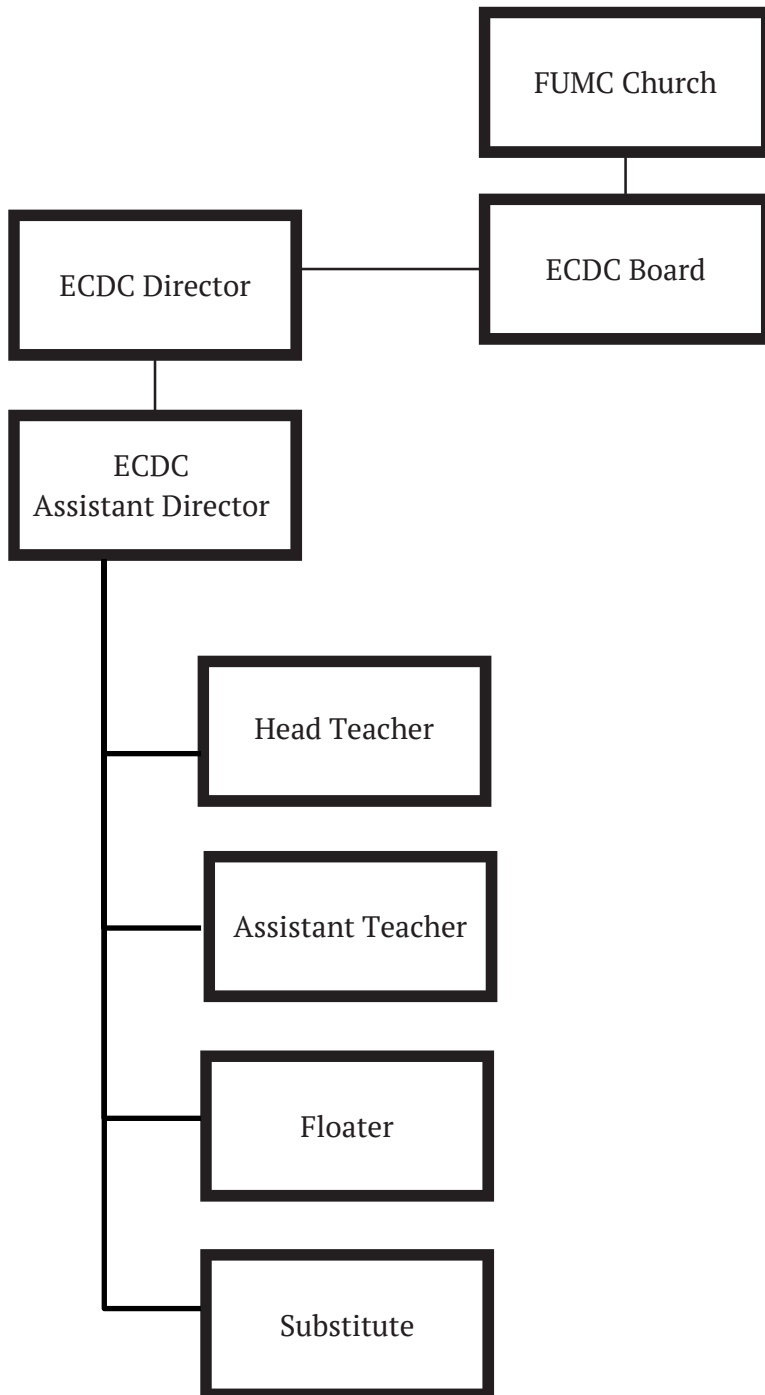


Early Childhood Development Center



**First United Methodist Church
Early Childhood Development Center**

Parent Handbook



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Staff-Parent Communication

To keep parents aware of happenings at ECDC, a parent communication bulletin board is located near the Director's office. General information, a monthly calendar of activities, special events, and a monthly menu will be posted on the bulletin board. Daily schedules will be posted in each classroom. A daily report concerning sleeping, eating, toileting, and social behavior will be sent home with children in the Infant, Crawler, Toddler, and two-year-old classrooms.

An annual open house will be held for parents in each classroom. If a parent would like an additional conference, the teacher should be contacted in advance to set up a time. Our teachers will be happy to talk to parents about their child's adjustment and progress.

However, lengthy discussions concerning the child should take place at a scheduled conference, not at the door, in the hall, or classroom. Impromptu conferences with a teacher while children or other parents are present are unproductive and may be disruptive. Parents may observe their child at any time.

Teachers are unable to visit during ECDC hours unless you have an appointment. While you may observe a room or play with your child at any time, we request that you schedule appointments for questions that you may have about your child's day.

ECDC welcomes any questions or suggestions. The Director is available to discuss any problems or concerns. If necessary, complaints or concerns may be submitted in writing to a member of the ECDC Board. A list of ECDC Board members is available from the Director. Every effort will be made to address concerns in a timely and sensitive manner.

Philosophy

The congregation of First United Methodist Church believes that each child is a child of God and should have every opportunity to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially to the fullest potential.

In response to this call of Christ to reach out in love to meet the needs of families and children, we are committed to a childcare ministry based upon the principles of the Christian faith as taught by Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "let the children come to me." (Mark 10:13-16) He also said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me." (Matthew 18:5) Paul reminds us that we are the "Body of Christ." (Romans 12:5) As Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them, we, as His body today, are called to invite the children into our fellowship and bless them.

Therefore, our congregation is committed to carrying out our mission by establishing and maintaining the following Weekday Children's Ministries programs: Mother's Morning Out, First School, Nursery, Early Childhood Development Center, and other weekday children's programs as they emerge. The purpose will be to provide safe, secure, caring settings and Christian nurture for children of the congregation and then to the community. In addition to providing physical care for their children during the day, the Weekday Children's Ministries will provide programs of a Christian nurture and support for parents.

Statement of Mission

The Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) is a non-profit ministry of First United Methodist Church which seeks to meet the needs of working parents of young children in the spirit of Christ and to acknowledge the sacredness of each child.

Objectives of ECDC

1. To provide adequate and supervised facilities for each child.
2. To offer loving care in a developmentally appropriate environment for the whole child, thus nurturing children's physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual development.
3. To facilitate the development of a positive self-concept by helping the child make use of his or her abilities and talents in accord with basic knowledge of principles of child development.
4. To help each child become aware of God's love and to grow in an understanding of Christian principles and ethics.
5. To supplement the home experiences of each child to help him or her develop into a well-rounded individual through group experiences.
6. To provide age-appropriate opportunities for cognitive development through a child centered curriculum that emphasizes learning as an interactive process.
7. To provide an environment for children that will serve to enrich their understanding and appreciation of the world around them.
8. To help children develop self-reliance and self-discipline.
9. To provide effective and open communication between parents and staff concerning the welfare and development of the child.
10. To provide well-balanced and nourishing food for the child, adequate for the day spent at the center.

Christian Education

1. Children will be made aware of God's love through the example of Christian teachers, the wonders of nature, and the sharing of stories and songs about Jesus.
2. A prayer will be said before each meal and snack.
3. Bible verses and songs may be used to emphasize the love of God to all creation as they relate to units of study.
4. Emphasis will be placed on the religious aspects of holidays (i.e., Christmas is Jesus' birthday).
5. Children of eligible age will be invited to register for and attend First United Methodist Church's Vacation Bible School.
6. Children in the 3, 4, and Pre-K room will attend Chapel once a week.
7. Activities and stories from the United Methodist curriculum may be used.

Birthdays

ECDC recognizes that birthdays are a special day in the life of a child. Birthdays will be celebrated on a designated day each month. Parent's may coordinate with the child's classroom teacher in advance regarding bringing in special refreshments. No homemade snacks will be permitted.

Invitations for parties outside of ECDC may be given out if all the children in the class are included.

Television Viewing

Television viewing is used to supplement and enhance the daily plan for the children. ECDC will limit television viewing to 30 minutes a day. There may be allowances made for special events.

Miscellaneous

Children should not bring toys unless the item is something special for "show and share" day or pertains to the unit of study. Books are welcome anytime.

Visitors

All visitors must present at the ECDC office prior to going to a child's classroom. Photo identification will be required. Parents are encouraged to visit ECDC at any time. However, naptime should be considered. Parents and visitors listed on a child's enrollment form may be allowed in the child's classroom. The allowed visitors must report to the Director's office before going to a child's room.

Parents are encouraged to participate in special holidays or serve as resource persons for special programs in their child's classroom.

Rest Time

All children remaining at ECDC after 12:00pm will participate in quiet rest or nap time. ECDC staff will provide a comforting, quiet atmosphere, perhaps with music or story records. It is recommended that children do not bring special blankets or stuffed animals for rest time.

Infants sleep in cribs and are allowed to form his/her own pattern of sleeping and waking. No soft objects such as pillows, quilts, comforters, bumper pads, stuffed toys, or blankets shall be allowed in the infant's sleeping environment.

Cots are provided for toddlers and older children at ECDC. Nap mats must be supplied by the parent. All nap mats must be taken home each Friday for laundering and returned to ECDC on Monday.

Weather Policy/Center Closure

Fire and tornado drills are conducted on a regular basis. Each classroom has emergency exit routes posted. ECDC has a weather alert radio. The ECDC Director monitors conditions and alerts ECDC staff and parents as needed. Parents should be aware that telephone contact during weather emergencies may be difficult.

Parents are urged not to pick up their children during severe weather warnings. In the event of a tornado warning, a parent may come to the center to be with their child. The parent cannot leave with their child unless written notice is given releasing ECDC and First United Methodist Church from any responsibility.

ECDC will follow the Montgomery Public School policy on bad weather days. If weather conditions deteriorate during the day, the ECDC Director may decide to close the center. Parents will be notified to come get their child.

In the event of a power failure, the Director will make a decision regarding the operation of the center. DHR requires that a licensed center be closed and DHR notified in the event of a power outage lasting 30 minutes. Parents will be notified if ECDC will be closed.

Services Offered

Ages: 6 weeks through 5 years

Monday – Friday (Year-round)

Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and the day after, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, Juneteenth, and any other holiday observed by the church staff.

Licensure

ECDC is an Alabama Department of Human Resources licensed facility. ECDC adheres to the regulations and procedures set forth in the DHR Child Care Licensing and Performance Standards. A copy of the performance standards is available for review in the Director's office or through DHR. The DHR licensing evaluation along with Health Department and Fire Department inspection reports are posted in the office of ECDC.

Enrollment

The First United Methodist Church ECDC is open to any child regardless of race, sex, or gender. Application for enrollment forms, accompanied by the registration fee, will be received on a first-come basis. Classes will be filled in accordance with the following guidelines for enrollment preference.

1. Children of FUMC staff employed by Staff-Parish Committee
2. Children of FUMC members.
3. Non-church members

Sibling Enrollment

1. Sibling of currently enrolled child of FUMC staff employed by Staff-Parrish Committee
2. Sibling of currently enrolled child of FUMC member
3. Children of FUMC members
4. Sibling of currently enrolled child of non-church members
5. Non-church members

Enrollment Policies

1. A child is officially enrolled when the director of ECDC has approved the Enrollment Application, required information and forms are completed and fees are paid.
 - Forms and information to be completed upon enrollment:
 - A. Child's Pre-Admission record
 - B. Family Information Forms
 - C. State of Alabama Certificate of Immunization
 - D. Medical Emergency Card
 - E. Parent Agreement/Release and checklist
 - F. Copy of Driver's License from each parent
 2. Class assignment is determined by the child's age August 1 and will be at the discretion of the Director.
 3. After classes are filled, children who are not enrolled may be placed on a waiting list in order of dates on their registration forms.
 4. A parent/child orientation conference with the Director may be required prior to the child entering the program.
 5. ECDC does not accept children on a drop-in basis or as visitors. Exceptions may be made for the children of FUMC staff when space is available and at the discretion of the Director. A prorated charge will apply.
 6. Children with special needs will be enrolled upon an individual basis after the facts of the situation are reviewed. DHR standards will be followed.
- All records are confidential and kept in the Director's office. Parents must notify the ECDC office of any changes.

Meals and Snacks

Parents must notify ECDC in writing of any food allergies and or dietary restrictions when a child is enrolled. Food allergies will be posted in each classroom for ECDC staff. Food exceptions are not made except in the case of medical necessity.

ECDC provides balanced, nutritious hot lunches daily. Children are offered nutritious snacks in mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Children are encouraged but not forced to try various foods. Monthly menus are posted in the center. On occasion, changes may occur in the posted menu.

ECDC does not offer a breakfast program. Children should eat breakfast prior to arriving at ECDC. Parents should NOT send or bring breakfast to be eaten at the center.

Infants and Toddler Food

Each day parents should bring the necessary prepared bottles and food properly labeled with the child's name and instructions concerning feeding.

Bottles must be plastic with covered upright nipples. Bottles will be stored in a refrigerator and will be sent home daily. Infants will be held for bottle feedings and bottles will not be propped. One extra ready-to-use can of formula, marked with the child's name must be kept at the center for emergencies. Parent is responsible for providing the correct formula type for their child.

Baby food previously opened will not be accepted by ECDC. All jars opened at ECDC will be sent home at the end of the day or discarded. Parents will supply a spoon and cups with spouts when needed.

Toddler through Age 5 Food

When children are old enough to eat table food, a hot lunch will be provided by ECDC. Lunch is included in tuition. ECDC provides milk when a child is drinking from a cup.

Clothing and Personal Belongings

Children should be dressed in comfortable, washable, play clothes that will allow them to participate in a variety of activities without undue concern for damage.

Each child must keep a complete change of appropriate seasonal clothing, including underwear and socks, at the center to be used for emergencies.

Infants should have two (2) sets of extra clothing in their diaper bag.

A weekly supply of disposable diapers for those children not toilet trained must be kept at ECDC. Parents should check their child's supply at the end of each day.

Items used in caring for infants and younger children such as baby wipes, pacifiers, bottles, cup with spout, must be provided by the parent. All items must be labeled with the child's name.

During toilet training and afterward, the children should wear clothes they can easily manage themselves. Please bring pull-ups and three (3) complete changes of clothing during toilet training. Until children are accident free from toilet training, please keep at least two (2) extra sets of clothing at the center.

All children except infants and crawlers must wear shoes. Closed toe shoes appropriate for running and climbing are recommended for the playground. No cowboy boots, flip-flops, cleats, or clogs.

In cold weather, children must have suitable outerwear to ensure their comfort and safety when playing outdoors.

Cubbies with coat hooks will be provided for each child's belongings.

PLEASE label all personal items brought to ECDC.

Waiting List

A waiting list will be established for each class. A child is placed on the waiting list when the waiting list form has been completed and turned into the ECDC office along with the waiting list fee. The form is dated, and the child's name is placed on the appropriate class waiting list. When a vacancy occurs, the ECDC staff will notify parents in the order of the waiting list.

Tuition and Fees

The annual registration fee is due with the return of the enrollment form and annually thereafter on January 1st. It is non-refundable.

Monthly tuition is posted on the first day of the month and due by the fifth day of the month. Payments made after the fifth of the month will be charged a late fee of \$10 per day.

Tuition for the entire year may be paid in January along with the \$110 annual registration fee. A 5% discount for one enrolled child will be given when a year's tuition is paid in full in January. No refunds will be given for yearly tuition paid in advance regardless of a change in enrollment status of a child.

Late fees will be charged at the rate of \$10 per day up to ten (10) days. After this time, the child will be dropped from enrollment unless arrangements are made with the ECDC Director.

No reduction of fees will be made for absences due to holidays, weather closings, illness, or quarantine. In addition, there will be no reduction of fees for children who wish to attend on a part-time basis.

Families having more than one child enrolled in ECDC will receive a 5% discount for the second child only.

\$110 Annual registration fee, non-refundable

Children 18 months and younger:
\$827.20 per month – Due by the fifth of each month

Children 18 months and older:
\$795.30 per month – Due by the fifth of each month

Withdrawals and Dismissals

ECDC reserves the right to drop any child from enrollment upon two weeks written notice if he/she seems unable to participate in group experiences or is unable to follow the ECDC rules and guidelines. Likewise, parents may withdraw their child upon two weeks written notice or upon payment of two weeks additional fees. Once a child is withdrawn, the registration fee must be paid again for re-enrollment.

Withdrawal notices must be received in writing in the ECDC office 2 weeks preceding withdrawal. If two weeks written notice is not received, full payment for the two weeks will be due. Example: If a child's last day of school is May 30th, written notice must be submitted by May 16th or full payment for the two weeks must be paid

Arrival and Departure

Parents must escort their children to and from their classroom at ECDC daily. Children must be signed into the center upon arrival and signed out upon pick-up. Parents must sign full name to maintain DHR standards.

Children are only released to the custodial parent, guardian, or authorized person. Written, not verbal, authorization for persons other than legal guardians is required for pick up and proper photo identification (Driver's license) must be provided. On the ECDC enrollment form, parents may list names of individuals other than parents that are authorized to pick up a child. It is the parent's responsibility to keep this information current. No exceptions will be made to this rule unless the parent submits an "Authorization for Release of Child" form in writing, in advance, to the Director.

Children should arrive at ECDC no earlier than 7:30 am and be picked up no later than 5:30 pm. A late fee will be charged for children left after 5:30 pm. The fee is \$5 for the first minute and \$5 for each 5 minutes thereafter or any part thereof. This fee should be paid at the time the child is picked up.

Children should arrive, if possible, at ECDC no later than 8:30 am each day to receive morning snack. Parents should notify the ECDC office by 9:00 am if a child will be late arriving or if a child will not be attending ECDC that day.

Undesirable or Aggressive Behavior

Biting, hitting, pushing, and bullying are undesirable and unwanted behaviors that can often become common childhood behaviors. These behaviors are most often a phase and young children move through this phase quickly if handled properly. ECDC follows the methods obtained from The National Association of Education of Young Children to deal with undesirable/unwanted behavior.

The following steps will be taken at ECDC in the event of a biting incident:

1. Separate the children involved in the biting episode.
2. ECDC staff will address the biter in a firm voice acknowledging the inappropriate behavior (i.e., "No, you may not bite your friend.") The biter will be removed from the situation and other children for a short period of time. Then the biter will be redirected to prevent the undesirable behavior.
3. The child who was bitten will be comforted by ECDC staff. If necessary, the wound will be cleaned per protocol by ECDC staff. If further medical attention is deemed necessary, ECDC staff will notify the parent.
4. ECDC staff will complete a "Boo-boo" report for the incident. The ECDC Director will be notified to review and sign the report. Parents of all children involved in the incident will receive copies of the report. Names of children involved in the incident will remain confidential.
5. If necessary, a conference with the ECDC staff, Director, and parent may be scheduled to discuss a child's unwanted/undesirable behavior.

Biting Policy

1st Offense: Report incident to ECDC Director and parents. Acknowledge inappropriate behavior with child and remove from situation. May be put in time out for 2 minutes.

2nd Offense: Repeat steps for 1st offense and notify parents with a phone call.

3rd Offense: Repeat above steps and notify parents that a scheduled meeting will be required with the child's teacher and Director.

4th Offense: Within 30-day period parent's will be notified that the child may be suspended for 3 days.

Medication

Medication will not be administered by ECDC staff. If a child requires medication during the day, a parent may come to the center to administer the medication.

Diaper rash cream is the one exception. Diaper rash cream may be administered by ECDC staff with a completed, written, signed authorization and information form from the child's parent. The diaper rash cream should be in its original container with a prescription label clearly stating the child's name and directions for administering the cream. The cream will be kept in locked storage and administered to the child by designated ECDC staff. ECDC staff will document medication administration.

Discipline

ECDC is "child centered" meaning the first concern is to do what is best for the child. The purpose of discipline is to guide and protect, to be gentle, loving, and sensitive to the needs of the children while helping them learn acceptable behavior and self-control.

Discipline shall be age and developmentally appropriate for the child. Discipline will not be associated with food, naps, bathroom procedures, or be humiliating or frightening to the child. No verbal abuse, physical punishment, or threats will be used. A kind, firm voice with positive reinforcement shall be used. If necessary, separation from the group for short periods of time may be used.

In the event these measures do not bring about acceptable behavior, the Director will talk with the child. If the Director feels further help is needed, parents will be called for a conference. Severe behavior problems such as unacceptable language or hurting other children must be reported to the Director. A brief written notice of the problem will be sent to the parents.

Health and Hygiene

A current State of Alabama Certificate of Immunization must be on file for each child at ECDC. It is the parent's responsibility to update the form after each immunization. Parents may submit a medical or religious exemption form if their child does not receive immunizations.

Children will wash their hands before eating and after using the restroom.

Each infant has his/her own crib with sanitized sheets. Sheets are changed daily.

Toys in the infant and toddler rooms are cleaned and sanitized daily.

Illness

Children must not be brought to ECDC if they have: severe colds, undetermined rash or spots, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, chronic cough, or other symptoms of illness. **A child must be free of fever without medication for 24 hours before returning to ECDC.**

If signs of illness occur during the day (i.e., temperature registers 100.0 F or greater, vomiting, diarrhea), parents will be notified to pick up their child promptly. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency numbers on the enrollment form will be called. The child will be isolated and comforted until picked up.

Parents should notify ECDC if a child has a contagious disease/ illness. The goal is to prevent the spread of illness. Parental cooperation is essential.

Guidelines for Returning to ECDC after Illness

(This list is not limiting. Please check with Director regarding other illnesses and conditions not listed below.)

Conjunctivitis (pink eye) – 24 hours after beginning antibiotic eye drops

Chicken Pox, Hand Foot and Mouth – 5-7 days after first blisters and when all blisters have scabbed over.

Diarrhea – after 24 hours symptom free

Fever – Free of fever (temperature 100.0 F or greater) without medication for 24 hours

Head Lice – Children with head lice are required to remain home during treatment. Parents are to immediately notify the school of the infestation. Student's will be readmitted to school upon presentation of a statement from the child's physician/Health Department verifying the child is lice, as well as nit free.

Strep Throat (streptococcal pharyngitis) – 24 hours after beginning antibiotic and free of fever

Vomiting – after 24 hours symptom free

Ringworm – 48 hours after beginning medication

Impetigo – Must have Doctor's note to return after being on antibiotics for three days. All areas exposed areas must be covered. Must report if staph or strep develops.

Flu/RSV – Free of fever without medications for 24 hours and not exhibiting any other symptoms of illness. Please keep your child at home until their strength has returned.

COVID – A student with COVID-19 must be past 5 days from the first symptoms, symptoms improved, and be fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication. If anyone in the student's household tests positive for COVID-19 the student should quarantine for 5 days after exposure.

Accidents/Injuries

ECDC staff maintain current Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid Training for infants and children.

If a minor accident occurs, first aid measures will be taken, and a "boo-boo or ouch report" will be completed. The original copy will be given to the parent while a copy will be filed in the ECDC office. Parents will be notified in the event of an accident/injury that may need further medical attention.

The following incidents should be reported to the director and to the parents:

1. An injury occurring during center hours.
2. Notable falls or mishaps – Parents will be called, if necessary.
3. Incidents of biting, pinching, or malicious hitting – Parents of all children involved will be notified.

Any unusual injuries or bruising on a child when he or she arrives at ECDC will be reported to the Director. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure the safety of all the children in the program

Medical Emergency

In the event of an accident or illness requiring emergency medical care, the proper emergency management system (EMS) will be notified. Parents will also be notified.

Parents must sign an authorization form for ECDC to obtain emergency medical treatment in the event parents cannot be reached at time of accident or illness. Parents are responsible for updating the emergency contact information for their child.