

# Methodist Children's Academy

at First United Methodist Church of Pensacola, Florida



**After School Care**

## 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 First United Methodist Church of Pensacola. A half day program began in 1983 as a Mother's Day Out program and play group with two classes, meeting one day a week with approximately 18 children. Our full day program began as a contracted program in 1997 and the church took over full operation of the program on May 27, 2000. Today we offer care for infants through prekindergarten with a large after school program for elementary children.

Our After School program at MCA strives to provide a safe, secure, and supportive environment that gives our families peace of mind when they can not be there. We believe that building strong kids and strong families will strengthen the foundation of our communities. School age children spend six and a half hours in the structure of an academic setting. As young children, they need the opportunity for socialization, active outdoor play, team building activities, development of creativity using fine motor skills, and practice in their school work. The MCA After School Program is conscious of the role of extended day programming in the family, the school community, and each child's growth and development. Nurturing each child, and cultivating academic, social, and lifelong success is our focus.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The Methodist Children's Academy is a Christian childcare program. We believe that each child is a unique gift from God, and therefore worthy of love, acceptance and support. Kid Connect, offered on Wednesdays, is an opportunity for students to grow in their relationship with God through worship and small group activities.

## **ENROLLMENT/REGISTRATION**

You must complete and return registration forms as well as your non-refundable registration fee of \$75.00 per child, prior to your child's first day in our program.

Read this handbook carefully. You are responsible for the information contained in it. If you have any questions please contact the After School Program Director.

We are a school year program only. Summer camp is a separate program that you may register for prior to summer. You will not forfeit your child's position in after school care if you choose not to attend in the summer. If schools are not in session, we will offer full-day services at no additional cost, however, you must sign up prior in order for us to staff accordingly. If you do not sign up for our full-day programs ahead of time, you risk being denied care for the day and a possible fee could be assessed to your account. MCA After School Care encompasses all school days including extended hours on early release days.

It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to keep enrollment records current. This includes home and business phone numbers, address, email, and persons authorized to pick up your child.

This program does not discriminate as to race or religion.

## **TUITION**

Tuition payments are due on the first of every month. Tuition payments are considered delinquent after the 5th of every month, at which time a late fee of \$10.00 will be added to your total. Tuition payments made after the 10th of the month will have an

additional \$25.00 late fee applied. Tuition not paid by the end of the month will forfeit your child's position in our program. If there is any difficulty in reaching this deadline please notify the Child Care Accountant immediately. Please be advised that two returned checks will result in a denial of acceptance of any further payments by check. All future payments must be made in the form of a cashier's check, money order, or cash.

Payment should be made out to MCA or the Methodist Children's Academy and can be placed in the payment box, made online, or mailed. Payments by mail must be received by the deadline and not just postmarked by the deadline.

### **LATE FEES**

Pick up time is 5:50pm. There will be a late fee of \$1.00 per minute per child applied to your account for every minute after 5:50pm. If tardiness exceeds 5:55pm your account will then be charged a late fee of \$5.00 per minute per child for every minute after that. Early pick up is by 4:00pm every day. A late fee is applied to your account if pick up time is after 4:00pm. Habitual tardiness will result in your child's enrollment status to be changed from early pick up to full time care. This will also result in a rate increase. Beginning with your third late notice, your late fee will be increased to \$50.00 per child until 6:00pm. regardless of whether you are one minute or ten minutes late. After your fifth notice, you will be asked to find a program that better suits your needs. If habitual tardiness continues we reserve the right to dismiss your child from the program.

Any request for account changes must be directed to the After School Care Program Director and Child Care Program Accountant.

## **WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM**

You may chose to withdraw from the After School program any time during the year. You must submit a letter stating your child's last day of enrollment in the program. If your child has not attended after school for up to one week we will assume you have not withdrawn your child from the program and your account will continue to be billed your monthly tuition rate. After two weeks of failure to formally withdraw from our program, we will assume your child is no longer returning and his/her position will be filled. You will also be responsible for all fees accrued during the period your child was assumed still enrolled.

## **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 persons 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.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Physical punishment is not allowed. Humiliating verbal punishment is also not allowed. The child will be taught to respect himself/herself and other students, as well as adults through example. *Inclusive Time Out* (removal from physical, but not visual participation) is used when behavior is unacceptable. An explanation will be given to the child as to why his/her behavior is unacceptable. It is the behavior that is not acceptable, not the child. Positive reinforcement is emphasized and given for appropriate

behavior. We “catch them being good!” Parental consultations are sought when unresolved by the above procedures. If all other methods fail, a child will be removed for the program. Parents/guardians should not use physical punishment in the presence of other children participating in the program or on the premises.

## **UNSAFE/ AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY**

Aggression is broadly defined as a behavior or disposition that is forceful, hostile, or attacking. This behavior may occur as a form of retaliation or may even occur without provocation. Aggression can take on a number of different forms, such as through yelling at another individual (verbal aggression) or by engaging in physical violence (physical aggression). Aggression can be direct behaviors such as hitting, kicking, biting, pushing, etc. Aggression can also take an indirect form like teasing, bullying, spreading rumors, name-calling, ignoring someone, etc.

Below you will find our policies regarding any behaviors that may be considered aggressive or unsafe. We want to ensure the safety of every child while they are in our care. Discipline is the process of encouraging children to learn self-control and to avoid danger to self or others. At times, all children feel uncooperative and should be allowed time and a space to gain 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 proves to be unsuccessful the following steps will be taken in order to ensure the safety of the other children and staff.

The first incident of behavior that is seen as aggressive or unsafe will resort in the documentation of an incident report. These behaviors

will also be reported to the administrative staff. Parents may be notified based on the severity of the incident and will be required to sign an incident form at pick up that afternoon.

Unsafe or aggressive incidents that continue to occur will result in additional parent/teacher/director conferences, and can result in the child being asked to stay home for up to one week. If these incidents can not be rectified after a short break from the program, our services may no longer meet the needs of your family and you may be asked to find alternate care.

Any incident that results in an extreme injury (including severe biting or unprovoked attacks using excessive violence that may result in broken skin to another child or staff) will result in immediate action being taken. The director and teachers will make a decision in regards to what consequences or actions should be taken concerning the offending child. All parties involved will be notified immediately.

Our policy regarding behaviors that are determined to be aggressive or unsafe are for the well-being and safety of all children and staff in the program. These are general guidelines that will help further aid the staff in providing a safe and nurturing environment for everyone in our program.

## **ILLNESS AND EMERGENCIES**

When a child becomes ill or seriously injured, the parent is notified immediately and is expected to pick up the child within a timely manner. Our policy states any child that has vomited, has had more than two loose bowels, or is running a fever of 100.5 or higher must be sent home immediately. For the health and well being of the



other children in the program if your child is sent home sick, we ask that they do not return the following day and are symptom free 24 hours prior to returning.

In the case of an emergency (as determined by the program's staff) paramedics will be notified immediately. Parents will be responsible for all costs incurred in such emergencies. Please contact the program director to discuss any emergency situations where medication may be required. If your child does not feel well enough to participate in our daily activities (outside play, gym, etc.) please keep them at home until they feel well enough to participate.

\*\*\*Health Department can supercede all of our policies if deemed necessary\*\*\*

## ***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 or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your 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 settings until his or her temperature has been normal and has been sign and symptom free for a period of 24 hours.

*For additional helpful information about the dangers of the flu and how to protect your child, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/> or <http://www.immunizeflorida.org/>*

## **SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

The personal safety of each child in our child care programs is our most important consideration. Only persons authorized on your child's registration form may pick up your child. You may add or delete names by sending a notice or requesting a change in the MCA office. We request that you call the office if someone other than the regular person will be picking up your child. Please inform all new people picking up, that they will need to show proof of identification before the child will be released to them. Children will not be released to a sibling unless they are 18 or older.

If a state of emergency is declared by the Escambia County Emergency Management, if the weather is deteriorating and warnings have been issued by the weather bureau, or if people have been asked to stay off the roads, then the church staff (in conjunction with the program directors) may make a decision about closures. This is for your safety and the safety of the children. Information about emergency closings will be posted at [MethodistChildrensAcademy.com](http://MethodistChildrensAcademy.com) and on the MCA Facebook Page. Closure information will also be shared with local media such as WEAR TV3 and the Pensacola News Journal (if time allows). Our child care programs follow the Escambia County School System closing of schools in emergency situations. There may be times when we need to close the center due to adverse weather conditions when the school district does not. Every effort will be made to contact you in the event of an emergency.

## **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 and Federal Criminal Background check

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

Since our program provides a wide variety of toys and games, we discourage children from bringing toys and games from home. If items from home are brought to the program, staff are not responsible for the items safe return. Items may be taken away until a parent can pick them up.

If it is determined, by the program staff, that a child is unable to benefit from the program or that he or she presents a danger to other children or staff, the parent will be requested to withdraw that child from the program.

## **KNOW YOUR CHILD CARE FACILITY**

*Information by the Florida Department of Children and Families*

*For more information: [MyFLFamilies.com/ChildCare](http://MyFLFamilies.com/ChildCare)*

### **General Requirements**

Every licensed child care facility must meet the minimum state child care licensing standards pursuant to s. 402.305, F.S., and ch. 65C-22, F.A.C., which include, but are not limited to:

- Valid license posted for parents to see.
- All staff appropriately screened.
- Maintain transportation vehicles (if transportation provided).
- Provide parents written disciplinary practices used by the facility.
- Provide access to the facility during normal hours of operation.
- Maintain minimum staff-to-child ratios:

<b>Age of Child</b>	<b>Child: Teacher Ratio</b>
Infant	4:1
1 year old	6:1
2 year old	11:1
3 year old	15:1
4 year old	20:1
5 year old and up	25:1

**Health Related Requirements**

Emergency procedures that include:

- Posting Florida Abuse Hotline number along with other emergency numbers.
- Staff trained in first aid and Infant/Child CPR on the premises at all times.
- Fully stocked first aid kit.
- A working fire extinguisher and documented monthly fire drills with children and staff.
- Medication and hazardous materials are inaccessible and out of children’s reach.

**Training Requirements**

- 40-hour introductory child care training.
- 10-hour in-service training annually.
- 0.5 continuing education unit of approved training or 5 clock hours of training in early literacy and language development.
- Director Credential for all facility directors.

## **Food and Nutrition**

- Post a meal and snack menu that provides daily nutritional needs of the children (if meals are provided).

## **Record Keeping**

Maintain accurate records that include:

- Children’s health exam/immunization record.
- Medication records.
- Enrollment information.
- Personnel records.
- Daily attendance.
- Accidents and incidents.
- Parental permission for field trips and administration of medications.

## **Physical Environment**

- Maintain sufficient indoor space for playing, working, & napping.
- Provide space that is clean and free of litter and other hazards.
- Maintain sufficient lighting and inside temperatures.
- Equipped with age and developmentally appropriate toys.
- Provide appropriate bathroom facilities and other furnishings.
- Provide isolation area for children who become ill.
- Practice proper hand washing, toileting, and diapering activities.

## **Quality Child Care**

Quality child care offers healthy, social, and educational experiences under qualified supervision in a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment. Children in these settings participate in daily, age-appropriate activities that help develop essential skills, build independence and instill self-respect. When evaluating the quality of a child care setting, the following indicators should be considered:

## **Quality Activities**

- Are children initiated and teacher facilitated.
- Include social interchanges with all children.
- Are expressive: including play, painting, drawing, story telling, music, dancing, and other varied activities.
- Include exercise and coordination development.
- Include free play and organized activities.
- Include opportunities for all children to read, be creative, explore, and problem-solve.

## **Quality Caregivers**

- Are friendly and eager to care for children.
- Accept family cultural and ethnic differences.
- Are warm, understanding, encouraging, and responsive to each child's individual needs.
- Use a pleasant tone of voice and frequently hold, cuddle, and talk to the children.
- Help children manage their behavior in a positive, constructive, and non-threatening manner.
- Allow children to play alone or in small groups.
- Are attentive to and interact with the children.
- Provide stimulating, interesting, and educational activities.
- Demonstrate knowledge of social and emotional needs and developmental tasks for all children.
- Communicate with parents.

## **Quality Environments**

- Are clean, safe, inviting, comfortable, child-friendly.
- Provide easy access to age-appropriate toys.
- Display children's activities and creations.
- Provide a safe and secure environment that fosters the growing independence of all children.



**To report suspected or actual cases of child abuse or neglect,  
please call the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873.**

*CF/PI 175-24, 03/2014*

*Information for "Know Your Child Care Facility" is provided by the  
Florida Department of Children and Families,  
Office of Child Care Regulation and Background Screening pursuant to  
s. 402.3125(5), F.S.*

Child Care Facility Certificate of License Number  
C01ES0084

