GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

PARENT HANDBOOK

Updated January 2016
MISSION

The George Mason University Child Development Center was established to support University faculty, staff, and students by providing an excellent on-site child care and play-based preschool program.

PHILOSOPHY

The staff of the CDC is committed to caring and educating children in a positive emotional and social environment that is cognitively stimulating and that supports each child’s culture, language, ethnicity, and family arrangement. Our teachers incorporate the latest research and best practices as they respond to the needs of each individual student. Teachers encourage the children’s explorations in a nurturing atmosphere with a variety of invitations, inspiring the children to discover how things work; to learn about living things and their community; and to enjoy music, art, and dramatic play activities.

The atmosphere in the CDC is one in which children feel physically and emotionally safe, joyful, and confident. In such a supportive setting they are able to scaffold learning for cognitive, social, spiritual, and emotional growth. Children are very observant, and they understand respectful interactions more authentically when they see them modeled by people around them. Children are dynamic learners; at the CDC we believe in actively listening and responding to their interests. Additional supports for learning – including the social environment, cultural objects, and other people – are valuable means for cognitive, social, and emotional development. Our staff is committed to helping children develop confidence in their individual strengths and natural curiosity, enabling them to explore the world with delight and enthusiasm. Supporting children’s explorations helps them expand their skills and develop a strong, joyful self-image.

COMMUNICATION

We value and facilitate frequent communication between parents and teachers, and consider this input an important contribution to the planning and implementation of the program.

Confidentiality

The CDC has written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children’s records. Disclosure of children’s records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality require familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect).
We carefully maintain confidentiality and respect the family’s right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. Exceptions to this policy occur only when we have reason to believe that a child’s welfare is at risk and it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies, as well as with individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child’s interest.

**Classroom contact**
The Lead teacher will share contacts for the child’s class. All questions and concerns regarding your child should be directed to her/him first. If you are unable to reach the teacher or have additional concerns you can contact the Director or Assistant Director at 703-993-9750 or 703-993-9751.

**Conferences**
Conferences between parent and teacher will be scheduled twice a year, but can also be arranged at other times. Parent-teacher conferences are held without the child present.

**Daily reports**
Lead and Assistant Teachers work 8 hour days; teachers fill out informational sheets about every child daily. These are available for parents when they collect and sign out their child. Confidential information will not be written on the daily sheets. Children who have difficulties, an accident or an illness during the day will receive confidential incident reports. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of your child’s daily sheets or incident reports you are welcome to call the classroom to talk with and/or schedule a conference with the Lead Teacher.

**Newsletter**
At the beginning of each month, a copy of the classroom newsletter will be posted outside the classroom and sent to each family electronically. The newsletter contains information about current events and future plans at the CDC as well as notes from each classroom. Please read each issue carefully for information that directly affects your child.

**Parent Feedback**
We always welcome suggestions from parents on all aspects of our program. Please share them with either the Director or Assistant Director.

**Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee**
Parents and Teachers meet together to discuss various topics related to the program and collaborate on implementation on the first Friday of each month, from 12 – 1 pm.
Photographs and Videos
Photographs and videos of the children are taken occasionally for use in the program. Written parent permission is requested at the beginning of the school year. Occasionally, University students, staff, or faculty use photographs or videos for research or educational purposes. Permission will be secured from CDC parents each time such a project takes place.

Visiting
Our doors are always open to parents. You are welcome at the CDC at any time. However, when you are at the center with your child, we ask that you and your child follow center/classroom policies and rules. For example, the lunchroom policy requires your child to clean his/her place after lunch; encourage him/her to show you what he/she is capable of. If you plan on eating at the CDC, you should bring your own lunch, or have the staff order one for you in the morning.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE
Our approach to guidance and discipline is based on each child’s growth and progress. We focus on fostering the development of every child’s healthy self-concept. We will never participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. Teachers encourage children and acknowledge their accomplishments; recognizing that each child is unique, teachers use distinct solutions in handling individual situations. They support children in the development of skills necessary to be successful in a group, providing children with opportunities to cooperate, problem solve, and negotiate with peers. If you wish to discuss your child’s behavior, please arrange a conference with the teacher. In order to better understand and meet your child’s needs, teachers may also request a conference. We will not discuss children in the presence or earshot of the child, other classmates or adults, and ask that you also refrain from doing so.

WELLNESS, SECURITY
The physical, emotional, and cognitive safety of each child at the Center is the primary focus of every member of the staff. All doors to the Center are locked. Families are given a fob for access to the building. For the safety of all no one should hold the door for an unfamiliar person. It is vital that visitors to the Center be asked to identify themselves and their purpose prior to being allowed egress.
Fire drills
We conduct twice yearly Shelter in Place drills and monthly fire drills. Records of these drills are available in the office.

Shelter in Place Policy:
The physical address of the Child Development Center is 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030.
In the event that the building must be evacuated, egress shall be made through the outside doors, located at the end of each hallway. If the end hallways cannot be reached, children may exit through the Froggie (4s – room 106) and Bumblebee (2s – room 131) classroom doorways to the front of the building.
In a situation where severe weather prevents evacuation teachers will bring the children into the hallway, away from rooms with outside windows. Secure rooms include the clinic, share closet, teacher workroom, kitchen, and the library. In the event of a power failure emergency lighting will be provided by the building’s back-up system.
Drills: In addition to our monthly fire/evacuation drills, the shelter in place drill shall be held twice a year.
Training: All teachers shall be trained on the policy at the time of employment and at our annual training sessions each August.

Release of Children
Children will only be released to parents and those adults listed on their emergency forms. Appropriate legal paperwork shall be on file when the custodial parent requests the center not to release the child to the other parent. Please keep your authorizations up to date. Adults not recognized by the CDC staff will be asked for identification and will only be allowed to pick up your child if you have completed the proper authorizations.

Release to Unauthorized Person with Custody Rights
If a person who is not listed by the parent as authorized to collect the child states that he/she is the parent or legal guardian of a child or otherwise has the legal right to see or pick up a child, the CDC staff will proceed as follows:

- We will check the child’s file. If there is a certified copy of a court order or separation agreement showing that the unauthorized person does not have custody, we will advise the person.
- Notify the child’s other parent or other authorized person as soon as possible.
- Notify GMU security at 703-993-2810.
- We will release a child ONLY to the custodial parent or with written documentation giving permission for this in a court order or from the custodial parent.
Snow and Heat Advisory Policies
The Center will follow the University’s administrative schedule on closings; however, parents should consider the safety of their children on those days when the University is open and the streets are icy. In rare instances, the CDC may be closed at the Director’s discretion, if conditions at or around the Center are hazardous to the safety and welfare of the children. University closings are announced on local radio and TV stations. We encourage you to sign up for Mason Alert to receive email and text message alerts. You may also call 703-993-1000 (the GMU information line) for information regarding Mason closings. If GMU closes early due to weather or power loss, please pick your child up within a half-hour of being notified.

Clothing for children
Please dress children for play at school. Children should arrive at the CDC dressed in play clothes (not pajamas). Extra clothes and underwear should be left in a backpack in your child’s cubby, regardless of their age since spills or accidents can happen to anyone. Expensive clothes that can’t get dirty are out of place at the Center. Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. Children should dress each day as if the class will be going outside. We ask that you apply sunscreen to your child before coming to the CDC, especially during the summer months. Please do not allow your child to wear flip flops or Crocs to school. All clothing should be labeled with the child’s name. Children play and explore outside every day unless temperatures fall below 32 degrees or rise above 87 degrees. Please dress your child for the weather; layers that can be added or removed are recommended. Children with outdoor allergies will still be expected to go outside daily. During the active allergy season we recommend you seek advice from your pediatrician on how to best manage your child’s symptoms.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Health/Illness
Fairfax County Health Department regulations govern the return of children to childcare after a communicable illness. Students with infectious diseases, such as gastroenteritis, bronchitis, pneumonia, influenza, chicken pox, hand, foot and mouth syndrome, or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. (See policies below.) Please do not send a child to school who is vomiting and/or has diarrhea. Please inform the CDC immediately if there are any infectious diseases present in your home.
Children should be 24-hour fever free, vomit free and diarrhea-free before returning to school after an illness. The CDC also requests that you do not bring siblings who are ill or contagious into the Center.

Children who are not able to participate fully in the CDC program should not be sent to school. Children must be well enough to participate and to go outside during recess times.

If we notify you that your child has become ill during the day, we expect you to pick him/her up within an hour. Please keep emergency contact numbers up to date and note additional numbers on the sign-in sheet if you will not be at home or in your office.

The following policies will help in reducing the spread of illness in our center (and to reduce the number of days your child is sick):

- Chicken pox: exclude from Center until all scabs are dried (minimum of 6 days from first eruption).
- Strep Throat and Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye): exclude from Center until child has been on an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- Hand, Foot and Mouth Syndrome: exclude from Center until the blisters are not seeping and it has been 24 hours since the last blister appeared. Requires a note from the doctor that the child is free of contagion while blisters persist.
- Hepatitis, impetigo, mononucleosis, scabies, gastroenteritis, sinusitis, bronchitis, pneumonia and whooping cough: all require a note from the doctor that the child is free of contagion and able to resume normal activities.

If your child becomes ill at school, and meets any of the above criteria, you will be asked to collect him/her from school right away.

**Medication**

Except under extraordinary situations, we prefer not to administer medication at the CDC. Please do not send in any medication with your child, including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs, except under a doctor’s instructions as explained below.

State regulations permit the Center staff to administer oral medication to children only if:

- The medication is in the original container with prescription label or direction label attached
- Is consistent with the manufacturer’s instructions for age, duration and dosage.
• Medication shall be labeled with the child’s name, the name of the medication, the dosage amount, and the time or times to be given.
• The parent’s form available in the office is completed, dated and signed, and must include duration of the parent’s authorization for medication; it will expire after 10 work days. Long term prescription drug use and over-the-counter medication may be allowed with written authorization from the child’s physician and parent.
• As parent/guardian, you are responsible for administering the first day’s dosage of any new medication at home.
• In cases involving long-term medication for chronic conditions, a new authorization form must be filed with the CDC each year in August. A new medication form must accompany any medication changes during the school year.
• Prescriptions for medication are valid only up to 6 months. When an authorization for medication expires, you must pick up the medication within 14 days or renew the authorization. Medications not picked up by the parent within 14 days will be disposed of by the Center.

Diaper Rash Ointment
Parents who wish the CDC to apply diaper rash ointment must sign a permission/instruction form and provide the CDC with the ointment. The product shall be in the original container and labeled with the child’s name. Any known adverse reactions to previous use of the product must be disclosed on the authorization form.

Minor injuries at the Center will receive first aid by a staff member. The Director, Assistant Director, Lead teachers and many staff members are Red Cross certified in First Aid and CPR. If a serious injury occurs, the CDC will call 911 first, and notify parents second. For emergency purposes, parents must keep the Center informed of changes in work and home phone numbers and addresses. Should the child need to be transported to hospital a teacher will accompany him/her or follow the ambulance to the hospital. A CDC staff person will remain with the child until his/her parent(s) have reached the hospital. Parents must complete – and have notarized - forms provided by Fairfax Hospital Association to avoid any delay of necessary treatment.

Nap Time
Naptime is scheduled at a set time each day. State licensing requires that all children in the full day program be provided with an opportunity to rest. Some children may find sleeping in a group away from home difficult; others may not need to sleep. The staff will play quiet music and gently rub children’s backs. Children are not required to sleep, but must lie quietly for a time or engage in quiet activities.
**Nutrition**

The Center has contracted with Sodexo to provide a healthy breakfast, lunch, and healthy snack for the children each day. Breakfast is served daily from 7:30 – 9:00 am. Food will be delivered to the Center daily and served by the staff. If your child is a vegetarian, or has any food restrictions/allergies, please let the Center know and we will make arrangements to accommodate your child’s needs. With written parent permission, allergies are posted in the classroom and the kitchen for easy reference. If your child has an allergic reaction during the day, you will be notified.

All classrooms also have a morning snack period, and you are asked to send a small, healthy item for your child to enjoy then. Please do not send any food containing tree nuts or peanuts. The times for snacks and lunch are posted on your child’s classroom schedule.

Parents of children who prefer a different menu or organic food may opt to provide food for their child; however, it must be ready to serve. We regret that we cannot refrigerate or heat foods.

**Insect Repellent and Sunscreen Policies**

Outdoor areas during warm weather attract bugs. Parents who want the Center to use insect repellent on their children should provide the repellent and sign the Insect Repellent Permission Form. Sunscreen should be applied to your child before coming to the Center. If you provide us with sunscreen and signed Sunscreen Permission Form, we will reapply it in the afternoon. Any sunscreen sent to the CDC must be hypo-allergenic and have a minimum SPF of 15. All repellent and sunscreen is required to be in the original container and clearly labeled with your child’s name.

**ENROLLMENT/TRANSITIONS**

The Center serves faculty, staff, and students at the University offering full day preschool and childcare for children 2-5 years of age. We operate from 7 am until 6 pm Monday through Friday on a year round basis, with closings coinciding with those of George Mason University. We also close annually for a three-day period each August, (usually during the week prior to the fall semester) for staff development training. We are open during the University’s Spring Break. The yearly calendar is available each year at the beginning of May.

Children are accepted for enrollment at GMU CDC on a first come, first served basis for the spaces available. A date-stamped waiting list is maintained using the registration forms submitted. Children are offered enrollment according to the CDC policy for priority status.
Once families have accepted space in the program, families are responsible for paying a $200 (non-refundable) deposit to hold their child’s space in the program. This deposit is credited toward the first month’s tuition. Additional paperwork, including an enrollment agreement, emergency treatment authorization, family emergency contact and child release information, developmental history form, health information, immunization records, and proof of identity must be turned in at least 3 days prior to a child’s enrollment. Parents are also responsible for updating their information and their child’s immunization records as needed.

**Removal of Child from the Program**

If the George Mason Child Development Center determines the need to terminate the enrollment of a child, then we will make every endeavor to provide at least one week verbal or written notice. However, the CDC does reserve the right to require immediate dismissal/termination when there is just cause. Just cause includes, but is not limited to, the actions of any child whose need for special attention becomes a threat to the safety of other children or the staff at the center.

Additionally, potential reasons for dismissal/withdrawal may include:

- Behavior that is harmful to other children or the staff, such as repeated biting, hitting, scratching, pinching, kicking or other inappropriate behavior.
- Behavior that interferes with the teacher’s ability to provide a quality program.
- Foul language that is consistently used despite staff efforts to correct it.
- Repeated late pickups.
- Tuition that is over a month in arrears.
- The non-compatibility of a group setting with the current needs or developmental level of the child.
- Failure of the parents/family to comply with policies or procedures established by the Child Development Center or George Mason University. Additionally, behavior by any parent that is considered threatening to any member of the staff will result in immediate removal of the family from our program.

If a problem with a child should occur, daily sheets and incident reports and informal or formal conferences with the Lead Teacher or the Director are considered documented warnings of behavioral issues, and could lead to the removal of a child from the CDC program. There is no refund of tuition for children removed from the program.

**Tuition**

To expedite the process, we prefer payroll deductions for tuition payments. Checks should be made payable to George Mason University or GMU.
Send checks to: **GMU Child Development Center, 4400 University Drive, MSN 5C2, Fairfax, VA 22030.** Parents who are full time employees at George Mason may sign up for our Payroll Deduction option and have their child’s tuition automatically deducted from their GMU paychecks. Payments may also be made in person to the Director or Assistant Director, or left in the tuition payment lock box located outside of the Financial Administrator’s office. Please do not leave tuition payments in the classrooms as checks may become lost or delayed in processing.

Tuition is due on the first of each month and is considered overdue after the 10th. There is a $25 late fee for tuition submitted after the 10th of the month. Statements are sent to all families through email; these reminders will show the activity on your account for the annual year and they also serve as a receipt for your child-care payments. Our tax ID number is located on your tuition statement; you may use your tuition statement for tax purposes as each statement is also a summary of payments made for the annual year. There is a 7% reduction in tuition for the second child in a family.

Your tuition payment will always remain the same, unless you change your contract (enrollment agreement) with the CDC. Tuition cannot be reduced for a temporary reduction in hours that the child attends, or for absences from the program, including winter break and summer vacations. No reimbursement or discounts can be made for a child’s nonattendance. Possible absences due to a child’s illness or family events were taken into consideration when the annual tuition was established; we also considered the fact that the program is closed for a limited number of holidays and staff development days as outlined in the Center’s calendar. Any changes requested by a parent to tuition or to a child’s registration status or days of attendance must be approved and authorized by the Director or Assistant Director.

**Tuition Adjustment and Annual Registration Fee**

If it is necessary for the CDC to adjust tuition, parents will be given at least 30 days’ notice. Parents are required to give a 30 day written or e-mail notice if they will be leaving the program or are making changes to their child’s enrollment that will affect tuition. Your enrollment agreement is your contract with the CDC. Enrollment agreements are updated once a year, and are honored as an on-going year round contract with the CDC. Once your child is accepted into the program, he/she will be guaranteed a space from semester to semester and throughout the summer as long as she/he is continually enrolled and tuition and registration fees are paid. This contract/written notice policy protects your child’s space in the CDC and is strictly enforced. When leaving the program you will be liable for tuition if you do not submit the required notice. Your liability will end thirty days from the date the Director receives a written notice.
It is very important to meet with the Assistant Director to discuss any change in your child’s enrollment (i.e. you need to go from part time to full time) because your registration will be processed for the same slot your child currently holds. The CDC collects an annual registration fee along with an updated registration form in late March. The fee guarantees you a slot for the following school year if your child is continually enrolled at the CDC. The registration fee does not guarantee you a spot if you withdraw your child during the summer or at any other time of the year. If you choose to withdraw your child, the space will be filled from the waiting list. If you wish to re-enroll your child in the program, she/he will be placed on the waiting list effective the date of withdrawal.

**Late payment**

There is a $50 bookkeeping charge for any check returned unpaid by the bank. This must be paid by a separate check or money order made out to George Mason University. Tuition payments after the 10th of the month will include a $25 late-payment penalty. If you are going to be away on vacation, tuition should be paid prior to leaving.

**CURRICULUM**

Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation and promoting language, cognition, and social competence. In observing and noting children’s choices while they are playing, teachers understand each child’s learning style and assess their development. Teachers’ observations of the interests of the children guide their decisions about activities and materials offered in the classroom.

Young children learn through their play; each child’s approach to this work is unique and reflects their thinking. Children’s play sometimes has less to do with other people than with finding out about the world. They try out various roles in an environment without real-world pressures, playing at being a doctor, astronaut, garbage collector, or chef. Young children naturally explore their environments in ways that help them understand the physical environment and their impact on other people and objects. Through interaction with adults and peers they become intent upon using language as a tool for communication and understanding. Teachers act as facilitators to help the children explore and experience the various activities and materials in the classroom.

**Assessment**

When they are playing, children are most completely themselves. Their strengths are most evident, as are the areas where they need support. Teachers can observe the social, emotional, and cognitive skill of each child; perceive ways to encourage this growth, and
assist children in scaffolding new perceptions with previous learning. Observation of children in the comfort of their natural environment provides authentic understanding of a child’s development. It is recorded using a variety of media, including narrative records, photography, and audio or videotape. The focus of this kind of evaluation can include observations of a small group, an individual child, or whole class. An essential purpose, planned in advance, is at the core of each observation. This documentation provides teachers, children, and parents an opportunity to reflect on an event, collect vocabulary related to it, and build understanding of children’s developing social and cognitive skills. It provides teachers with information that can be applied to emergent forms of curriculum planning.

Parent-Teacher conferences are offered in the fall (usually November) and spring (April), but are also available to discuss a child’s development at any time. We provide a written summary of conferences for families, and keep a confidential copy of this report in each child’s file. As stated in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct:

P-2.12—We shall develop written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children’s records. These policy documents shall be made available to all program personnel and families. Disclosure of children’s records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality shall require familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect).

P-2.13—We shall maintain confidentiality and shall respect the family’s right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. However, when we have reason to believe that a child’s welfare is at risk, it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies, as well as with individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child’s interest.

If a parent of teacher believes that a child appears to need support from a specialist to reach developmental milestones, teachers and parents will plan together the best way to approach this. The CDC has information for families about Child Find services, provided through Fairfax County Public Schools Department of Special Services, Early Childhood Identification and Services (ECID&S) program. Child Find screenings are free to children ages 20 months to 5 years old who are Fairfax County or Fairfax City residents.
Field Trips
Field trips are an important part of the child’s experience at the Center. Our trips are age-appropriate in length and focus, and relate to areas of their interest. We frequently explore the Mason Campus, walking outside, enjoying the special programs offered, and meeting with members of the community. Classes may also travel to nearby places of recreational and educational worth. If transportation is required for the field trip, a permission slip must be signed in order for your child to attend. Some field trips require an additional fee. Parents are invited to assist, acting as chaperones.

TEACHING STAFF
The quality of the program at the Center reflects the professionalism and creativity of the teachers. The Center makes every effort to maintain consistency in the teachers in your child’s classroom. Schedules for staff are staggered so that child/teaching staff ratios are maintained.

Our teachers’ qualifications are equal to or better than those required by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The Lead Teacher for each classroom has at minimum an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field plus 12 credits of coursework in Early Childhood, a Child Development Associate’s certificate (CDA), and at least five years’ experience working with young children. Our Assistant Teachers have an Associate’s degree or equivalent, several years of experience and training, or a CDA. Current undergraduate or graduate students from GMU assist in the program, and the CDC has some non-student hourly employees. Lead and Assistant teachers remain with the classroom through the year. We make every attempt to pair part-time teachers with one classroom in recurrent semesters, but your child will interact with adults from all the classes. At times staff members will substitute in a different classroom. If you are picking your child up in the late afternoon, you will meet other members of the teaching staff. Each classroom maintains a staff board with pictures and brief biographies of the staff that are most consistently in that classroom.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Arrival
Each morning please walk your child to the classroom. Parents are responsible for signing in their child. Please leave a number where you can be reached for the whole day on the sign in/out sheet provided.

Departure
Please check and empty your child’s file folder of all accumulated notes and projects daily. We send home important messages through your child’s folder and the daily sheet
provided for each child. Sign your child out and tell the teachers “good-bye.” It is important that the teachers see you taking your child.

**Changes of Plans**
We understand and are supportive of your need to occasionally change previously set arrangements. If you find that you will be more than half-an-hour later than listed on the sign-in sheet, or especially if someone else is picking up your child, please call us on the classroom phone. It is important for us to know that you will be late in order for us to maintain staffing ratios. If you send someone else to pick up your child, be advised that we will not release your child to someone we are not able to identify as being authorized to pick him or her up. Those people authorized to pick up your child should arrive with photo identification so that we can verify their identity. Please keep your forms updated with the names of all authorized persons.

**Late Pick-Up**
The CDC closes at 6 pm; families are expected to be leaving the building with their children at that time. If an unforeseen issue prevents you from arriving on time, call your child’s classroom as early as possible. At 6 pm, teachers will call parents to determine if someone is on the way.

There is a $25.00 late fee per child at 6pm. At 6:15, a fee of $15 will be added, with an additional $15 for each 15 minutes following. By 6:10, if we haven’t heard from either parent, we will begin contacting the emergency contacts you have listed on the contact form. If we have not been able to make contact with an authorized person to pick up the child by 6:30, teachers are instructed to call the Fairfax County Police Department to come take the child into protective custody.

The fees will be added to your monthly payment reminded and must be paid on or before the 10th of each month. Children who are repeatedly left at the Center after 6 p.m. will be asked to withdraw.

**Absence**
If your child will be absent for the day, please call by 8:00 a.m. to inform us. We are not only concerned about your child, but we need to know the daily attendance for planning in the classroom and for the lunch count.

**Birthdays and Other Holidays**
Birthday celebrations for children should be kept very simple and relaxed. The treat may be your child’s favorite food such as fresh fruit, frozen fruit bars or baked goods. We ask that parents do not bring any products that contain peanuts or tree nuts. The CDC is a peanut and tree nut free center. If you choose to make a donation to the Center to honor a birthday or other event, it would be most welcome. Please contact the Director or Assistant Director for guidance and suggestions. All donations are tax deductible.
Other celebrations such as Christmas, Hanukkah, and Diwali, etc. are marked at the Center in a low-key manner and relate directly to the group of children. The age appropriate activities will focus on cultural rather than on religious themes.

Lost and Found
Mislaid items are displayed in the front hallway. Please remember to label all coats, hats, mittens etc. Unclaimed items will be used as extras for the Center, or given to charity at the end of each semester.

Schedule
The schedule of activities will be posted in each classroom, and includes a balance of indoor and outdoor time, large and small motor play, and active and quiet activities. While we do have group times, we recognize that children learn best from child-initiated and child-directed activity, so there are lengthy periods each day in which children are free to choose from among a variety of activities.

Transitions
We require that each child visit the Center (with a parent) prior to her/ his first day. These introductory visits serve several purposes: to allow your child to see the classroom and meet the children and teachers with whom s/he will be spending her/his days, and to give the teachers a chance to begin getting to know and thus to foster a bond with your child. This visit also gives you and the Lead teacher a chance to talk; the teacher will want to get to know your child and your family, and you will want to get to know the program. It is important to schedule this visit at a time when the teacher will be available to talk with you.

You should plan for your child’s first day to be brief - usually only two to two and a half hours – at a time when one or both parents can remain on site. After the pre-enrollment visit (or visits) and a short first day, most children are ready to begin full-time enrollment.

On your child’s first day(s) at the Center, allow enough time when you arrive to settle him/her in an activity before you leave. There are always a few children, however, who are made more distraught by having a parent delay their departure; you can take your cues for your departure from the teacher. Always say good-bye and then leave; never slip out without letting your child know you are going. It is not unusual for the first week to pass without tears and then to have the second or third week drop-offs become more difficult. If this happens, please remind your child that you will return later in the day, say good-bye and then leave. Teachers will assist your child in focusing on an activity. You are welcome to call the classroom or Center to check on your child’s progress.
A few other suggestions to support your child’s transition from home to school:

- Communicate your happiness about your decision to entrust your child in our care. Your child will sense that confidence and will feel secure about your departure.
- Encourage your child to walk into the Center and hang any belongings on his/her coat hook. This provides a feeling of independence and pride.
- Encourage your child to talk to you about the things he/she does each day. Communicate your interest and enthusiasm about what he/she does at the Center.

**Parking**
Parents may park in front of the CDC building when bringing/dropping off children. You may park in any of the spaces except the reserved spaces #121 and #122. Parents who work at or attend school at GMU may not leave their cars in the parking lot for the duration of the day.

**Items Needed**
A crib sheet labeled with the child’s name and a small blanket (i.e., 3’ x 4’) if he/she will be napping here; small stuffed animal is optional.
A pillowcase to store nap items.
Name tags on everything he/she brings to the Center. Toys from home other than naptime ‘stuffies’ are not permitted.
Sunscreen clearly labeled with your child’s name and a permission slip for application.
Bug Spray clearly labeled with your child’s name and a permission slip for application.
Full change of clothes that are seasonally appropriate.
Daily morning snack.

Blankets and sheets will be sent home once a week for washing; pillows are not permitted. Please check your child’s spare clothing bag frequently for completeness, size and seasonal appropriateness. We go outside everyday unless the weather or air quality permits it.

**LICENSING INFORMATION FOR PARENTS ABOUT CHILD DAY PROGRAMS**
The Commonwealth of Virginia helps assure parents that child day programs which assume responsibility for the supervision, protection, and general well-being of child for any portion of a 24-hour period are safe. Title 63.1, Chapter 10 of the Code of Virginia gives the Department of Social Services authority to inspect and license such programs. While there are some exceptions to licensure, licensed programs include child day centers, family day homes, child day center systems, and family day systems. The state may also voluntarily register family day homes are not required to be licensed.

Standards for licensed child day centers address certain health precautions, adequate play space, ration of children per staff member, equipment, program, and record keeping Criminal record checks and specific qualifications for staff and most volunteers working directly with children are also required. Standards require the facility to meet applicable fire, health, and building codes.

Compliance with standards is determined by announce and unannounced visits to the program by licensing staff within the Department of Social Services. In addition, parents or other individuals may register a complaint about a program, which will be investigated if it violates a standard.

Three types of licenses may be issued to child day programs. Conditional licenses may be issued to allow a new program up to six months to demonstrate compliance with the standards. A regular license is issued when the program substantially meets the standards for licensure. A provisional license, valid temporarily unable to comply with standards. Operating without a license, when required, constitutes a misdemeanor which, upon conviction, can be punishable by a fine of up to $100 or imprisonment of up to 12 months or both for each day’s violation.

If you would like additional information about the licensing of child day programs or would like to register a complaint, please contact the Regional Office of Social Services closest to you.

Fairfax Licensing Office
3959 Pender Drive, Suite 320
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
(703) 934-1505

Verona Licensing Office
Post Office Box 350
Verona, Virginia 24482-0350
(703) 248-9345

Northern Virginia Regional Office
320 Hospital Drive, Suite #23
Warrenton, Virginia 22186
(703) 347-6345

Piedmont Regional Office
Commonwealth of Virginia Building
210 Church Street, S.W., Suite 100
Roanoke, Virginia 24011-1779
(703) 857-7971

Central Regional Office
1604 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 130
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5008
(804) 662-9743

Abingdon Licensing Office
190 Patton Street
Abingdon, Virginia 24210
(703) 628-5181

Eastern Regional Office
Pembroke Office Park
Pembroke Four Office Building, Suite 300
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23462-5496
(804) 473-2116