

# Methodist Children's Academy

at First United Methodist Church of Pensacola, Florida



## Parent Handbook

6 East Wright Street  
Pensacola, Florida 32501  
850-438-6761 (preschool)  
850-438-3508 (infant/toddlers)  
850-432-1434 (church office)



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## HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

The Methodist Children's Academy is a ministry of the First United Methodist Church. Our half day program began in 1983 as a Mother's Day Out program and play group with two classes, one day a week and approximately 18 children. Our full day program began as a contracted program in 1997 and the church took over full operation of the program May 27, 2000. Today we offer care for infants through pre-kindergarten with a large after school program for elementary children.

The central purpose of the program is to develop good self-esteem and individual personal qualities within each child, while offering the highest possible educational techniques through hands-on, developmentally appropriate activities. The program's curriculum provides a comprehensive program for each child. The staff, who is very creative, energetic, nurturing and educated about child development, implements the curriculum. Social, physical, cognitive, and emotional areas of growth are fostered through interesting experiences in the program's setting. Positive reinforcement and guidance in learning activities and play foster each child's self-esteem. We believe that our program should be based on the use of play as a tool in learning basic concepts.

The staff of The Methodist Children's Academy goal is to assist each child to reach the fullest potential of his/her capability at their particular point in growth and to build an excellent foundation for future learning. We feel that the family is a precious unit and we encourage interaction between parents, grandparents, family members and special others with the children, teachers and administrative staff.

The curriculum is planned with monthly themes and will provide music, chapel, movement, art, language, and monthly special events that are age appropriate.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The Methodist Children's Academy is a Christian preschool. We believe that each child is a unique gift from God, and therefore worthy of love, acceptance and support. We offer a weekly Chapel program for two, three, and four year olds. Religion is integrated into our program by way of stories, song, art and many other forms. We start every morning with Assembly, which includes the Pledge of Allegiance and The Lord's Prayer.

## **ENROLLMENT/REGISTRATION**

Enrollment is open to all children, ages six weeks through four for our preschool, and children attending elementary school for our school age program, regardless of religion, race, sex, or creed. The number of spaces available in each class determines acceptance. The birthday cut-off date for all classes is September 1.

Registration begins in February for the upcoming school year. Those currently enrolled are guaranteed a spot for the following year. However, siblings of those currently enrolled are given preference but there is no certainty of a spot for the sibling, including infants. Current immunization record and physical must be on file by the second week of attendance for preschool children. These forms can be obtained from your pediatrician's office. The Program enforces this policy with direction from the Department of Children and Families. Shot records and physical must be kept up to date; if they have expired your child will not be able to return to school until we receive a current form.

## **TUITION**

The fee schedule is outlined in the Schedule of Payments form. Our full day preschool program is a 52-week, full year program. Tuition is for the year, but can be paid in monthly increments. Your agreement to pay tuition is not subject to adjustment because of illness, or absence of the child. Withdrawal of your child does not relinquish the responsibility of payments for the year your child is registered for.

## **LATE FEES**

Our hours of operation are 7:00 a.m. until 5:50 p.m. (9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. for VPK only). Your account is assessed our late fee as stated below if your child is not signed out by closing.

A late fee of \$1 per minute per child will be charged for the first five minutes of tardiness after designated pick up time. The rate goes to \$5 per minute per child after that. Beginning with your third late notice, your late fee will go to \$50 per child until 6:00 p.m. regardless of whether you are one minute or ten minutes late and then will increase to \$10 per minute after that. After your fifth late notice, you will be asked to find a program that better suits your needs. If there is a discrepancy between what you sign out as your time and the actual time, the director will have to log your time and ask you to initial it. If habitual tardiness continues, we reserve the right to dismiss your child from the program.

## **STAFF TRAINING**

Training requirements for all our staff are listed below:

40-hour childcare training course	10 hours of annual training
Infant/Child CPR training annually	Employment references
Local Criminal Background Check	Federal Background check

## **DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES**

The state requires all children to be signed in when they are dropped off and signed out when they are picked up. All person's signing in and out must be 18 years or older. Keep in mind your child must be dropped off in the care of a Methodist Children's Academy staff member only. When your child's class is participating in any other activity outside of their classroom you must still escort them to the designated area to be dropped off with a staff member.

If your child will be absent from school (for example: doctor's apt., illness, vacation) please notify the childcare office as soon as possible. If you are aware ahead of time that an absence will occur

you may submit this information to the office through email or in written form to be kept on file.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Discipline is the process of encouraging children to learn self-control and to avoid danger to self or others. An important aspect of discipline is the development of an environment, which is carefully planned to prevent problems by having low adult/child ratios, child proofing in every area, providing adequate toys and materials, channeling behavior in acceptable ways and planning developmentally appropriate activities and routines. Occasionally, all children feel uncooperative and should be allowed time and a space to gain their self-control. Children experiencing difficulty will be gently removed from an over stimulating situation and be given a place to sit within eyesight of the teacher. When difficult situations arise, teachers encourage children to examine what has happened and help work out possible solutions. If this move proves to be unsuccessful the child will then be brought to the office. If a child continues to struggle within the classroom after all measures have been exhausted, he/she will be asked to leave the program.

The Methodist Children's Academy and staff prohibit the use of discipline which is severe, humiliating, frightening, or associated with food, rest, or toileting.

**BITING** - Biting is very common in young children. It is a way for your child to express themselves when they can not do this verbally. The teachers try and make every effort to keep biting children away from the other children to prevent any more incidences. If a young child has bitten 3 times in a day our young friend may need to take a break from their other friends and be asked to stay home as determine by the director. Older children will be asked to be picked up on a case to case circumstance.

## HEALTH

The State of Florida requires every child who attends our program to have a physical examination completed by a licensed physician stating that the child is in good health and all immunizations are up to date. The following forms must be on file with the Methodist Children's Academy office within fourteen days of attendance:

1. Florida Physical Exam Yellow Form DH#3040
2. Florida Immunization Blue Card DH#680- Part B

The immunization card must be updated each time your child receives an immunization. It is your responsibility to bring the blue card you received while at the doctor's office to the Methodist Children's Academy office. You must keep this card up to date. Physicals must be updated every two years. Notices will be sent home if your records are not current. Your child will not be able to attend if either card has expired, regardless of a scheduled doctor's appointment.

Please do not send sick children to school. **If your child has run a fever, had diarrhea, or vomited in the last 24 hours, they are not well enough to come to school and should not return the next day. If your child does not feel well enough to participate in all activities (outside play, movement, etc.) please let them stay home until they can participate.** If your child becomes ill while in our care, **(fever, has had more than 2 diarrheas, or vomited)** you will be contacted immediately. Every effort will be made to contact you first, then your emergency contact person. If your child is sent home sick, he/she may not return to school the next day. Please Note: The Health Department can supersede all of our policies if deemed necessary.

If your child should be injured while in our care, however slight, our staff will fill out an accident report, which we will ask you to sign before you leave. If an accident indicates a need for immediate attention, every effort will be made to locate the parent and the child will be transported to the hospital of the parent's choice or to the nearest hospital, which ever is deemed necessary. When a



child is sick, a parent or guardian will be called immediately. Your child will need to be picked up within 30 minutes of notification. Methodist Children's Academy may apply fees to the accounts of children that are sick and are not picked up in a timely manner.

Any child with an increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and require additional services must have a current Emergency Care Plan on file with the childcare office. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to provide the correct and updated documents to be kept on file.

## **INFLUENZA VIRUS - *THE FLU, A GUIDE TO PARENTS***

### **What is the influenza (flu) virus?**

Influenza ("the flu") is caused by a virus which infects the nose, throat, and lungs. According to the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the flu is more dangerous than the common cold for children. Unlike the common cold, the flu can cause severe illness and life threatening complications in many people. Children under 5 who have the flu commonly need medical care. Severe flu complications are most common in children younger than 2 years old. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May.

### **How can I tell if my child has a cold, or the flu?**

Most people with the flu feel tired and have fever, headache, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and sore muscles. Some people, especially children, may also have stomach problems and diarrhea. Because the flu and colds have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough are more common and intense. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations.

## **What should I do if my child gets sick?**

Consult your doctor and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks a lot of fluids. Never give aspirin or medicine that has aspirin in it to children or teenagers who may have the flu.

## **Call or take your child to a doctor right away if your child:**

- Has a high fever or fever that lasts a long time
- Has trouble breathing or breathes fast
- Has skin that looks blue
- Is not drinking enough
- Seems confused, will not wake up, does not want to be held, or has seizures (uncontrolled shaking)
- Gets better but then worse again
- Has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes) that get worse

## **How can I protect my child from the flu?**

A flu vaccine is the best way to protect against the flu. Because the flu virus changes year to year, annual vaccination against the flu is recommended. The CDC recommends that all children from the ages of 6 months up to their 19th birthday receive a flu vaccine every fall or winter (children receiving a vaccine for the first time require two doses). You also can protect your child by receiving a flu vaccine yourself.

## **What can I do to prevent the spread of germs?**

The main way that the flu spreads is in respiratory droplets from coughing and sneezing. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled through the air and infect someone nearby. Though much less frequent, the flu may also spread through indirect contact with contaminated hands and articles soiled with nose and throat secretions.

## **To prevent the spread of germs:**

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Cover mouth/nose during coughs and sneezes. If you don't have a tissue, cough/sneeze into upper sleeve, not hands.
- Limit contact with people who show signs of illness.

- Keep hands away from the face. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

### **When should my child stay home from child care?**

A person may be contagious and able to spread the virus from 1 day before showing symptoms to up to 5 days after getting sick. The time frame could be longer in children and in people who don't fight disease well (people with weakened immune systems). When sick, your child should stay at home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children and should not return to child care or other group setting until his or her temperature has been normal and has been sign and symptom free for a period of 24 hours.

*For additional info about the dangers of the flu and how to protect your child, visit: [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu) or [immunizeflorida.org](http://immunizeflorida.org).*

### **SAFETY/EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

The personal safety of each child is our most important consideration. Only persons authorized on the emergency cards may pick up your child. You may add or delete names on your list by sending a written notice or requesting a change to the office. We request that you call the center if someone other than the regular person is picking up your child. Please inform all new pick-up people that they will need to show proof of identification before the child will be released to them. Children will not be released to older siblings unless they are high school age.

Fire drills are held on a monthly basis to acquaint children and staff with evacuation procedures. Our center is equipped with fire alarms and smoke detectors throughout our building. Other drills, including tornado and intruder, are done every other month.

If a state of emergency is declared by the Escambia County Emergency Management or the weather is deteriorating and warnings have been issued by the weather bureau and people have been asked to stay off the roads, then the church staff in conjunction

with the program director may make a decision about closures. We will weigh all factors involved before making our decision. This is for your safety and the safety of the children. Watch your local television for any closings.

Methodist Children's Academy follows the Escambia County School System closing of schools in emergency situations. There may also be times we need to close the center due to adverse weather conditions. Listen to WCOA radio station or local television stations for more information about the closing of schools. Every event will be made to contact you in the event of an emergency closing.

## **MEDICATIONS**

It is the policy of the Methodist Children's Academy to not administer any non prescription medications while children are in our care. If your child is prescribed any medication that must be administered during our school day hours we offer two available options to meet the needs of your family. A parent or guardian may come by the school office to administer the prescribed medication at any time. In order for childcare staff to administer any prescribed medication you must fill out a medication form. All medication must be prescribed to your child and in it's original container.

## **SAFE SLEEP**

If your child requires an alternate sleeping position, a documentation from a medical professional must include the child's name and date of birth, description of sleeping position, and the length of time authorization is valid.

## **POTTY TRAINING**

### **Toddlers**

Once your child begins to show signs of wanting to use the potty we are fully committed to the potty training process. These signs can include: being able to notify a staff member when they need to use the restroom, staying dry during most of the day in between potty breaks, and even the early signs of noticing when they have

soiled their diaper.

If you feel like your child is starting to show any of these signs, we are ready to begin the potty training journey with you and your family. Here are a few tips to help during the potty training journey:

- \* Extra clothes are a must! Accidents will happen. Extra clothes need to include plenty of underwear, outfits, socks, and even an extra pair of shoes.

- \* When dressing your child for the potty training journey, always keep in mind we encourage the children to become more independent by pulling up and down their own pants, underwear and/or pull ups. This may mean changing up their daily wardrobe with pull ups the have tab sides (this makes it easier to change when accidents happen) and even elastic waist bands that can be pulled up and down easily.

- \* Don't be discouraged when regression occurs. Consistency in potty training is one of the keys to success, and we will continue to work with your child to get them closer to being fully potty trained.

- \* Also keep in mind, if minor sets backs occur and accidents are more than 3 per day, we may ask that you keep your child in pull ups for a little longer for sanitary reasons. We do ask that when sending in pull ups, that you choose to use the ones with tabs. This can be discouraging for the children during the process if they are having to be completely undressed every time an accident occurs.

### **Preschool (threes and fours)**

Upon entering the preschool years (beginning in our 3 year old classrooms) we expect to see most children becoming fully potty trained, or getting very close. We strongly encourage all of our families to help us reach this milestone shortly after they enter our three year old classrooms. Please keep in mind as the children move to older classrooms, we no longer have the changing table facilities in these rooms. If we begin to notice a child that is still at a point of

not verbalizing the need to use the restroom and still soiling a diaper or pull up, we may request a conference with the family to address these concerns and the possibility of keeping them out of childcare temporarily until they have reached a better understanding of using the restroom. We are always very supportive and understanding in the rare case of a medical issue causing the potty training process to become prolonged. If you have documentation from your doctor where this is noted, please notify the teachers and office staff so we can work with you to meet your child's needs. We want every child to have a positive potty training experience while they are in our care and we appreciate all the help from our families when it comes to achieving this goal!

## **BIRTHDAYS AND SPECIAL EVENTS**

Birthdays are important and the program gives each birthday child special attention. Parents may send a special treat for the whole class if they wish. Please contact your child's teacher to discuss appropriate birthday treats.

## **CLOTHING AND TOYS**

We play outside everyday, weather permitting, so please dress your child in appropriate play clothes. Children need to dress comfortably for the weather and the day's activities. Overalls, onesies and "hard to open" belts are discouraged in children that are potty training and older. They seem to frustrate the child and discourage self-help skills. We encourage the children to explore the environment around them. In their exploration of their surroundings, the children will get dirty. We will take precautions to prevent their clothes from being soiled, such as using paint smocks, as we can, but we will not discourage the children's imaginations or creativity.

Please bring an extra change of clothes for your child including socks and shoes. Label all personal items that are brought to the center. This should include all cups, lunch boxes, back packs, and all clothing and bedding. It has been mandated by the state that all

bottles, sippy cups, and pacifiers be labeled with both first and last name.

## **SNACK, LUNCH AND NUTRITION**

The program provides a snack for all children every morning and afternoon. Please let us know of any allergies that your child has to any foods. Some of the snacks are coordinated with the monthly curriculum and theme. Please provide a boxed lunch for your child each day with an ice pack if necessary. If you need assistance with what to send in your child's lunch box, please ask the teachers for ideas. The refrigerator in the infant rooms is for bottles and sippy cups only! All other foods should be put in lunch boxes with ice packs.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERS**

Because we recognize the value of the involvement of those dedicated to the enrichment of the children, it is very important to us to welcome and utilize the talents of parents, grandparents, and significant others in as many areas of the program as possible.

Volunteers help the school meet the needs of the children by sharing time and talents and making the program more flexible and thus, more child-oriented through increased personal attention and assistance. Volunteers are welcome in the areas of storytelling, special events, holidays and many other ways.

Parents are an important part of our program. It is because of your input and support that The Methodist Children's Academy continues to grow. We encourage the interaction of parents and grandparents with their child in preschool. If you would like to volunteer in the program, please let us know. There is a special place for you!



Child Care Facility Certificate  
of License Number C01ES0084