

**Family Guide**

**Ozarks Technical Community College**

**Early Childhood Education Center**

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2

Welcome/Introduction………………………..………………………………………………………………………………..4

Non Discrimination Statement 4

**Parental Responsibilities…………………………………… …..………………………………5**

Our Program 6

History of the Center 6

Mission Statement 6

Accreditation 6

Philosophy 7

Goals and Objectives for Children 7

Personnel 8

Curriculum 8

Daily Schedule 9

Enrollment Process 11

Eligibility for Enrollment 11

Waiting List 11

Orientation 11

Required Forms and Documentation 12

Continued Enrollment 12

Minimum Enrollment 12

Updating Information 13

Schedule Changes 13

Absences 13

Exiting Procedures 13

Reasons for Dismissal 13

Financial Policies/Procedures 15

Tuition 15

Multiple Children 16

Late Fees 16

Collection Process 16

General Policies/Procedures 17

Hours/Days of Operation 17

Daily Arrival 17

Daily Departures…………………… ………………………………………………17

Separation 17

Cell Phone Usage 18

Parking 18

Procedures for Releasing Children 18

Meals 19

Birthdays 18

Guidelines for Healthy Celebrations 20

Celebrations and Traditions………………………………………………………… 21

What to Wear to School 21

Outside and Physical Activity Policy 21

Screen Time Policy 22

Naps 23

Toys from Home 23

Field Trips 23

Health, Safety and Security 24

Medical Examination 24

Immunization Record 24

Sick Child Policy 24

Medication Authorization Policy 26

Special Needs Policy 26

Allergies 27

Accidents and Injuries 27

Weather Conditions 27

Emergency Procedures 28

Safety Practices 32

Parking Lot/Street Safety 32

Court Orders 32

Security System 33

Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse/Neglect 33

Child Abuse/Neglect 33

Discipline Policy 35

Parents as Partners 38

Visiting the Center 38

Parent Participation 38

Parent/Teacher Communication 38

Parent/Teacher Conferences 38

Program Evaluation 39

Information Resources 39

Grievances 39

Parent Signature Page 41

Welcome/Introduction

We would like to welcome your family to the Ozarks Technical Community College Early Childhood Education Center. We look forward to partnering with you to meet the needs of your child and family. Our hope is that this program exceeds your expectations.

This handbook was created to acquaint you with the information needed for your child to have a successful learning experience at the OTC Early Childhood Education Center.

Please read this handbook and keep it handy throughout your child’s stay at the Center. If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this handbook, please feel free to discuss it with the Center Manager.

The Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) Early Childhood Education Center serves the OTC students, faculty and staff, and the local community. The Center is licensed by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Section for Child Care for children ages 2-5. The Center has been accredited by Missouri Accreditation of Programs for Children and Youth since October 2008.

Childcare services are provided according to the OTC academic calendar, during the Fall and Spring semester, when day classes are in session. Hours of operation are 7:00am to 5:30pm Monday through Friday.

The OTC Early Childhood Education Center registers children on a semester basis, with efforts made to accommodate families’ varied schedules as much as possible.

Non Discrimination Statement

Ozarks Technical Community College prohibits discrimination and harassment and provides equal opportunities in its admissions, educational programs, activities, and employment regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, veteran status, and disabilities that include HIV and AIDS, and medical conditions.

Parental Responsibilities

# The Center expects parents to:

1. Pay fees on time.
2. Complete all forms for enrollment and registration and keep your child’s personal/medical records up to date.
3. Check your child in/out on a daily basis.
4. Check your child’s cubby and mailbox each day. Read all communications from the center.
5. Pick up your child on time.
6. Follow the stated health policies of the program. Let us know if your child has a contagious illness.
7. Contact the program if your child will not be attending school on a scheduled day
8. Keep a complete set of season appropriate clothing in your child’s cubby.
9. Provide the Center with diapers and wipes until your child is fully toilet trained.
10. Be receptive to any and all communication from the program regarding your child’s behavior and cooperate with the program in efforts to bring about improvements in the situation

Our Program

# History of the Center

Over a decade ago, employees and students participating in professional development days and student forum lunches voiced the need for childcare. Because of these concerns and discussions, a proposalfor an on-campus preschool facility was submitted in 1998. Justification presented for the facility was to provide needed childcare for faculty, staff, and students and to meet the needs of the required practicum for the Early Childhood Development (ECD) program. After receiving a grant from the *Missouri Preschool Project (MPP)* in August 1999, the Early Childhood Education Center opened. The first center was located in a converted duplex at the corner of Hampton and Central Streets.

In August 2007, with a $1.5 million investment from the College, the newly constructed childcare facility opened. The Early Childhood Education Center has grown in enrollment by more than 150%, serving more than 100 families a year and providing service-learning opportunities for an average of 150 students each year. Because the Center is no longer MPP grant-funded, the College absorbs faculty and building expenses, which demonstrates OTC’s commitment to students, employees and the community.

# Mission Statement

The mission of the OTC Early Childhood Education Center is to provide developmentally appropriate, high quality, affordable, accessible childcare for children ages 2-5 in an environment which is safe, healthy, and nurturing. The center also provides a learning laboratory for college students enrolled in early childhood development courses and practicum work. The Center partners with parents and provides a model of best practices for children, families, students, and teachers.

# Accreditation

The OTC Early Childhood Education Center has been accredited by Missouri Accreditation of Programs for Children and Youth since October 2008.

Founded in 1981, Missouri Accreditation is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental agency. Missouri Accreditation serves as an institutional accrediting agency, providing leadership in the development of standards and performance based assessment. Missouri Accreditation functions in areas beyond the scope of state licensing for early childhood programming. To receive accreditation, a program must exceed the minimum licensing requirements. Missouri Accreditation focuses on qualitative aspects of the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth opportunities made available to children enrolled in education programs.

Accreditation involves a thorough validation of the criteria listed below:

* Children’s Relationships and Interactions
* Physical Environment
* Programming/Curriculum
* Program/Family Connections
* Administration
* Health, Safety and Nutrition

For more information or to read the Center’s self-study manual, please visit the Center Manager’s office.

# Philosophy

The Early Childhood Education Center provides a warm, secure setting where each child can develop to his/her own potential socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. Our center is developmentally based on the theory that children learn best through a concrete, play-oriented approach to education. We provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum which emphasizes child-initiated, child-directed, teacher supported play in a safe and nurturing environment.

Our curriculum and environment are designed to meet each child’s needs and to promote continuous growth in social, emotional, intellectual, physical, verbal and creative areas of development. Creativity and a strong sense of identity and competence are emphasized. Children are helped to develop a positive self-esteem and attitude towards others. The center also recognizes the importance of family in the development of each child and welcomes the involvement of parents and family members in the center.

Our center emphasizes an anti-bias approach that is based on respect for all people, especially advocating for children. We strive to create an environment where we recognize and value the uniqueness of each individual.  The OTC ECEC is an inclusive center which works to meet the needs of all children, including those with special needs whenever possible.

# Goals and Objectives for Children

* to provide a learning environment that encourages growth in all areas of development—socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically
* to help children develop a positive self-concept and attitude toward learning, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging
* to foster social/emotional growth by providing children with a secure and loving foundation
* to encourage the development of self-help skills which satisfy the children’s increasing need for independence and control over their environment
* to develop problem solving and decision making skills
* to promote respect for self, others, the natural world, and property
* to use language to communicate effectively and to facilitate thinking and learning
* to respect and accept social and cultural diversity

It is our aim to work with each family in creating the best environment for each child. The teachers of the OTC Early Childhood Education Center are concerned with the growth and development of each individual child by promoting:

* Cognitive Development:
  + Learning to solve problems and form concepts
  + Developing language and communication skills
  + Discovering and exploring the near environment
* Social-emotional Development:
  + Developing self-esteem and personal adjustment skills
  + Achieving self-confidence in relationships
  + Developing a sense of responsibility and persistence in completing tasks
* Physical Development:
  + Developing hand and body coordination
  + Learning physical skills
  + Learning good health habits
* Creative Development:
  + Expressing ideas through creative skills
  + Expressing self through creative medium
  + Developing the ability to think and act in different and unique ways

# Personnel

The staff of the Early Childhood Education Center is well educated with varied educational backgrounds and experiences in teaching and guiding young children. Full-time employees’ degrees range from associates to masters.

We also participate in the College’s work-study program. This federally funded program places college students with various majors in work sites on campus. These students assist our teachers in many ways while gaining valuable work experience.

Early Childhood Development practicum students are placed in the classrooms for learning experiences. They assist teachers and interact with the children. Practicum students are under the teacher’s guidance and supervision at all times while providing appropriate activities for children to experience.

The OTC Early Childhood Education Center maintains adult/child ratios of 1:8 for classrooms with 2 year olds and 1:10 for classrooms with 3-5 year olds. Because our program is enhanced with work study employees and ECD students, the adult/child ratio is often much lower.

All adults who volunteer in the Center are required to be registered with the Family Care Safety Registry with a “no finding status” or have a current good cause waiver. All volunteers must also have results of a negative tuberculin skin test or a TB Risk Assessment form and a signed confidentiality statement on file. All adults who are counted in the adult/child ratio are required to be registered with the Family Care Safety Registry and have a “no finding status” or a current good cause waiver. Adults who are counted in the adult/child ratio also must have on file results of a negative tuberculin skin test or a TB Risk Assessment form, a signed confidentiality statement, and a physical examination by a medical professional. Background screenings are completed annually on all students and volunteers and bi-annually on all employees.

# Curriculum

Developmentally appropriate activities are planned for each classroom. The daily schedules provide a variety of child directed and teacher directed activities, quiet and active times, as well as inside and outside play. Children have daily opportunities to learn in all developmental areas: physical, emotional, social, and intellectual.

The OTC Early Childhood Education Center’s objectives for instruction are based on the Project Construct approach to learning. Project Construct is based on the constructivist theory of learning, which states that children actively construct their own knowledge and values as a result of interactions with the physical and social worlds. This process-oriented framework not only supports young children’s ways of learning but also provides teachers, families, and administrators with the information they need to make appropriate decisions regarding the education of young children. The Project Construct framework is closely linked to state and national standards and provides a way for early childhood educators to meet learning objectives and translate their knowledge and observations of young children into appropriate teaching practices.

The primary aim of the Project Construct approach is to help foster the development of each child as an autonomous individual- socially, morally, and intellectually- in the context of relationships with others.

Project Construct classrooms:

* Use students’ interests to motivate and engage them in learning.
* Allow children to take initiative, express opinions and make choices.
* Encourage children to collaborate and work together.
* View children’s errors as learning opportunities.
* Assess children’s thinking, as well as their work, in order to teach more effectively.

Although the program may appear very informal, the curriculum and environment are the result of careful and detailed planning based on the best, most current knowledge of child growth and development.

**Daily Schedule**

The overall program is planned to meet the developmental needs of the children enrolled. Lesson plans will be implemented for each individual group of children. These plans are posted outside of each classroom.

The program provides flexibility within the schedule according to the needs of the children and the plans for that day, but the program is framed within the following schedule:

7:00 - 7:30 The Center opens. During this period when staffing and enrollment are low, children may be grouped together and participate in a variety of child directed activities.

7:30 - 8:00 Children go to their specific classrooms. As classroom assistants arrive, classrooms and tables are prepared for breakfast.

8:00 - 9:15 Breakfast is served.

8:30 - 11:30 During this period, the children participate in activities planned by the teachers. Those may include large group or small group activities such as circle time, stories, music, art, science or learning center activities. These may take place inside or outside. This time may include several bathroom or diapering periods, depending on the age of the children. Classrooms and tables are prepared for lunch.

8:45 - 1:15 Outside time activities are planned during this time, with classes’ use of the playground staggered.

11:00 - 12:00 Lunch is served to the children. Staff are expected to sit with the children during meal times and assist them in developing positive social skills. Staff are also encouraged to eat with the children.

12:00 - 3:00 Rest time for the children. The first 30 minutes is a “settling in” period, when children go to the bathroom, calm down and relax. The children are encouraged to be comfortable. Nap times are staggered according to ages of the children. Those who do not go to sleep may get up and play with quiet activities in the classroom after 1 hour of rest time. An adult remains with the children at all times. This is the quiet time in the Center when staff are encouraged to prepare classrooms, lesson plans, etc.

2:00 - 4:15 Quiet time in the classrooms gently moves into snack time. Children then have a period of free play and/or activities planned by the teacher.

2:45 - 5:15 Afternoon activities continue with outside activities with classes’ use of the playground staggered. During this period, enrollment and staffing usually begins to drop and the children may be grouped together.

5:15 - 5:30 Remaining children are awaiting the arrival of parents. The Center closes at 5:30.

Please note: This daily schedule is designed to provide a framework that children can depend on in order to feel secure during their day at the Center. Exact times will vary in each classroom. However, each day’s routine will remain as consistent as possible. Each classroom has a more specific daily schedule posted.

Enrollment Process

# Eligibility for Enrollment

Enrollment is open to children of OTC students, faculty and staff, as well as the community. Parents may choose to enroll their children in full or part time care. Enrollment is open to children ages 2 – 5. Enrollment is on a semester basis; however, currently enrolled children are permitted the first chance to enroll for the following semester.

# Waiting List

The OTC Early Childhood Education Center maintains a waiting list for interested families. Families may place children on the waiting list by completing the waiting list form on the OTC ECEC website. Waiting list priority is given according to the following:

1. OTC students
2. OTC faculty and staff
3. Community

When a space becomes available, families on the waiting list are notified on a first come, first served basis according the priority order listed above. Enrollment is based on availability in the appropriate age grouping.

# Orientation

Once the decision is made to enroll, families are provided with an enrollment packet and a family handbook. Families are encouraged to visit the Center and classrooms before the beginning of each semester. A center-wide Open House is held before the beginning of each Fall semester. Parents are encouraged to call or email the Center Manager with any additional questions.

There are some things you can do to help prepare your child for his/her first day; they also help alleviate feelings of anxiety:

* Visit the Center with your child prior to the first day of attendance.
* Tell your child ahead of time that you will be leaving him/her at the Center while you go to class or work.
* When the time comes for you to leave, say good-bye and reassure your child that you will return. If possible, let your child know what time you will return (after nap, at lunch time, etc.). This helps your child develop a routine.
* If you are not able to visit or stay for a while, talk with your child’s teacher about other ways to support your child’s transition to the classroom.

# Required Forms and Documentation

All families are required to have the following information before attendance:

* Child Care Enrollment Form
* OTC ECEC Registration forms
* Child’s Immunization Record
* Child’s Medical Examination Report (within 30 days of enrollment)
* Tuition Enrollment Contract
* Authorization for Emergency Care and Transportation
* Picture and Video Release
* Handbook Policy Agreement (from the last page of this handbook)
* CACFP Income Eligibility Form
* $25.00 Registration Fee

\*Student families must also provide a current class schedule.

\*\*Families receiving state assistance must provide verification of assistance.

# Continued Enrollment

Once your child is enrolled in the program, we assume that your child will continue for the academic term. Near the end of each semester you will receive an OTC ECEC registration form to indicate your desired hours for the upcoming semester. We will accommodate your requests on the basis of space availability. If you do not submit this form by the deadline indicated, we will assume that you no longer need childcare. Continuing families have priority over new families.

# Minimum Enrollment

Children must be enrolled for a minimum of 2 half days per week.

# Updating Information

Please remember to update contact information (phone number, addresses, immunizations, etc.) with the Center Manager any time changes occur.

# Schedule Changes

If you wish to change your child’s schedule, you need to speak to the Center Manager. Schedule changes are subject to availability and are at the discretion of the Center Manager.

# Absences

Please remember to call and leave a message with the office or your child’s classroom teachers if your child is going to be absent or later than scheduled. Emails are also acceptable communication methods.

There are no rate reductions for missed days due to illness, vacation or other circumstances.

# Exiting Procedures

The school has a 2 week notice period to terminate enrollment. Please give the Center Manager written notice 2 weeks prior to cancelling enrollment or attendance. You are responsible for any unpaid fees including the 2 week notice period.

# Reasons for Dismissal

Childcare services may be terminated for the following reasons:

* Failure to pay tuition and fees by due dates
* Failure to provide necessary documentation and paperwork within required timeframes
* Falsification of information
* Non-compliance with any of the policies in this handbook
* Arriving late to pick up child
* Lack of parental cooperation with the Center’s efforts to resolve differences and/or meet the child’s needs.
* Inability of parents, relatives, or other parties to deal in a professional manner with Center personnel or other parents and children at the center.

In some instances, it may be necessary for a decision to be made about the dismissal of a child. After attempts have been made to meet a child’s individual needs, any child who demonstrates an inability to benefit from the care offered by the Center or whose presence is detrimental to other children may be discharged from the facility. The Center reserves the right to ask that a child be removed from the program if the child becomes a disruption over a period of time *(Example: hurting other children*). Care of a child may be discontinued if the Center and the parents cannot establish a mutually satisfactory working relationship (Licensing Code 19 CSR 30-62.182).

If a child is being dismissed from the program, Center staff will work with parents to find alternative care within the community, when appropriate.

Financial Policies/Procedures

# Tuition

Tuition is billed monthly. Tuition for the full month is due by the first of each month. Payments are not accepted at the Early Childhood Education Center. Payments may be made in one of the following ways.

1. Pay with a credit or debit card online at [www.otc.edu/earlychildhoodcenter](http://www.otc.edu/earlychildhoodcenter). Click the “payment” button. There is a $3.00 per transaction fee for online payments.
2. Make **CASH ONLY** payments at Cashier Services located on the second floor of Information Commons. The Cashier Office is in Information Commons 207.

A registration fee of $25.00 will be charged for each child each semester.

Parents will receive a statement for unpaid fees.

Due to ongoing operational expenses**, there are no rate reductions for** **absences.** No reduction in fees can be made for any reason.

Arrangements may be made for semester payments in advance.

1. A late charge of $25.00 will be assessed for child care fees received after the 3rd of each month and will be added to the next month’s tuition payment.
2. Because fees are our primary source of financial support, unless a payment plan agreement has been made and signed with the Center Manager, failure to pay fees by the 15th of the month will result in your child being withdrawn from our program and any registration fees will be forfeited.

You will be charged your normal weekly rate for absences. There is no credit for missed days due to illness vacation, or other absence

OTC Student/Employee Rates\*

5 Days a week $75.00

4 Days a week $60.00

3 Days a week $45.00

2 Days a week $30.00

Half Days $10.00\*\*

\*Proof of OTC student/employee status must be submitted with registration each semester.

\*\*Half Days are 7:00-12:30 pm or 12:30-5:30 pm

Community Rates

1. Days a week $125.00
2. Days a week $100.00
3. Days a week $75.00
4. Days a week $50.00

Half Days $20.00\*

\* Half Days are 7:00-12:30 pm or 12:30-5:30 pm

Multiple Children

If more than one child per family is enrolled, there will be a 10% reduction in the weekly fee for each additional child. The child enrolled for the most days is considered to be the first child and will pay the full rate.

# Late Fees

Parents arriving after the 5:30 pm closing time will be assessed a fee of $1.00 per minute. Fees are on a per child basis.

If no one has contacted the facility or has arrived to pick up your child by 6:01 pm, OTC Safety and Security and the Springfield Police Department will be contacted.

The late pick up charge policy will also be enforced during inclement weather when the OTC Early Childhood Education Center closes early. Families will need to plan accordingly for weather related traffic issues.

Consistent lateness may be cause for withdrawal of your child from the program.

# Collection Process

* A late fee charge of $25.00 is assessed for fees not paid by the 3rd of each month.
* If child care fees are not paid by the 15th of each month, your child will be withdrawn from our center.
* Unpaid accounts will be turned over to the OTC Business Office and will be assessed an additional 35% in collection charges and placed with a collection agency for handling when the fees are over 30 days late.

# 

General Policies/Procedures

# Hours/Days of Operation

Hours of operation are 7:00 am to 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, during the regular Fall and Spring semesters. The Center follows the OTC Academic Calendar. We are open all days during the Fall and Spring semester that classes are in session, including finals weeks. Please check the calendar and be aware that the college holidays may differ from those of other school districts.

# Daily Arrival

We have a secure check in system using our computer monitors in our lobby. Please allow a few extra minutes the first time you drop off and/or pick up your child to register in the system.  Each parent and authorized pick up person will need to register in the system the first time they are dropping off or picking up.  This will involve getting a registration code from the Center Manager, and choosing two 4 to 8 digit passcodes. **It is extremely important that children are checked in and out each time they attend.  This system is how we know how many children and which children are in each classroom and in the center at any given time.  In an emergency this information is vital.**

After checking your child in on the computer, walk with him/her to the classroom. Place any items from home in your child’s cubby. **To help keep everyone healthy, all children and families must wash their hands upon entering any classroom. Please stop at the sink in your child’s classroom with your child to wash hands when you arrive each day.**

To ensure that we have a clear transfer of responsibility for your child, **please be sure that a teacher is fully aware of your child’s arrival each day.**

# Daily Departure

When you arrive to pick up your child, make sure to check your child out on the computer. In the preschool classrooms hallway, you will find a mailbox for your family. Invoices, notes, reminders, newsletters, etc. will be placed in your mailbox, instead of your child's cubby. Please check your child’s classroom cubby each day for notes, paperwork, clothing, etc. Parents **must** walk to the classroom or to the playground to pick up their child. **Please be sure that a teacher is fully aware of your child’s departure each day.**

# Separation

It is quite common for young children to feel some separation anxiety. It is often a child’s first response to coming to a new school, returning from an extended absence, or experiencing changes in the family. Some children will cry and may try to leave with you. These reactions usually disappear when the child understands that you will return and when they feel comfortable with the teachers and other children in the classroom.

Overcoming separation anxiety may take a few minutes, hours, or days, depending on the child. We know that it is hard for parents to leave when their child is crying. It helps your child if you say goodbye to him or her, instead of sneaking out the door. Be assured that a teacher is always available to your child. Usually the sadness your child expresses ends shortly after you leave.

Remember also that separation anxiety may not occur right away. Children are sometimes eager to attend school because it is new and exciting, but when the newness wears off, they may wish to stay with you. Please feel free to call the Center and talk to your child’s teacher to see how your child is doing. Please talk to the teacher if you are concerned about your child’s adjustment to school.

# Cell Phone Usage

Please refrain from using your cell phone when dropping off and picking up your child. It is difficult to interact with your child and your child’s teachers if you are on the phone.

# Parking

Please be considerate of other families during drop off and pick up. If you are planning on staying longer than 15 minutes, please utilize the parking spaces in our parking lot.

Handicap access must be provided to the building at all times. Any parking or driveway areas marked in blue must be kept free of vehicles. Do not park your vehicle in any of these areas unless you have the appropriate handicap tag on your vehicle.

# Procedures for Releasing Children

The safety and well-being of your child is of primary importance to the staff of the Center. We feel it is our responsibility to see that your child is safely supervised. The following guidelines will be closely adhered to and enforced:

1. When enrolling your child, you must provide information on anyone you authorize to pick up your child.
2. Identification will be required of parents and/or other persons authorized to pick up your child until we recognize you as someone who regularly picks up your child.
3. In the event that someone not on the list will be picking up your child, the parent must sign a note authorizing the person to take your child.
4. If the staff feels the adult (parent or other authorized adult) picking up the child may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the staff may do the following:

* Offer to call another authorized adult to pick up your child.
* Call OTC’s Campus Security if a parent is aggressive or threatening.
* Notify the local authorities.
* Discontinue the care of your child if this incident is repeated.

# Meals

The OTC Early Childhood Education Center is committed to providing each child safe, nutritious food in a pleasant learning environment. We follow the nutrition standards of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Missouri Eat Smart Guidelines. The Missouri Eat Smart guidelines were written to help child care providers create a food and nutrition environment that will improve the health of our children.

Your child must be present at the time meals/snacks begin to be served. Please consult the daily schedule on the bulletin board outside of your child’s classroom for their meal times. Licensing rules require that all children present during a meal/snack be served. All families must complete an Income Eligibility Form each year. Weekly menus are posted outside the kitchen and copies are available on top of the mailboxes weekly. Children may not bring their own food. Special arrangements may be made for children with religious customs or dietary restrictions. Please discuss these with the Center Manager. A physician’s order is required to be on file with the Center to honor such requests.

All children are required to sit at the table for meals/snacks. Such times are an important social time for children. Meals are served family style to encourage independence. While we encourage children to try and taste food offered to them, we do not require that a specific amount be eaten. Should you have a specific concern about your child’s eating habits or nutritional intake, please arrange a time to talk with your child’s teacher. Please let us know in advance if you would like to join your child for lunch. Children are not to bring extra food, candy or gum with them to school. **Children arriving with food from an outside source will be asked to dispose of the food.**

We participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. All meals/snacks served meet the guidelines set forth by this program. You will be asked to complete forms for this program on an annual basis. These forms should be returned even if you do not qualify. This program helps us meet our budget and indirectly affects your tuition rates. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. All children are served the same meals regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD).

# Birthdays

Birthdays are very special for children and are an important part of a child’s social development. Typically, foods for celebrations include cupcakes, candy, cookies and other treats that have a large amount of sugar, calories and fat. While there is nothing wrong with an occasional treat, unhealthy choices have become the norm rather than the exception. As a center we are working to instill lifelong healthy habits in the children in our care.

**Guidelines for Healthy Celebrations**

We encourage families to join us for their child’s birthday or other special occasions. The following is a list of healthy alternatives our center can provide for special occasions that promote and reinforce good nutrition. Please talk with your child’s teacher at least a week in advance about your choices, so we can be sure to have the food item on hand for snack time on your child’s special day.

Whole Grain Crackers

Granola Bars

100% Juice Boxes

String Cheese

Fresh Fruit and Low-fat Dip

Trail/Cereal Mix

Animal Crackers

Raisins

Rice Cakes

Pretzels

Yogurt/Yogurt Parfaits

Graham Crackers

Single-serve Boxes of Cereal

Vegetables and Low-fat Dip

If you feel that you want to provide “treats” for a special celebration, here is a list of non-food suggestions:

Stickers

Bubbles

Pencils

Little Toys

Toothbrushes

Activity Books

Bouncy Balls

Party Favors

Erasers

Glow-in-the-dark items

Finger Puppets

Plastic Rings

Fake Tattoos

Rubber Stamps

Whistles

Sunglasses

Before bringing items to the facility, make sure the items you wish to bring are approved by one of the OTC Early Childhood Education Center full time staff members and are age appropriate.

Here are some ideas that will give your child a memorable experience on their special day:

* Take time to have a meal with your child at the center.
* Purchase a special book for the classroom library in the birthday child’s name. Your child’s teacher can read the book to the class. Make it even more special by coming to your child’s class to read the new book.
* Plan and provide a special art activity or craft project for your child’s class.
* Work with your child’s teacher to plan special party games or activities.

If you have any questions, please feel free to talk with your child’s teacher or the Center Manager.

**Celebrations and Traditions**

We value diversity and strive to honor the traditions of many cultures. Parents are always welcome to share any family traditions with their child’s class. There are certain college traditions that the Center participates in yearly such as the Fall Harvest Parade and Graduation. Participation in these traditions is voluntary and other arrangements can be made if a family chooses not to participate. Letters are sent out prior to each activity with detailed information.

# What to Wear to School

Children should come to school with appropriate clothing for both indoor and outdoor play. We are a hands-on, messy place where kids can be kids. A child should feel free to participate in any and every activity offered at school.

* Shoes and clothing should be comfortable, easily manageable, and labeled for easy identification.
* Send your child in a sturdy shoe that supports his or her foot properly and protects the toes. Sneakers with socks are best. Sandals, flip-flops, dressy shoes and boots should not be worn as they can cause playground accidents and injuries.
* Please leave a complete change of clothing in your child’s cubby and check periodically to be sure it’s complete and appropriate for the season. Label your child’s belongings.

# Outside and Physical Activity Policy

Outdoor play is not only fun for children, but important for their growth and development. It is important that children are outside every day, weather permitting. Being outside allows children the opportunity to stretch their muscles, breathe in fresh air and enjoy the freedom of more space.

Missouri licensing guidelines state that children should have one hour of outdoor play every day unless prevented by weather or special medical reasons.

The decision to go outside will be determined daily, based on temperature, wind chill or heat index. The Center Manager will determine the amount of time the children stay outside, based on the Missouri Department of Health’s Child Care Weather Watch Chart.

**Active Play Time**

Children will be given at least two hours of active play every day, including both teacher-led activities and child directed free play. Children will not be seated for periods longer than 30 minutes, excluding nap time. Staff will encourage all children to participate in a variety of physical activities that are developmentally appropriate.

**Play Environments**

The center has safe equipment accessible to children outdoors and in the classrooms. Children have access to water through either a water fountain or water bottles throughout the day. Children are encouraged to drink water both while they are in the classroom and while they are outside.

**Physical Activity Education**

Teachers provide fun, engaging, developmentally appropriate physical activities in their daily lesson plans. The center has a variety of display materials and classroom materials that teachers may choose from to support physical activity in their classrooms. Information and educational materials about physical activity is provided to parents to encourage parents to participate in physical activities at home with their children. Center staff are provided training opportunities on developmentally appropriate physical activities annually.

**Supporting Physical Activity**

Withholding physical activity (outdoor play) as a form of discipline is not permitted. Staff will model positive behaviors by being physically active with the children, both indoors and outdoors. Staff are required to participate in all structured and unstructured physical activities with the children, promoting physical activity. Staff must redirect children to safe physical activities and/or involve the children in discussions about what to do when safety concerns arise.

Please dress your child appropriately. Make sure your child has a coat or jacket at school with his/her name in the jacket. Classrooms go outside in the morning and the afternoon; temperatures can change dramatically during that time frame.

It is our policy that a child who comes to the Center is well enough to participate in both indoor and outdoor play. If there are medical reasons why a child can’t participate in outdoor activities, we will be happy to comply with a physician’s written request and instructions.

# Screen Time Policy

Screen time in the classrooms is limited to maximum of 30 minutes per week. This includes the use of videos, television, computers, tablets, etc.

# Naps

All children are required by state licensing rules to rest in the afternoon. According to licensing rules, all children must rest for at least 30 minutes. Children who are awake will not be left on cots for longer than one hour. The Center will provide cots, but you will need to send a blanket and a fitted crib sheet labeled with your child’s name. Please take the sheet and blanket home to launder weekly. Your child may bring a quiet soft toy (for rest time only). If the toy becomes a distraction to the other children, parents will be asked to take it home. Due to space restrictions, nap items must fit in the child’s cubby.

# Toys from Home

The OTC Early Childhood Education Center provides an ample supply of developmentally appropriate toys and materials for every child in our care. Therefore, children do not need to bring toys from home, since these items may be lost or broken. Children needing security items in the opening days of school may bring clearly labeled items while adjusting to their new environment.

**Weapons of any kind, toy or real, are not allowed on the premises.**

# Field Trips

Parents are notified in advance of all field trips both on and off campus and the children are escorted on all field trips by OTC Safety and Security personnel. Written parental permission slips are required for all field trips. We welcome and encourage parent involvement on all our field trips.

Health, Safety and Security

# Medical Examination

State licensing regulations require that we maintain certain records on your child. All information required for the Center’s file will be kept strictly confidential. These records must be completed prior to admission, with the exception of your child’s health form, which must be on file at the Center within **30** **days** of yourchild’s enrollment.

# Immunizations

**A current immunization record is required prior to attendance. Your child’s immunization record must be up to date before your child can start.**

Your child must have the immunizations required by the Missouri State Department of Health. **Failure to satisfy the immunization requirements set by the Missouri Department of Health will warrant withdrawal of your child from the Center** (Licensing Code 19 CSR 30-62.132 and Licensing Code 19 CSR 30-62.19.)

Missouri law regarding immunizations (Section 210.003.7, RSMo) states, “All public, private, and parochial day care centers, preschools, and nursery schools shall notify the parent or guardian of each child at the time of initial enrollment in or attendance at the facility that the parent or guardian may request notice of whether there are children currently enrolled in or attending the facility for whom an immunization exemption has been filed. Any public, private, or parochial day care center, preschool, or nursery school shall notify the parent or guardian of a child enrolled in or attending the facility for whom an immunization exemption has been filed.”

In accordance with Section 210.003.7, RSMo., the parent or guardian of a child enrolled in or attending the OTC Early Childhood Education Center may request notice of whether there are any children enrolled at our facility with an immunization exemption on file. If you would like to request this information, please contact the Center Manager and the information will be provided to you. Please note, the name or names of individual children are confidential and will not be released. Our response will be limited to whether or not there are children enrolled at our facility with an immunization exemption on file.

# Sick Child Policy

It is difficult to work or study effectively if you are concerned for the well-being of your child. It is also difficult for teachers and children alike when there is a sick child in the classroom. This is why we want to work with you to keep your child and the other children attending the Center healthy.

We ask that you put yourself in the place of your child, the other children and their parents when deciding if your child is well enough to attend the Center. Ask yourself the following questions:

* Could your child be contagious?
* Would you want your child playing closely with a child displaying the same symptoms?
* If you felt like your child feels, would you be able to cope with a group and a busy schedule?

Thoughtful and honest consideration of these questions will give your child a happier, more comfortable experience at the Center and can also help limit the spread of disease.

There will be times when your child becomes ill during the day. We will call you so you can make arrangements for your child to be picked up. Your child will be isolated from the other children, either in the Center Manager’s office or in a location away from the other children, until your child is able to be picked up. Your sick child is required to be picked up within 30 minutes of receiving a phone call from the Center. Failure to comply could lead to withdrawal from the program. You should have a workable plan for your child’s care in case of illness.

You will be called and your child will be isolated from other children if your child displays any of the following symptoms:

* **Fever** of over **100** **degrees** (by mouth) or **99 degrees** (under the arm)
* **Unexplained rash or spots**.
* **Vomiting -** we realize children can throw up if they cough or choke. Occasionally a child will vomit after overeating. We will call you to pick up your child if there is indication that your child is ill.
* **Diarrhea –** more than one abnormally loose stool. If a child has one loose stool, he/she will be monitored for additional loose stools or symptoms. We will call you to pick up your child if the child has more than one symptom or we feel the diarrhea is caused by a virus or is contagious.
* **Severe cold symptoms –** cough, earache, eye infection, thick nasal discharge.
* **Head Lice –** children must be nit free to attend school.
* **Sore throat or trouble swallowing**
* **Pinkeye –** tears, redness of eyelid lining, irritation followed by swelling, and/ or discharge of pus.
* **Severe coughing –** if the child gets red or blue in the face, or makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sounds after coughing.

**Your child may return to the Center when he or she has been** **fever and symptom free for** **24 hours, without the use of pain relievers**.

We want to keep your child at the Center and we don’t wish to inconvenience you or interrupt your work or studies, but we must place the health and safety of all of the children first.

Depending upon the seriousness of an illness, a recovering child may need an approval for re-admittance signed by the attending physician. The need for an approval from a physician will be determined by the Center Manager (Licensing Code 19 CSR 30-62.192.)

# Medication Authorization Policy

In order for a teacher to administer medication, the following steps must be followed as mandated by the Missouri Department of Health Licensing Handbook.

1. All medications will be given to a child only with the dated, written permission of the parents stating the length of time medication may be given. The parent must complete a Medication Authorization Form.
2. Medications **must** be in the original container and labeled with the child’s name and instructions for administration, including the times, amounts for dosages, and the physician’s name. This may include sample medication provided by a physician.
3. All nonprescription medication **must** be in the original container and labeled by the parents with the child’s name and instructions for administration, including times and amounts of dosages.
4. All medication will be stored out of the reach of children or in a locked container.
5. Medication will be returned to storage immediately after use.
6. Medication needing refrigeration will be kept in the refrigerator in a container separate from food. Medications must be in a zip-lock bag marked with the child’s name.
7. Medication will be returned to the parent or disposed of immediately when no longer needed.
8. Date and time(s) of administration, the name of the Teacher/Staff giving the medication, and the quantity of any medication given will be recorded promptly after administration. This information will be filed in the child’s record after the medication is no longer necessary (Licensing Code 19 CSR 30-62.192).

# Special Needs Policy

We openly welcome children with special needs and will make every attempt to accommodate those needs. The Center will make an individualized assessment about whether we can meet your child’s particular needs without fundamentally altering our program. Should your child have any special needs, please set up a time to discuss it with the Center Manager. We encourage you to share documentation that would equip our staff to help meet the needs of your child. We are not required to accept children who pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others.

As of November 1, 1995, the Missouri State Department of Health requires children with special needs (*Example: breathing treatments, asthma*) to have a written statement on file from their prescribing physician giving child care staff instructions on use and/or dosage. These written statements are needed within 30 days of the child’s enrollment. (Licensing Code 19 CSR 30-62.132 and Licensing Code 19 CSR 30-62.192.)

# Allergies

When a doctor diagnoses a child as having an allergy, a statement to that effect must be placed in the child’s file. The parent needs to inform the teachers of the restrictions placed on the child due to the allergy. Every effort will be made to accommodate a child’s special needs.

# Accidents and Injuries

Children are supervised in their indoor and outdoor activities; however accidents and injuries may occur. In case of an injury or accident, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The child’s injury will be assessed by a CPR/First Aid trained staff member.
2. Standard first aid procedures will be followed.
3. 9-1-1 and OTC Safety and Security will be called if a child needs immediate medical attention. Parents will also be notified. If a child must be transported by a medical unit, a staff member will ride with the child or follow the ambulance.
4. In cases of non-emergencies, after taking care of the child, a parent/guardian will be notified, either through a phone call or email.
5. An accident/injury form will be completed with details about the incident and the necessary measures taken.
6. After gathering all necessary signatures on the accident report, one copy will be given to parents and one copy will be placed in the child’s file in the office. (Licensing Code 19 CSR30-62.192).

In the event of an accident or injury that appears to need emergency medical treatment, the following sequence of phone calls should occur:

1. 9-1-1 (dial 9 first for an outside line).
2. OTC Safety and Security at 6-911 (or off campus at 447-6911).
3. Child’s parents (if a parent cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be notified).

# Weather Conditions

The Center closes in inclement weather **only** if the OTC Springfield campus is closed. Opening and closing time may be altered by the severity of weather conditions. On extreme weather days, please come directly to the Center to pick up your child so our staff can leave for home in a timely fashion. If the Center closes early, your child **must** be picked up by the specified time.

# Emergency Procedures

The Center Manager and the Program Director are responsible for implementing emergency plans and procedures and ensuring the safety of the children.

**Emergency Contact Information**

OTC Early Childhood Education Center

936 N. Hampton

Springfield, MO 65802

417-447-8130

* 911 911
* Fire Department 911
* Police Department 911
* Ambulance Service 911
* Poison Control 1-800-222-1222
* OTC Safety and Security 6911
* Local Media 417-268-3200 (KY3)

Children’s emergency contact information is located on their registration forms in the red three ring binders labeled in each classroom and in the office. It is also located in each child’s individual file in the file cabinet in the office.

In the event of an emergency impacting the whole center, every effort will be made to contact children’s parent(s)/guardian(s) as soon as possible. When evacuating the building, the Center Manager will take the red binder from the office with him/her. If the center phone is available, then it will be used to call children’s parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform them of the situation and give them further instruction. If the center phone is not usable, the Center Manager and/or Program Director will use their cell phones, if available. If possible, an e-mail will be sent out to all families informing them of the situation and giving them further instruction. The first priority in any emergency situation will be the safety of the children and the ECEC employees. This includes keeping phone lines open to communicate with emergency services if necessary. Contacting parent(s)/guardian(s) will be a second priority until all children and ECEC employees are safe and accounted for and emergency services has arrived.

**Fire**

* When a fire alarm is activated, evacuation is mandatory.
* Children are gathered with their class and designated evacuation routes are used to the assembly area. Classes’ sign-in sheets and emergency backpacks are taken with them. Classrooms #3 and #4 exit out the playground door and out the playground gate. Classrooms #1 and #2 exit out the main entrance. The assembly area is in the Industry & Technology Transportation Center (ITTC) building on the corner of Central and National streets.
* Doors are felt before opening, and doors and windows are closed as during evacuation if safe to do so.
* Once outside, ECEC employees count children and check sign-in sheets.
* Emergency instructions given by the Center Manager, Program Director, or lead teacher are followed.
* Everyone is encouraged to move rapidly, but not run proceeding to the assembly area in an orderly manner, not crowding the person ahead. Sidewalks are used, the children do not cross parking lots. Caution is exercised when crossing streets with the children.
* The telephone is only used to report the emergency. 911 is called immediately.
* The building is not re-entered until authorization is given by emergency personnel.

**Medical Emergency**

* 911 is called. The dispatcher is provided with the caller’s name, location, number of people injured and a description of the medical emergency.
* The caller does not hang up the phone until the dispatcher tells them to do so.
* OTC Safety and Security is called at 6911 using a phone in our building or 417-447-6911 if using a cell phone or other phone.
* Someone is assigned to phone the emergency contact person of the victim.
* Someone is assigned to meet the ambulance and escort them to the individual requiring assistance.
* First aid kits are located in each classroom and in the front office. First aid kits are taken outside with each classroom when they are on the playground.
* An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is located in the Teacher Workroom next to the employee mailboxes.

**Tornado**

* A ***tornado watch*** is issued by the National Weather Service when tornadoes are possible in the area.
* A ***tornado warning*** is issued when a tornado has been sighted, or indicated by weather radar, in the area.
* When tornado sirens are heard, evacuation routes are followed to the stairwell and down to the basement college classrooms or hallway. These areas are approved tornado shelters. Each classes’ sign-in sheet and emergency backpack is taken with them.
* Everyone is encouraged to move rapidly but not run proceeding down the steps in an orderly manner using both sides of the stairwell, not crowding the person ahead.
* Everyone stays away from windows, exterior doors, and outside walls.
* No one attempts to return for forgotten articles.
* Once in the basement, ECEC employees count children and check sign-in sheets.
* Everyone waits for an “all clear” notification prior to returning upstairs.

**Earthquake**

* If inside: Drop, Cover, and Hold On.  The children and ECEC employees drop to the ground, crawl under the tables or other sturdy furniture, and hold on to a leg of the table or side of the furniture if possible.
* If outside: Drop, and Hold On.  The children and ECEC employees drop to the ground and crawl away from anything that might fall on them.  All children and ECEC employees are kept out of the covered playground area as the roof could fall in an earthquake.
* Everyone remains alert for aftershocks. Elevators are not used and the building is evacuated carefully using evacuation routes after the shaking has stopped. Once outside, ECEC employees count children and check sign-in sheets.
* ECEC employees await instructions from first responders and no one re-enters the building until it is deemed safe for reentry.

**Utility Failure**

* In the event of a power failure, the center will remain open unless the temperature in the building goes below 68 F or higher than 85 F. If the temperature goes above or below this range, parent(s)/guardians(s) will be contacted to pick their child up as soon as possible.
* In the event of water failure, parent(s)/guardians(s) will be contacted to pick their child up as soon as possible.
* Utility failures are immediately reported to the Facilities and Grounds Department at 417-447-4801 and the Safety and Security Department at 417-447-6911.
* All refrigerators and freezers in the building are kept closed.
* Computers, appliances, and nonessential electrical equipment are unplugged.
* Instructions given by the Safety and Security Department, Facilities and Grounds Department personnel, and the fire department are followed.

**Flood**

* If flooding of the building appears imminent, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted to pick their child up as soon as possible.

**Intruder**

* If an unknown intruder is in the building, the intruder/emergency code is “Red Alert”. If this phrase is heard, ECEC employees immediately follow the Run, Hide, Fight philosophy for survival.

Run = escape, this is always the best option.

Hide = barricade AND escape, lock doors and move furniture in front of doors, turn off lights, close blinds, silence cell phones, block windows, turn off computer monitors, keep children calm, quiet, and out of site, and escape using any means necessary (any available doors or windows, break windows with a chair or other object if necessary).

Fight = use any means necessary to distract, slow down, or stop the intruder. This is a last resort and only when your life or the lives of others are in imminent danger. Attempt to incapacitate the intruder by creating a distraction, throwing items at the shooter, and acting with physical aggression.

* Call 911 as soon as possible. Provide as much information as possible including the location of the intruder, the number of intruders, the physical description of the intruders, etc.
* If there is an unsafe event happening in our surrounding area the entrance doors to the building will be locked down as necessary. All children and staff go downstairs to ECEC 101 and the door to this room is locked. This room is near the downstairs exterior exit and also has windows in the event that Run, Hide, Fight procedures become necessary.

**Chemical Exposure**

* In the event that the area in which the OTC Early Childhood Education Center is located is exposed to a dangerous chemical, everyone remains inside the building. If necessary, everyone goes to ECC 104, 105, and 106 and this room is sealed. Plastic and duct tape are available in the Rubbermaid tub in the storage room which will be used to seal doors and air vents.

**Missing Child**

* If a child is missing, the Center Manager or Program Director is notified immediately.
* Lock-down procedures are immediately implement. ECEC employees lock all of their classroom doors and close the blinds. All doors providing access to the building are locked.
* 911 is called.
* OTC Safety and Security is called at 6911 using a phone in our building or 417-447-6911 if using a cell phone or other phone.
* The missing child’s parent(s)/guardian(s) are called. If at least one parent or guardian is not reached, the child’s emergency contact is called.

**Bomb Threat**

* Bomb threats usually are received by telephone. If a bomb threat is received, the person receiving the call remains calm and obtains as much information as possible from the caller.
* The person receiving the call will get the attention of co-workers and have them call 911 and the Safety and Security Department at 417-447-6911.
* The time of the call and the specific telephone the call came in on is noted.
* The caller’s number is noted if the phone is equipped with caller I.D.
* If the bomb threat is received via a note or email, 911 and the Safety and Security Department at 417-447-6911 are called and provided the information obtained. The caller’s voice, any background noises heard, and the exact wording of the message are described.
* Children are removed from the building using fire escape routes.
* Children are gathered with their class and use the designated evacuation routes to the assembly area in the Industry & Technology Transportation Center (ITTC) building on the corner of Central and National streets. Each classes’ sign-in sheet and emergency backpack are taken with them. Classrooms #3 and #4 exit out the playground door and out the playground gate. Classrooms #1 and #2 exit out the main entrance.
* Once outside, ECEC employees count children and check sign-in sheets.
* Children will be taken to one of our off-site locations by walking following our off-site evacuation plan.
* Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be contacted to pick their children up as soon as possible.

**Off-Site Evacuation**

* If it becomes necessary to evacuate the area, ECEC employees and children will walk to the OTC Industry & Technology Transportation Center (ITTC).
* If the ITTC building must be evacuated, the secondary off-site evacuation point will be the OTC Norman K. Meyers (NKM) building.

# Safety Practices

Some ways families can help to ensure safety of all children in the Center:

* Keep staff informed of any potentially unsafe or threatening situations that involve you or your family.
* Keep the number of people who drop off and pick up your child to a minimum. Make sure they are on your authorized pick up list.
* **Do not let people you don’t know through the secure, locked door of the childcare center.**
* Have your child walk with you when entering and exiting the building.

# Parking Lot/Street Safety

* When entering and leaving the Center, hold children’s hands to ensure their safety.
* Transport children in car seats appropriate to their age and weight as required by law.
* Do not leave children unattended in cars.
* Keep doors locked to protect valuables. Do not leave your car running.
* Park only in designated spaces if you plan to stay longer than 15 minutes.

# Court Orders

If there are any orders from the court (no contact, protections, custody, etc.) regarding who can and cannot have contact with your child, it is imperative that parents provide the Early Childhood Education Center office with a copy of the order. Without legal documentation, the ECEC cannot prevent someone who has proof that they are or are known as the biological parent from picking up a child.

Sharing information regarding custody or domestic violence situations with the office and your child’s teacher is strongly encouraged. Sharing this type of information allows the staff to be aware of additional security measures that may need to be taken. All information will be kept confidential and only shared with essential staff members.

# Security System

Inorder to help keep our children safe, OTC has installed a security system at the door to the Early Childhood Education Center classrooms. The ECEC has a keyless entry that allows our families to enter the center at any time while also helping us maintain a high level of security. When entering the center, there is a keypad located next to the locked door entering the preschool classrooms hallway.  You will be given a Keyless Entry System Code for your family.  Please do not share this code with anyone other than those you have authorized to pick up your child**.** If you feel that your code needs to be changed at any time for security reasons, please let the Center Manager know and your code can be changed. Please help us maintain a secure facility by always closing the secured door behind you. ECEC personnel only should open the locked door to allow individuals without a Keyless Entry System Code entrance into the facility.

# Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse/Neglect

All Center staff members and child development professionals are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. A mandated reporter refers to “an individual who in their professional relationship with the child and family may encounter child maltreatment or neglect”.

Mandated reporters are obligated and required by law to report, not prove, suspicions of child abuse, including maltreatment or neglect. Effective August 28, 2004, Missouri law requires Mandated Reporters to identify themselves when making a report. A report is required when a reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or when a reporter observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect.

\*\*Any person may report, and anonymous reports are accepted from individuals who are not mandated by occupation to report.

\*\*It is against the law not to report. If a person truly suspects abuse and decides not to report, they run the risk of facing both criminal and civil charges.

# Child Abuse/Neglect

If/when a staff member suspects child abuse, maltreatment, or neglect, the following occur:

* Objective documentation of what was observed and/or what the child said.
* Staff members may notify the Center Manager for review of findings and assistance in making the hotline call or they may call the hotline without notifying the Center Manager.
* Hotline call will be made.
  + The hotline number (1-800-392-3738) is located in the office, each classroom, and the teacher lounge.
* Professionalism and confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
  + Teachers will not discuss the hotline call with others, including staff members or family members of the child.

You do not have to have approval from anyone to report child abuse or neglect.

Discipline Policy

*“The goal of discipline is not to make the teacher’s life easier. The goal of discipline is to guide the behavior of the children in such a way that they will internalize our outward expectations and develop the inner controls they need to function as whole and happy individuals.”* Marianne Monica

When a problem arises in the Center concerning a child, it is the responsibility of the ECEC employees to handle the issue with the highest level of professionalism possible. ECEC employees will utilize discipline methods which encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation.

A major goal of an early childhood program is to promote positive social and emotional growth in young children. To promote children's positive social and emotional growth, the discipline process must be fair and consistent. It is the adult's responsibility to create an environment in which children can successfully develop these abilities as they grow from infancy. The physical environment must be safe, orderly, attractive, and inviting in order to promote positive social interactions. Families are encouraged to communicate frequently with staff about expectations for their child’s behavior.

Appropriate child guidance techniques are those which lovingly and purposefully teach children pro-social skills, while building children's self-esteem. Therefore, OTC Early Childhood Education Center teachers are responsible for establishing a classroom environment where discipline is always positive and never punitive. Children can only learn appropriate classroom behaviors in the classroom. Removing a child from the regular classroom when it is not his/her choice is avoided. When a child is removed to another place for discipline, it sends the message that may cause insecurity, hostility, or the feeling that “You (the adult) don’t know what to do with me, and now I am in control.” Children’s needs at school are best met by the classroom adults in cooperation with the children’s parents. Additional support may be sought from the Center Manager.

Teachers use positive guidance strategies. This includes conflict resolution strategies and setting well-defined limits. Natural and logical consequences are used to help guide children’s behavior and teach responsibility for actions. Punishment is replaced by a sense of mutual respect and cooperation. Allowing children to experience the consequences of their actions provides an honest and real learning situation. Children are allowed to assume the responsibility and consequences of their acts with support from their teachers.

Teachers communicate with children using positive language, telling the children what to do instead of what not to do. Teachers support and encourage children to use their own words to express their feelings and resolve their own conflicts whenever possible.

Discipline strategies that are **NOT** permitted in child care centers by Missouri Department of Health Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers include: physical punishment including, but not limited to, spanking, slapping, shaking, biting or pulling hair, punishment or threat of punishment associated with food, rest or toilet training, placing children in a closet, a locked or unlit room or any other place which is frightening or any discipline technique which is humiliating, threatening or frightening.

Withholding physical activity time (outdoor play) as a form of discipline is **NOT** permitted.

**Appropriate Interventions**

Occasionally, misbehaviors will occur which will necessitate intervention. Remember, the goal of discipline is to promote social and emotional growth. Any intervention will be culturally sensitive, fair, and consistent. Attention will be given to ensuring that the degree of intervention matches the degree of the misbehavior. There is a difference between interventions required for the occasional misbehavior and those necessary for chronic misbehaviors. For chronic misbehaviors, a behavior intervention plan may be necessary.

There is no one solution to any behavior problem. Individual children may respond differently to various interventions. Often, the behavior and intervention may occur numerous times before an improvement is noticeable. Teachers must be willing to **objectively** reevaluate their prevention and/or intervention strategies and be willing to try a different approach if those implemented have not been successful.

It is not appropriate to expect the child to take full responsibility for their actions. Adults must accept the responsibility for guiding the child toward appropriate behavior. **The aim of any intervention is to encourage children to solve problems within the classroom environment.**

**Behaviors Requiring Immediate Intervention**

*Definition:*Any behavior which threatens the safety of the child, others, or the environment needs immediate intervention.

***Making sure everyone is safe is the first priority. The need and type of intervention will be decided with this in mind.***

Behaviors requiring immediate intervention might include but are not limited to:

- physical aggression: fighting, kicking, biting, pushing, hitting, spitting, etc.,

- purposely throwing objects,

- wanton destruction of materials.

**Addressing Challenging Behaviors**

When a child exhibits challenging behavior on a continual basis that is not resolved through guidance strategies, the teachers will meet with the Center Manager to ask for further guidance. A conference will be scheduled with the child’s parents, the lead teachers and the Center Manager to discuss concerns and observations as well as gather further information. The center staff and parents will collaborate on the development of strategies to help the child succeed in the classroom and discuss possible community resources available. A behavior plan will be established during the conference and a timeline will be established to review the behavior plan and discuss progress. Teachers will keep the Center Manager and the child’s parents informed of progress in reducing the challenging behavior. Parents may be asked to volunteer in their child’s classroom to provide additional support. This strategy is used as an alternative to suspension.

If the ECEC employees feel they need further assistance with how to best meet the child’s needs, the center may, with parental permission request the assistance of outside agencies. Outside agencies may include United 4 Children, Parents’ As Teachers and/or public school early childhood special education services. Children may be referred for evaluation/screening to rule out any health or developmental needs that may be contributing to the challenging behavior. If parental permission and cooperation is refused for either the assistance of outside agencies or evaluation/screening, the continued enrollment of the child will be reconsidered. Failure on the part of the family to work with staff members and community resource persons called in for assistance will constitute grounds for dismissal from the program.

**Strict Guidelines for Discipline**

1. No corporal or intimidating punishment will be administered in the center. ECEC employees and families may not apply corporal punishment (spanking) in the center.

2. Children will not be deprived of food, snacks or treats as a punishment. Food is not used as a punishment or reward at any time.

3. Classrooms are never left unattended.

4. Children will not be isolated or held up for public ridicule.

5. ECEC employees will not shout/scream at the children.

6. Physical activity will never be withheld as punishment.

**Incident Reports**

Any consistent behavior problems will be brought to the attention of the Center Manager. Staff will complete incident reports for any behavior that injures a child or places a child or teacher in danger. Completed reports are used as documentation of a particular incident and/or child’s behavior. Reports are necessary in providing documentation when needed at a later date. Parents will be required to sign all incident reports and will receive a copy of all incident reports.

Parents as Partners

The entry of your child into the Early Childhood Education Center marks the beginning of an active partnership between families and our ECEC employees. We are committed to working with you to create a positive learning experience for your child. We hope to develop a positive and open relationship with each of you as we share in these very important years of your child’s life.

# Visiting the Center

The Center has an open-door policy. Parents are invited into the Center at any time. Come whenever your schedule will allow. You are welcome to observe at any time your child is in care. We have observation windows and an observation room. You are also invited to join in the classroom activities and discuss ideas with the teachers to enhance the curriculum.

# Parent Participation

Our goal is to include parents in the program in whatever ways work best for each family. Some families are able to spend time in the classroom helping with various activities; others are able to contribute materials and resources, etc. There is no limit to the possibilities! Families are welcome to volunteer to help in the classrooms, offer to share a special talent with the children, help with an activity, read and/or play with the children, go on a field trip, or help serve meals. Arrangements to participate should be made with the classroom teachers or Center Manager ahead of time.

# Parent/Teacher Communication

We recognize that communication between teachers and parents is essential. Every effort is made to communicate with parents in a meaningful, convenient way, including emails, parent notes, bulletin board notices, and phone calls.

We also rely on you to keep us informed of any significant changes in your child’s life. Our experience has been that these changes will often have an impact on your child’s arrivals and departures, interactions with children and adults in the classroom, eating, sleeping, and toileting routines. Please share any pertinent information with the teachers or Center Manager as soon as possible so that we can plan and support students’ understanding of these impacts on your child.

# Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences are held at intervals during the year, usually at the end of each semester, to help parents and staff work together for the best interests of the children. Additional parent/teacher conferences can be requested by either party at any time during the year to discuss questions, concerns, or the development of your child.

# Program Evaluation

All families will be asked to assist us in evaluating and assessing our program each year by completing a survey. Your completion of this survey enables us to obtain and maintain our accreditation status and gives you a voice to express your level of satisfaction with the Center as well as any suggestions you might have to make our program better.

# Information Resources

There are several items available for families to review at our Center at any time. These items include child abuse/neglect background screenings on all ECEC employees, a copy of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Licensing Rules for Group Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers, copies of our licensing reports, accreditation materials from Missouri Accreditation of Programs for Children and Youth, as well as any developmental records for your child. If you would like to see any of these items, please see the Center Manager. Your child’s individual portfolio is in their classroom and may be viewed at any time by asking your child’s teacher.

In addition to the materials listed above, there is a brochure rack in the lobby with information parents may find useful. A Family Resource Library is available on the shelf outside the Center Manager’s office. If you would like to check an item out, please see the Center Manager. If you are interested in obtaining information about a specific topic, please check with your child’s teacher or the Center Manager. Information for parents is also located on the shelves beneath the mailboxes.

# Grievances

The OTC Early Childhood Education Center is committed to providing a high quality program that meets children’s and family’s needs. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to bring them to the attention of the appropriate staff member. Center staff will make a reasonable effort to respond to the parent and resolve any issues.

However, when a problem arises, parents should speak directly with their child’s lead teacher. If a parent feels the issue is not resolved in a timely manner, concerns should then be brought to the attention of the Center Manager. In the event a parent feels an issue is still not resolved in a timely manner, the parent may speak with the Program Director of OTC’s Early Childhood Development program.

Grievances can be discussed in person, in writing, or by telephone. Parent conferences can be arranged at any time to discuss questions, concerns, or the development of your child. Your input and comments are always welcome. Every effort will be made to achieve resolutions that are in the best interest of the children, families, and the Center.

Parent Signature Page

**PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAGE TO THE CENTER MANAGER.**

**Thank you!**

I (we), the undersigned, have received and have read the OTC Early Childhood Education Center Parent Handbook. **I (we) understand and agree to abide by the policies** **as stated**. I (we) also understand that new policies may be implemented as needed and as determined by the OTC ECEC Center Manager, the administration of Ozarks Technical Community College, state childcare licensing regulations, Missouri Accreditation, or other official governing bodies.

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Parent’s Signature Date

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Parent’s Signature Date

*In response to the human needs of our* *clients, we reserve the right to adopt new policies, change existing policies, and/or authorize exceptions to existing policies.*