



### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

The University of Delaware is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and Title IX institution. For the University's complete non-discrimination statement, please visit:

<http://www.udel.edu/home/legal-notices/>

### **Parental/Adult Code of Conduct**

One of the goals of the ELC is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the staff at the ELC but is the responsibility of each adult who enters the Center.

- Adults are expected to foster a positive environment by interacting with children and other adults in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect.
- No adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on Center property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. This includes mobile phone conversations.
- Verbal and physical threats of any kind will not be tolerated. All threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities.
- Adults may not use corporal punishment or harsh verbal criticism of children on ELC property. Parents are encouraged to discuss behavioral concerns with the ELC staff and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.
- Adults are prohibited from correcting or disciplining a child that is not their own. If an adult witnesses a child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their child, the adult should direct their concern to the classroom staff and/or a Center Administrator.
- For the health of all ELC employees, children and associates, smoking is prohibited in the building and on the property.
- Families are expected to park only in the large lot on the western side of the ELC between the signs with an ELC permit on the car dash. Families understand that parking anywhere else – including the small lot at the front of the building and in the fire lane - is not permitted and may lead to a parking ticket from UD Parking Services.
- The routines your child develops during the early years will continue throughout their school career. Children are expected to attend every day to benefit from the educational components and routines of our programs. Children must be settled in classrooms by 9:30 am (or 8:30 am if they are eating breakfast). Drop offs after 10 am require notification in advance.
- Please refrain from using your phone while in the ELC. Children and staff need your full attention at drop off and pick up.

Any adult who violates the Parental/Adult Code of Conduct will not be permitted on ELC property thereafter and such violations may result in termination of enrollment.

### **Parent Concerns/Conflict**

Should you have a question or concern regarding your child's care, please first contact your child's classroom teacher. If your concern is not addressed or resolved to your satisfaction, please contact the appropriate Co-Director. In the event a conflict arises between a family and the classroom staff, and a meeting with the Directors is necessary, conflict resolution strategies will be used to support both parties. These strategies include providing a time for a scheduled meeting, in an uninterrupted space for talking so both parties can be heard and sharing ideas towards a mutually agreed upon solution. The Director will offer guidance to support an optimal solution for both parties, and a decision will be made to support both parties moving forward in support of everyone on the team, including the child.

## **Parking**

A parking pass will be distributed to currently enrolled families of the ELC valid for up to one hour at drop off and up to one hour at pick up in the large, designated parking lot to the right of the ELC as you enter off Wyoming Rd. Cars that do not have this pass or a UD grey parking permit in their front window may be ticketed and/or towed. ELC staff do not have the authority to waive parking fees assessed by UD Public Safety. Use the main entry of the building to enter/exit the building.

The small lot closest to the ELC is reserved for visitors and employees. This lot is absolutely not available for drop off or pickups. The circle in front of the building cannot be used by families to pick up/drop off children as this designated area is for school bus pick up/drop off in the morning and afternoon and is a fire lane the remainder of the time.

For the safety of all of our children and families, do not leave children unattended in your vehicle while at the ELC and do not leave your car idling in the parking lot unattended.

## **Photographing and Videotaping of Children**

Families complete a UD model release form related to photos/videos. Full time staff take photos of children to share with families and to use in their classroom activities/displays. Children who have permission to be featured online could have their photo shared on the ELC website or our FaceBook page. Families should consult with the teaching staff before taking photos of anyone beyond their own child. (due to photo restrictions)

## **Physical Activity**

The ELC will provide opportunities for physical activity for each child one year and older according to his or her ability. In addition, 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity indoors or outdoors will be provided every 4 hours when the child is in care and structured physical activities are adapted to allow inclusion of children of all abilities.

## **Positive Guidance/Behavior Supports**

The ELC uses the Pyramid Model of positive guidance as a framework to support the social/emotional development and learning of all children. This model is an evidence-based model for assuring the social emotional needs of all children are recognized and supported. More information about the Pyramid Model for Early Learning can be found here:

<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Pyramid/overview/index.html>

The ELC promotes relationship building through the use of the Conscious Discipline Curriculum and strategies to support positive behavior for all members of the learning community. Relationship building describes the process of establishing emotional connections with others, starting from birth, which are based on trust and intimacy. Through relationships, children discover who they are and learn to understand others. When young children experience people helping, understanding, and enjoying them, they approach the world with openness and enthusiasm, and they grow to be responsive and caring people. Babies are born with a drive to relate to and connect with others, and they continue to develop the social skills necessary to form strong, healthy relationships throughout their lives. More information about Conscious Discipline can be found here:

<https://consciousdiscipline.com/>

The ELC employs positive guidance as a method to support both social-emotional growth and relationship building, with a strong emphasis on preventative measures. Strategies are appropriate to the child's age, developmental stage and individual needs. One goal is to help each child develop self-control/self-regulation. We recognize that it is important to work together with families to encourage the child's positive behaviors.

The most important step in the process entails the teacher's use of preventative strategies, by providing routines and engaging activities and positive interactions. Teachers recognize the essential role that relationships play in their ability to facilitate children's social competence therefore they take intentional steps to ensure that every child feels accepted and gains a sense of belonging. Teachers create safe learning environments, so children can answer three key questions with affirmation: Am I safe? Am I loved? What can I learn? Absolutely YES!

Staff support each child's social emotional development through modeling and explicit instruction of friendship skills, self-care, and creating positive group dynamics. Strategies are appropriate to the child's age, developmental stage, and individual learning styles.

Teaching staff promote pro-social behavior by interacting in a respectful manner with all staff and children and by modeling behaviors such as caring, turn taking, listening, negotiating, and comforting and by intentionally facilitating children's efforts in these areas. Teachers actively teach social communication and emotional regulation skills, and they assist children in resolving conflicts. Teachers scaffold learning opportunities for children to experience positive examples of self-awareness and conflict resolution with others each day, building a community of learners who work and learn together.

*The following opportunities, among others, are provided:*

- Respectful interactions
- Engagement in activities and labeled praise for positive efforts
- Stating the emotion; giving value to feelings
- Encourage verbalization of feelings
- Modeling of conflict resolution strategies and behaviors such as: caring, turn-taking, listening, negotiating, and comforting

*To support a child's growing self-regulation skills, we use:*

- Redirection to a different activity
- Teacher support during an activity
- Breathing and mindfulness techniques
- Picture schedules to predict routine
- Safe place/Calming corners

*Working towards a positive solution:*

When challenging behaviors occur, teachers observe to identify events, activities, interactions, and other contextual factors that predict challenging behavior and may contribute to the child's use of challenging behavior (Functional Behavior Analysis). Teachers identify skills that need to be taught and incorporate these into their activities and routines. Teachers use environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior.

Teaching staff respond to a child's challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and others, is respectful and provides the child with information on acceptable behavior. Staff guide and support children who bully, isolate, or hurt other children; helping them to replace the behavior with relationship-building skills and strategies. If challenging behavior persists, then teachers meet with their associate director to examine collected data and to plan how to proceed. After meeting with the age group administrator, the teaching staff meet with the family to share observations, discuss concerns, and determine if there are any related issues that could contribute to the behavior. Families are also asked to assist in developing a plan to determine supports (a more formal Behavior Support Plan) that would help the child while in the classroom and at home. The plan includes positive behavior support strategies/Conscious Discipline strategies to support the child and families. After implementation of the Behavior Support Plan, the team, including the family, will reconvene to review progress. With family permission, additional consultants, specialists, and agencies may be consulted by the family or by the ELC.

The ELC will support all children, including children identified and supported with an IEP/IFSP, and work with outside agencies and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to support children's continuation in their current placement. A child's enrollment will not be terminated for challenging behavior unless it is a last resort option in cases that include: 1.) a determination of a serious safety threat; and only after 2.) a detailed progression of intermediate interventions for the child has been implemented and documented through a Behavior Support Plan and Team.

#### *Important Language from Office of Child Care Licensing and NAEYC:*

Teaching staff never use threats or derogatory or humiliating remarks and neither withhold nor threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline. At no time will any staff member or volunteers of the ELC engage in psychological abuse, ex's include, shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection or coercion, ex's include, Rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up) and will not use any form of physical/ corporal punishment. Examples of physical punishment include: shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears; or requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time.

### **Professional Development**

#### *Screening and Assessment Assurances*

During orientation and ongoing professional development throughout the year, staff are trained to implement screeners and other child assessments such as: Ages and Stages 3, Ages and Stages SE, Teaching Strategies Gold and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness (applicable to age of children) through ongoing access to vendors web-based trainings. ASQ screenings are often completed by families. Teachers can facilitate this completion.

#### *Policies and Procedures*

This also includes an initial orientation of policies and procedures at the ELC.

### **Program Evaluation**

The ELC leadership team is committed to an ongoing strategic planning process and program evaluation with the goal of continuously moving the Early Learning Center forward as a center of excellence. The

ELC conducts annual staff and family surveys, and ongoing evaluation of professional development opportunities, staff recruiting and retention, accreditation and licensure compliance, and child screening and assessment data. This information, along with feedback from our University and community partnerships guides our overall plan.

### **Referral for Evaluation**

When teachers suspect that a child may have a developmental delay, which could benefit from therapeutic intervention, this should be communicated to the Leadership Team. Together the teacher and director will gather anecdotal notes, review assessment and screening data and write a report about the child's experience in the classroom specific to this concern. Next, they will reach out to the family of the child in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner to discuss the concern and recommend further evaluation. If the family agrees to pursue an evaluation, the Director will provide the family with contact information for agencies which conduct such evaluations such as Child Development Watch, the Christina School District and Nemours Behavioral Health. If the family gives their consent, therapists who work in the center may be asked to observe the child and share their opinion as to whether an evaluation might be a reasonable course of action.

### **Release of Children**

To protect the safety of the children in our care, it is critical that children only be released to authorized individuals as listed by the families in their enrollment packet and any subsequent updates.

In the event of an emergency, the parent may call to grant permission to have someone pick up who is not on the list. We will confirm that the caller is the parent by asking child and family specific questions to the caller. The parent must provide verbal or written permission (written is preferred and can be faxed or emailed). It will also be necessary for the parent to provide the person's name and description. Upon arrival, this person must present identification.

No child will be released to a person who appears to be intoxicated or otherwise incapable of bringing the child home safely.

**NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS:** Unless the Center has a copy of a valid court order barring a non-custodial parent from contact with his/her child, the ELC cannot refuse a parent access. If the Center has a court order stating that a non-custodial parent is not allowed contact with the child and the non-custodial parents attempts to take the child, Police Officers will be called for assistance.

If a family wishes to add or delete people authorized to pick up their child, they must provide the ELC with this information in person and in writing to staff at the front desk. The change will be noted in our files and the staff will be notified. It is essential that all contact information be kept current for authorized pick-up persons.

To protect the safety of the children in our care, it is critical that children only be released to authorized individuals. If a staff person does not recognize the person picking up, we will ask for identification. If a person is not on the authorization list, we cannot release the child.

If a child is left at the Center past pick-up time, the parents and other persons listed as authorized to pickup will be called. If there is no response at any of the provided numbers, messages will be left. If there is no response to pick up the child within a half hour, Police Officers will be notified, and the Delaware Division of Child Protective Services will be called to assume responsibility for the child.

## Schedule

Classroom specific daily schedules are posted in each classroom. Below is an overview of activities at the ELC on a daily basis.

### Center Wide Schedule

7:00 am	ELC opens, Free Choice and Morning Activities
8:30 am	Breakfast served to each classroom as appropriate by age and need
8:30 am – 11:30 pm	Classroom Activities/Outdoor Activities
11:30 am - 12:00 pm	Lunch Served to each classroom as appropriate by age and need
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Rest Time as appropriate
3:00 pm	Snack served to each classroom as appropriate by age and need
3:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Classroom Activities/Outdoor Activities
6:00 pm	ELC Closes

## Security and Safety Measures

The health and safety of our children is of paramount importance. Some important information:

- All exterior doors are locked. Persons other than staff must enter and exit the building through the front reception area and must show ID if they are not known to the front desk staff.
- Children must be escorted to/from the classroom and the adult who is dropping off/picking up must sign the child in/out.
- Only persons authorized by families will be permitted to pick up a child from the ELC. Authorized persons must be a minimum of 16 years old and will be asked to present identification if they are not recognized by staff. (See section titled "Release of Children.")
- The ELC is equipped with security cameras outside the building. In addition, there are observation booths overlooking all spaces used by children.
- Observation booths are left unlocked. Classrooms may be observed, videotaped or audiotaped for a variety of reasons. Families or others outside the ELC are not permitted to video or audio tape without the consent of all families. You will not receive notice of observation or recording.
- All ELC staff are required to have training in first aid, CPR, and blood borne pathogens. Before working with children, staff must have a criminal background check, including a child abuse registry check and adult abuse registry check. In addition, all staff are required to have a periodic health exam and TB test.
- All UD students, faculty and volunteers who will be in the building more than seven hours in one week or a total of forty hours or more in a year are required to have a criminal background check, which includes a child and adult abuse registry check, as well as a health exam and TB test.
- Outdoor learning areas are available for each age group and are equipped with age-appropriate equipment and a six-foot perimeter fence.
- Classrooms are equipped with age-appropriate furniture, toys and equipment, safety outlets, finger guards on bathroom doors, each room is connected to an internal intercom system and the ability to lock the classroom door from the inside for lockdown purposes.
- Smoke, sprinkler, and fire alarm systems are located throughout the building.
- Fire Drills are practiced monthly. The University of Delaware Environmental Health and Safety department and University of Delaware Police help to oversee all emergency preparedness activities.

### **School Age Program**

The ELC offers before and after care for three local schools: Newark Charter School, West Park Place Elementary and Las Aspira Academy. Buses for each school pick up and drops off at the ELC. This program is open to children who have current siblings participating in other programs at the ELC. Contact the ELC to express interest in the School Age program.

### **Screen Time**

Screen time activities include watching television, using a gaming device, tablet, phone, or computer. Screen time must be supervised by a staff member, age appropriate, and educational. Screen time activities require written parent/guardian permission and are limited to one hour or less per day unless a special event occurs. Children younger than two years are prohibited from participating in screen time activities.

### **Sleeping: Children**

All cots in preschool will be a minimum of 18" apart. Cots/cribs in infants and toddlers will be at least 18" apart and preferably 3 feet apart when classroom space allows. When possible, children are to sleep head to toe to prevent the spread of air-borne illnesses. To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) the following guidelines are followed:

#### *Infants 1-12 Months old*

- Keep soft or loose bedding away from sleeping infants and out of safe sleep environments. Items including, but not limited to the following, are not to be placed in the crib or pack-and-play with an infant: toys, blankets, comforters, pillows, stuffed animals, bumper pads, sheepskins, flat sheets, cloth diapers other than those worn by an infant, etc. Items can impair the infant's ability to breathe if they are close to its face. Attaching toys or objects, such as mobiles or busy boxes, to sleeping or rest equipment is prohibited.
- Infants shall sleep only in cribs and be placed on their backs when laid down to sleep. An exception may be granted if the infant's health care provider documents in writing that the infant's physical or medical condition requires an alternative sleeping position or use of sleep-positioning device. The health care provider must stipulate the specific sleeping position in which that infant must be placed or stipulate the sleep-positioning device and how it should be used.
- After being placed down to sleep on their backs, infants are allowed to assume any sleep position when they can easily turn themselves from the back position. If infants arrive at the program asleep, or fall asleep, in equipment not specifically designed for infant sleep, the infant is removed and placed in appropriate infant sleep equipment.
- The swaddling of infants requires written parent/guardian consent. The use of blankets for swaddling shall not be used when laying an infant down to sleep; swaddle-blanket sleepers may be used.

A child's rest equipment shall be labeled with the child's name and only used by that child.

### **Smoking, Alcohol, Illegal Substances & Firearms**

No smoking, alcohol, or illegal substances are permitted on ELC grounds, including all interior and exterior spaces. Firearms are prohibited on ELC property.

### Staff-Child Ratios

Every attempt will be made to maintain ELC ratios, however there may be short periods of time when classrooms will move toward, but not exceed, State ratios.

Age Group	ELC Ratios	NAEYC Ratios	State of DE Ratios
<b>Infants</b> Under 12 mos.	1:3 Group size of 6	1:4 Group size of 8	1:4 Group size of 8
<b>Toddlers</b> 12 – 36 mos.	1:4, 1:5* Group size of 8-10*	1:6 Group size of 12	1:8 Group size of 16
<b>Preschool</b> 3-5 years	1:8, 1:10* Group size of 16-20*	1:10 Group size of 20	1:10 (3) 1:12 (4) Group size of 20 (24)
<b>School Age</b> K – 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	1:8 Group size of 16	1:15 for school age Group size 30	1:15 Group size of 30

\*ratios may vary depending on square footage of the room.

When children are in mixed age groups, the ratio for the youngest child will be maintained. During nap times when children are sleeping, the Delacare licensing permits ratio decreases to half of the normal staffing pattern with the exception that infant ratios remain the same, regardless of whether the children are awake or asleep.

At least two staff members must be in the building during all hours of operation, which is to include one member of the leadership team, or a person designated by leadership to open/close the center.

### Staff Working for Families

We do not encourage, authorize, or take responsibility for any services that employees may provide outside of our programs.

### Supervision of Children

At no time may any child be left unsupervised in the Early Learning Center or on the ELC grounds. Staff may permit kindergarteners and school-age children to leave the teacher's supervision (out of sight and sound) for no more than 10 minutes so long as the children are in a safe environment (e.g., go to hall bathroom, report to front desk, walk dishes to kitchen). The teacher checks on any children who do not promptly (within 10 minutes) return to the group as expected or if an adult at the child's destination doesn't confirm his or her arrival.

Support Staff and Volunteers do not work alone with children. They must be with, and supervised by, regularly scheduled teaching staff at all times. Support staff include an adult employed by the program, but not part of the teaching staff.

It is never permitted for infants, toddlers, or young two's to be out of sight of classroom staff; all staff must be able to see and hear the children at all times. Once a guardian signs a child out of the ELC, they are responsible for the close supervision of that child while on ELC property.



## **Toys from Home**

Unless specifically requested/approved by your child's teacher, toys, games, electronic equipment, trading cards or similar items, should not be brought to school. Young children who have a transition object such as a blanket or stuffed animal may bring that item to the Center, but the ELC is not responsible if it is lost, damaged or broken in any way.

## **Transitions**

The typical transition period at the ELC is at the beginning of September, which is consistent with the school district movement for the school year. Children in the infant program, who are ready, will move up to Toddlers. Children who are in Toddlers will move up to Preschool at this time, if they are already three, or soon to be three. Children who are in Preschool will move up to Prekindergarten (typically must be 4 on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>). Children who are in the Preschool 3 program, which is a multi-age class with 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds, will stay with this group until they leave to go to Kindergarten.

The Kindergarten process in Delaware is one of School Choice. The school choice deadline is January, so you will want to check this out when your child is in their PreK experience.

The Delaware Readiness Teams website has many resources for you to utilize during the year your child is four to get ready for Kindergarten. We will send home information about this process to all Kinderbound children, starting in November each year.

Our School Age program supports children who are in three area schools: West Park Place Elementary School, Newark Charter School, and La Aspira Academy Charter School. Our School Age program is very small, and there is a wait list. Families have an opportunity to express their interest in the program each March, prior to the start of the Kindergarten year. Families are notified of their status in getting into the program by April.

## **Transportation: Children including Before and After Care**

Buses for West Park Place, Aspira Academy and Newark Charter School pick up and drop off at the ELC. The movement of children in and out of the building during these times is documented on the bus checklist located at the front desk. This is also recorded at the classroom level on the child tracking sheet. If a child is unexpectedly absent at the bus return time, families are called to verify if other arrangements have been made.

## **Visitors Under the Age of 16**

Visitors to the Center who are under the age of 16 may not be considered volunteers and are considered to be an additional child for purposes of the staff/child ratios. Visitors under the age of 16 must be directly supervised by qualified staff at all times.

## **Volunteers**

A person must be 16 years or older in order to volunteer in a licensed center, may not count toward staff/child ratios, may not be left alone with children and must be supervised at all times by a qualified staff person. All volunteers that are present more than 5 days or 40 hours per year are considered as "staff" which requires them to have a volunteer personnel file which shall include a health appraisal, background check, 2 references, orientation, signed Child Abuse Reporting Law, and Declaration Form.

The DE State Police fingerprinting division does not conduct background checks for persons under the age of 18, persons between the ages of 16-18 cannot volunteer more than 5 days or 40 hours per year. Requests to volunteer are approved by the leadership team. Volunteers are required to sign in and out.

**Weather Policy for Outdoor Learning**

Children will participate in outdoor learning activities daily. The Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards – written in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics – recommend children play outdoors daily when weather and air quality conditions do not pose a significant health risk. The Office of Child Care Licensing **requires** that children go outside when the wind chill factor is 32 degrees or higher or the heat index is 89 degrees, or lower and the weather and environmental conditions do not pose a significant health or safety risk. Outdoor play during periods outside the temperature range is permissible – unless the National Weather Service has issued an advisory regarding health or safety risks in the area.

The ELC closely monitors [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) for all weather and air quality alerts and will adjust the outdoor play schedules accordingly. Children should be dressed appropriately to accommodate these temperatures when outdoors. If children are not healthy enough to go outdoors, they should not be brought to school.

**Withdrawal Policy**

When you wish to withdraw your child from the ELC, 30 days' written notice is necessary. We respectfully request that you also include the reason for withdrawing.

## Community Resources

Act Now Crisis Line and Children’s Services .....	800-969-4357
Birth to Three Offices .....	302-255-9134
Brandywine Counseling .....	302-656-2348
Catholic Charities .....	302-655-9624
Center for Disease Control .....	800-232-4636
Children and Families First .....	302-658-5177
Child Development Watch .....	302-283-7240
Child Mental Health Services .....	302-633-2600
Child, Inc .....	302-762-8989
Dart First State Reduced Fare Program .....	302-577-3278
Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families .....	302-633-2505
Delaware Division of Family Services .....	302-451-2800
Delaware Guidance for Children and Youth .....	302-652-3948
Delaware Health and Social Services .....	302-255-9040
Delaware Helpline .....	302-577-3000
Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood .....	302-831-3239
Delaware Office of Early Learning .....	302-735-4295
Delaware State Housing Authority .....	302-739-4263
Developmental Disabilities Council .....	302-739-2232
Easter Seal Society .....	302-324-4444
Hudson State Service Center (Newark) .....	302-283-7500
Jewish Family Services of Delaware .....	302-478-9411
KidsHealth from Nemours .....	<a href="http://kidshealth.org">kidshealth.org</a>
Libraries – Delaware Division of .....	800-282-8696
New Castle County Head Start Program (3–5-year-olds) .....	302-452-1500
New Directions Early Head Start (pregnant women and birth – 3-year-olds) .....	302-831-0584
Occupational Therapists and Associates .....	302-736-0990
Office of Child Care Licensing .....	302-892-5800
Online Guide to Human Services .....	800-560-3372
Parents as Teachers .....	302-398-8945
Parent Education Partnership .....	302-633-2505
Parent Information Center .....	302-999-7394
Poison Control Center .....	800-722-7112
Read Aloud Delaware .....	302-656-5256
Wilmington Head Start (3–5-year-olds) .....	302-421-3620
YMCA of Delaware .....	302-571-6908