

St. Francis Early Learning Center
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PARENT HANDBOOK

St. Francis Early Learning Center
is a component of
St. Francis Parish of the
Archdiocese of Philadelphia



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PHILOSOPHY

In a democracy, we must take all the children of all the people, value them equally, and provide the best possible conditions to encourage their development into persons who can find life worth living and at the same time be useful members of society. We at St. Francis Early Learning Center realize the importance of the early years. Early care and feeding the mind, body, and spirit is essential to the growth of the child and the nation.

St. Francis Early Learning Center is a vital program undertaking a multitude of activities on behalf of young children. Here, a tremendous effort is made to close the gap between theory and practice.

We are constantly striving to enhance the effectiveness of our program by supplying all that is needed to help fulfill the complex and expanding responsibilities, which are involved. Beneficial experiences of quality are provided under skilled leadership. Each child enjoys the environmental stimulation and opportunities, which will make it possible for him/her to fulfill the complete range of his/her developmental capacities.

St. Francis Early Learning Center recognizes that each child is a unique individual. To meet the child's needs we provide a rich variety of activities and experiences. We endeavor to create a warm, accepting atmosphere, which not only makes the child feel secure but also enables him/her to learn readily. Learning is an on-going process, which begins for each child in the home and expands as the horizons widen. With help from parents and by means of a curriculum sensitive to individual progress, teachers guide each child in his/her growth toward maturity.

Children who feel good about themselves and have confidence in their abilities are more likely to succeed than children who believe themselves incapable of success. Success or failure appears to be caused as much by the child's concept of himself/herself as it is by measures of mental ability.

All facets of development - physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual - take place concurrently. Only through experiences, which integrate the whole being, can a child grow, learn and discover that he/she is a person of worth.

The physical organization of the classroom is not enough to take care of all the needs of our children. There must be a special "social organization" of the classroom where basic needs of the children are to be met. This we conceive as an atmosphere activated by the operation of the four freedoms, which liberate the child for learning. They are:

- Freedom from fear;
- Freedom of movement;
- Freedom of conversation while working and
- Freedom of choice--allowed frequently.

Finally, we attempt to establish a rapport with parents in order to strengthen your confidence in us by selecting St. Francis Early Learning Center for your children. We do this through frequent communication, face-to-face, electronic and written. We discuss your child's strong points as well as those areas of skill and character that need maturing. This is done to better assist you, the parent, in preparing your child for good citizenship here and in the future.

St. Francis Early Learning Center offers peace of mind to parents from varied backgrounds, with one common denominator--the daily need for quality childcare.

Our Mission

St. Francis of Assisi Parish, School and Early Learning Center exists to transform lives and bring about a just and compassionate society where every individual is valued, families are healthy and strong, and communities are united in their commitment to the good of all.

We are committed to trying to help all children and their families, to value them equally, to provide the best possible physical, emotional, and intellectual conditions to encourage their development into persons who can find life worth living and at the same time be responsible and honest members of society.

We endeavor to create a warm, accepting atmosphere, which not only makes each child feel secure, but also enables him/her to learn readily.

Our Vision

We envision a world touched by God's mercy: where poverty and need are alleviated, and all people share justly in the blessings of creation.

Our Core Values

Compassion: Genuine care and heartfelt concern for those we serve

Dignity: Respect for each person created in God's image, regardless of color, capacity, or age

Charity: Generosity toward all people in need, in gratitude for God's goodness to us

Justice: Defense and advocacy for the rights of the poor and disadvantaged

Excellence: Professional competence and responsible stewardship of time and resources

ADMISSIONS

Children between the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years old may enroll in St. Francis Early Learning Center.

We require all children to have age appropriate inoculations and physicals prior to admission according to the Department of Public Welfare.

Parents will be notified if their child is accepted.

IEP/IFSP: If your child has an IEP/IFSP, a copy must be provided during the enrollment process. If you do not wish to share the IEP/IFSP you must provide a written letter stating so.

St. Francis Early Learning Center opens Monday through Friday at **6:45 AM** and closes at **6:00 PM**.

FAILURE TO ADJUST

The Center meets the needs of a child who functions according to his/her age level in terms of physical and mental health. Each child is afforded a two-week adjustment period to determine if the child is able to adapt to the program at the Center. The daycare will refer parents to appropriate agencies (MCIU, DPW, Child Link, etc) for assistance in obtaining services best suited for their child's needs.

The daycare also reserves the right to withdraw your child at any time if we feel your child is of harm or disruptive to other students and/or staff. You will be contacted to attend a conference with the teacher and director before any action is taken and at that time written records will be presented to support the cause of dismissal.

Every effort will be made by the Director and Staff to assist the child/parent in a smooth transition to the program and to overcome any problems that may arise. However, if for some reason the child does not adjust, he/she will be withdrawn.

MEALS

Meals are provided by the Center three times daily (breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack). Breakfast consists of milk, fruit juice, cereal/muffin, etc. Hot lunches are served throughout the year, consisting of vegetables, meat, starch and bread and milk. A dessert of fresh or preserved fruit or gelatin is also served. Snacks consist of cookies, (variety brand) or crackers, and fruit juice. ***No outside food is permitted in the center. If your child is lactose intolerant a doctor's note is required. If your child has a food allergy please notify us immediately and provide a Dr.'s note.***

INFANT / TODDLER FEEDINGS

Infants: Bottles must be premixed; dry cereal must be in a re-sealable container (no cereal boxes)

Young Toddlers: Sippy cups must go home daily for washing

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Arrivals

We have arranged for free play activities between 6:45 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., so that teachers can facilitate parent/child separations and the transition to school activities, as well as have the opportunity for brief communication with parents as they arrive. **In order for your child to receive breakfast they must arrive by 8:30 am. Meals will not be served after 8:45am.** If your child arrives after meal time it is the parent's responsibility to provide breakfast prior to the child's arrival.

More structured activities begin by 9:30 a.m., and arrivals after that may cause disruptions to an activity in progress resulting in loss of attention. It is imperative to have your child in school by **9:00 a.m.** so that this can be avoided. Children will not be accepted after 9:00am unless previous notice is provided. Doctor's notes are required when arriving late due to a morning appointment.

In the interest of safety, children must be brought to the classroom by an adult who must notify the teacher of the child's presence and initial on the daily sign in/out sheet located outside your child's classroom. Parents are required to enter the classroom during the arrival process.

DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CHILD AT FRONT DOOR TO ENTER ALONE!

Infant/ Toddler Parents: If your child arrives with a soiled diaper it is your responsibility to change them.

Departures

If you arrive while the teacher is involved in a structured activity, we ask that you minimize the interruption as much as possible. Parents are required to enter the classroom during the departure process. Teachers may need to share or ask about important information with you.

Children will only be released to an adult who has been listed on the emergency contact/parent consent form or verbal consent by the child's parents. Escorts must come into the classroom, notify the staff, and initial the daily sign in/out sheet. This information is used for tracking enrollment and attendance.

The director or receptionist must be contacted by the child's parent if an emergency arises and the child will be picked up by someone other than the persons listed on the proper forms. The teacher or director will require a form of photo identification.

Staff supervises children until your arrival. Once you are in your child's classroom, we ask that you take charge of your child and be responsible for them at that point. If your child is involved in free play or activity, they are required to clean up before they leave. We ask that you reinforce this with your child so that they do not run out and leave toys, materials laying around for someone else to clean.

Supervision

Please be advised that your child/children is/are under constant supervision while at St. Francis Early Learning Center. In the morning when delivered, children are accompanied to their classroom, where a staff person is on hand. At least one staff member is available to monitor children. Health breaks (toileting) are scheduled several times daily, however, the child is permitted to be excused whenever needed. Children are supervised during this time.

Supervision of children to and from school is the responsibility of the parents or guardian.

Door Bell

A bell is provided for your convenience in the event that the front desk person has left the office temporarily. Please give about 2 minutes before continuing to ring the bell if someone has not come to the front. We appreciate your cooperation with this matter. You may also call the center phone if there is still no one coming to the door.

Security

Please DO NOT open the door to anyone or hold it open for anyone entering behind you or as your exiting. The door facing Hamilton Street is not an exit. We ask that no one exit via this door. It cannot be supervised properly and we do not want someone to enter without our knowledge. This is a safety risk to all staff and children.

DURATION OF PROGRAM

St. Francis Early Learning Center maintains a 52-week program. Hence, once you are registered, if you expect your child to complete the program, you must maintain your fiscal responsibility for the duration of that period of time.

St. Francis will close in observance of certain holidays as well as in service days. Whenever possible parents will receive these dates in advance.

CURRICULUM

St. Francis Early Learning Center is to provide a high quality child care program for the care and education of the children in the surrounding community.

St. Francis Early Learning Center is owned and operated by St. Francis of Assisi Parish, whom provides supervisory oversight and ultimate authority. As an education-based center, St. Francis Early Learning Center adheres to principles in its mission of providing a high quality child care program in a nurturing environment. St. Francis Early Learning Center's program includes a regular, weekly lesson format.

We presently follow and implement *The Creative Curriculum*[®], which translates research and theory from the field of early childhood education into a practical, easy-to-understand approach to working with children and their families. It is a comprehensive curriculum with a clear organizational structure and a particular focus on routines and experiences. It is aligned with St. Francis Early Learning Center's philosophy of a high quality child care program for the care and safety of the children of St. Francis Early Learning Center and the surrounding community. The Creative Curriculum is cross walked with the PA Early Learning Standards.

Children's Goals for Development and Learning

We focus children's interests, their developmental levels, their personalities or temperaments and their individual needs to provide important information about the experiences that should be covered, both for a class or group and individually. This understanding of each child becomes the backbone of curriculum and defines the types of activities and experiences that are presented through intentional classroom planning. Child-centered learning is focused on the child's needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles with the teacher as a facilitator of learning. This creates a concept of the child having their own role in the learning process. Our center gathers information from parents and also from observing children to help drive lesson planning and the curriculum. We use information from families, the children's observations and other experiences to develop individualized goals for children that include experiences and activities that are challenging, yet achievable. We crosswalk Creative Curriculum with the PA Early Learning Standards to accomplish our goals.

Experiences, Environment and Materials

We create a classroom environment that reflects the Key Learning Areas of the Learning Standards, is inviting and stimulating and keeps children involved in learning. Our center uses the philosophy from the Creative Curriculum Learning Centers to provide an environment where children can explore and learn with and without teacher facilitation. We design a classroom environment that is stimulating, yet warm and welcoming - a positive setting that will set the stage for successful learning experiences. Our environments use materials and equipment that are in good repair, are culturally, linguistically and age appropriate, and that reflect opportunities for active engagement (or hands-on learning). We follow The Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) through Keystone Stars and national accreditation standards from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) which offer good insight into the key elements for high quality classroom environments.

Teaching Methods, Instructional Practices and Assessment

We use Creative Curriculum and areas of assessment below. Teachers are constantly recording child observations to make careful, intentional decisions about what children should learn, using the Learning Standards as a guide. These resources are needed to develop activities and experiences that motivate children to explore and stay actively engaged. We assess individual children, the classroom as a group, instructional practices, and the experiences that are provided to determine how children are learning or making progress in skill development. From here, we determine adaptations or revisions that may need to occur to enhance learning. Our daily schedule reflects both routines and planned experiences to build children's growth and development and learning opportunities through a balanced and varied schedule that is flexible, yet consistent

The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos uses research in the following areas: Creating a Responsive Environment, Know What Children are Learning, Caring and Teaching, and Partnering with Families. This is done by routines such as: Hellos and Goodbyes, Diapering and Toilet Toileting, Eating and Mealtimes, Sleeping and Naptime, and Getting Dressed. Experiences such as Playing with Toys, Imitating and Pretending, Enjoying stories and books, Connecting with Music and Movement, Creating with Art, Tasting and Preparing Food, Exploring with Sand and Water, and Going Outdoors help teachers create an environment of learning and fun!

The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool and Pre-K uses research in the following areas: How Children Develop and Learn, The Learning Environment, What Children Learn, The Teacher's Role and the Families Role in creating a curriculum to help children prepare for school. Its basis is on a center-based approach with observations and teacher facilitation to create a learning environment based on the children's needs. Some of the centers found are Blocks, Dramatic Play, Toys and Games, Art, Library, Discovery, Sand and Water, Music and Movement, Cooking, Computers and Outdoors.

Parent and Family Roles in Child's Achievement of Goals

Families' cultures and background provide valuable insight to a provider's curriculum. Every parent/guardian has hopes or aspirations for their children and their family. These goals, along with family values and customs, can influence the types of activities that are presented for children. Linguistic preferences and lifestyles are also important elements to consider. Together, they provide an important picture and element of curriculum. Again, information obtained at intake and throughout the year during surveys, updating forms and discussions with families helps us plan our curriculum appropriately. We encourage parents to have a part in program planning and decision making through board membership, surveys, a suggestion box (located with the tuition box), follow-up procedures after 45 days of care and during conferences, and parent program evaluations. We welcome parent suggestions and comments as we both work together to provide a positive child care experience for children.

Staff Roles in Child's Achievement of Goals

Teachers are facilitators of children's skill development. In addition to understanding children and their families, teachers' personal insight into their own cultural backgrounds and experiences, personality, interests and needs provide the third element that guides programs' curriculum design.

Teachers who combine personal experiences with their knowledge of child development and their familiarity with their children and families build strong opportunities for learning and development. Teachers scaffold learning by building on children's prior knowledge to introduce new ideas and information.

When combined, children, teachers and families offer essential and valuable information that help to create the framework for curriculum. While there are basic elements that will remain the same, such as Pennsylvania's Learning Standards for Early Childhood, the adaptations each teacher makes to accommodate the uniqueness of that classroom's clients makes curriculum fluid and individualized.

REFERRAL POLICY

At any time that the parent or teacher should have concerns that a child may need to be referred to a mental or social service the following steps must take place.

- Documentation must be written using objective observations as to the reason for concern
- Following observations it may be determined that a child would benefit from additional services
- A meeting with the director must be scheduled to talk about the concern
- The director or another individual may be brought in to determine if the concern is valid or if classroom changes or routine changes could eradicate the problem
- The parent will be encouraged to have the child assessed by a professional to determine disabilities such as hearing, speech and eyesight
- A meeting between the parent and the teacher and the director to discuss any concerns that any of the parties may have. This meeting should be in the first language of the parent if at all possible
- The concern must be backed by real evidence and documentation
- If the parent agrees, SFELC will supply the parent with the names and contacts of the appropriate agency

If and when doing an assessment on a child and conferencing with the parent, it is determined that there is a need for services we will refer the parents to the following programs

Behavior intervention

- Preschool intervention program: 610-272-4110
- Federation Early Learning Services: 215-676-7550

Developmental delays, physical disabilities

- MCIU-preschool intake: 610-539-8550 x177
- Children under 3: 610-277-1776
- Federation Early Learning Services 215-676-7550

DISCIPLINE POLICY

- The methods of guidance and discipline used shall be positive and consistent with the developmental age of the children and applied with full knowledge and understanding of the parent (s).
- There shall be no use of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, or harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- Discipline shall not be associated with the behavior of children in regard to rest, toilet training or food.
- Discipline shall not be associated with the withholding of emotional responses or stimulation and shall not require the child to remain silent for long periods of time.
- Children shall not be isolated without supervision.

Discipline And Guidance

At St. Francis Early Learning Center, the term guidance is used for several reasons. It is a positive term and implies working WITH the child to develop internal control of his/her behavior. Our goal is to encourage the children to become creative, independent, and responsible and socially mature human beings. This involves learning to make responsible choices and accepting the consequences of such choices.

Guidance takes several forms:

1. **Environment:** A place designed for children. The furniture is child-sized with lots of hands-on activities.
2. **Logical Rules:** Such as keeping our hands to ourselves and taking care of the learning environment. These are discussed with the children, as well as why such rules are needed.
3. **Curriculum:** Is developmentally appropriate, based on the children's interest and level of readiness.
4. **Positive Behavior:** We reinforce the behaviors we encourage. Catch them being "good!"
5. **Redirection:** Often interesting a child in another activity can eliminate a potential difficulty. We might ask a child to help us or send them to a different play area.
6. **Positive Reminder:** Telling the child what we want them to do, rather than using "no" or "don't."
7. **Renewal Time:** Occasionally a child needs to be removed from the situation for a brief time allowing them to consider alternate behavior.

Any on-going situations will be discussed with the parents to ensure a cooperative approach. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns.

NOTE: No corporal punishment will be allowed. This is defined as the use of negative physical touching (spanking, slapping, pinching, etc.) No unusual punishment will be allowed, such as humiliation, ridicule, threat, or coercion.

Chronic Disruptive Disorder

We will make every effort to work with the parents of children having difficulties in child care. We are here to serve and protect all of our children. Children displaying chronic disruptive behavior, which has been determined to be upsetting to the physical or emotional well being of another child, may require the following actions. Staff & director should follow the following procedures.

Documentation

The staff shall record all observed behavior deemed problematic. As much detail as possible shall be included: time, date, environment and what occurred, with the exception of the name of any other child.

Initial Consultation

The staff member will use all means of communication to inform parent of observed behavior. Staff will discuss with parents necessary tactics to assist child in improving.

Second Consultation

If the behavior persists the staff member will arrange for conference with parent to discuss relevant information. Goals will be established and the parent will be involved in creating approaches towards solving the problem.

Third Consultation

If the initial plan for helping the child fails, the parent(s) will be required to meet with the staff and Director. Another attempt will be made to identify the problem, outline new approaches to the problem, and discuss the consequences if progress is not apparent.

Suspension

When the previous attempts have been followed and no progress has been made towards solving the problem, the child may be suspended from the childcare center indefinitely. The Child Care Director may immediately suspend a child at anytime he/she exhibits a behavior, which is harmful to him/ herself or to others. A parent may be called from work at anytime the child exhibits uncontrollable behavior that cannot be modified by the childcare staff. That parent may be asked to take the child home immediately.

Suspensions from the childcare program may vary from a few hours to indefinitely.

Child Abuse

Per state regulations, all staff is mandated reporters. This means, that in the event any staff person suspects child abuse by a parent, guardian, or another staff member, immediate action should take place. Staff should implement agency procedures, which coincide with state regulations, for reporting child abuse. The health and safety of each child is the center's priority. If a parent suspects child abuse they should notify the Director immediately.

HIPAA

The center keeps certain information on file regarding children and families, which may be considered personal in nature. Staff is expected to maintain this information in confidence and not discuss it or release it to persons outside the Daycare Center unless prior written permission has been obtained from the parties involved. Staff will also refrain from discussing confidential information concerning staff, the center or its families among themselves or with parents. Staff shall refrain from derogatory comments pertaining to the center, staff, children, or parents. Any staff found violating anyone's confidentiality would be disciplined. Information that has direct bearing on the welfare of any child shall be brought to the Directors attention immediately.

CLIENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Parents are encouraged to problem solve grievances in an informal fashion with the source of conflict while maintaining a respectful manner at all times.

Parents should schedule an appointment with the staff person with whom there is conflict and discuss issues and concerns immediately. Each person should have the opportunity to discuss and problem solve during this time.

If a parent is still unhappy with the attempts of problem solving then the Director will have a meeting with all parties involved and offer a resolution.

DISCHARGE POLICY

St. Francis Early Learning Center reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of any child at any time, if deemed necessary. The reasons can include but are not limited to the following:

- Non-payment or lateness of payments
- Excessive late pick ups and/or non-payment of late pick up fee
- Child is unable to adjust to program
- Physical and/or verbal abuse of staff or children by parent/guardian/family member or child
- Not adhering to center policies and/or procedures as outlined in parent handbook

FEES

RATES EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2011

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED PRICE SHEET



TUITION MUST BE PAID ON **MONDAY**. Please be advised, all tuition must be in our office on the due date. If we do not receive your tuition on that day, a \$5.00 late fee will be applied. If your tuition is not received within 3 days, your child can be **dismissed**. Your child can only return when the tuition is **paid in full** (pending vacancies).

Our primary responsibility is your child/ren. Once the tuition gets behind, it is very difficult to catch up. Your ability to pay tuition on time keeps our focus on your child/ren.

Parents who pay bi-monthly/monthly, please arrange payment schedule so that tuition is paid ahead rather than behind (to avoid late charges).

All payments are collected 1 week in advance! On the 1st day of school a payment for 2 weeks is required. The following Monday and every Monday after, payments are due.

CASH, CHECK or MONEY ORDER WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR PAYMENTS OF TUITION. (If paying by check please allow up to 1 week for checks to clear and avoid bounced check fees of \$10)

Payment by check will no longer be accepted after the 1st time a check is bounced.

Billing

All tuition is billed weekly. Each week when payment is made the balance will be 0. If your payments are made on a timely basis then your balance should be 0. The number of weeks billed is dependent on the number of Mondays in each month.

Because of operational expenses, there is **NO CREDIT** applied for the following:

1. Children who are absent for vacation, sickness or any other reason.
2. Holidays
3. Snow Days

Rates shown are per week and payment is due every Monday (payments are collected 1 week in advance)

				FULL DAY	HALF DAY					
INFANTS	3 Days			157	110					
(6 weeks - 12 mos)	4 -5 Days			235	180					
Young Toddlers	3 Days			150	105					
(13 mos - 24 mos)	4 -5 Days			220	167					
Older Toddlers	3 Days			140	98					
(25 mos - 36 mos)	4 -5 Days			210	161					
Preschool - PreK	3 Days			127	89					
(37 mos - 4 yrs)	4 -5 Days			190	146					
Registration	75 per child									
*** Rates are effective 7/11 and our subject to change at anytime without prior notice ***										

Tuition Receipts

Written receipts are given to parents/guardians each time any payment is received. Printed receipts will be given once payment is entered into computer system.

Parents are requested to retain their receipts in a secure place for tax purposes for the following year. It is also important to retain receipts if a discrepancy occurs in the payments.

End of year statements are provided by January 31st, per federal regulations, and sent automatically to all parents. Any account with a past due balance will have it's tax form withheld until payment in full is received. Forms will only be printed once; additional reprinting will incur a fee.

LATE PICK-UP (TARDINESS)

A warning letter is sent each time your child/children is/are picked up from the Center after 6:00 PM. Beginning at 6:01 you will be marked as late.

PICK UP TIME IS 6:00 PM

After the first and second warning is sent, a final letter will ask you to withdraw your child/children from the Center. St. Francis does not make provisions for families who are constantly late.

LATE FEES..... \$15.00 FOR EACH 15 MINUTE PERIOD

FOR EXAMPLE.....6:01 to 6:15=\$15.00 -----6:16 to 6:30=\$30.00 Etc.

****Late fee must be paid that evening or following morning CASH ONLY
for your child to continue with their enrollment****

Any child here beyond 6:30 will result in the police being notified.

ADDITIONAL FEES

- HOLIDAY ACTIVITIESContingent on the type of activities
- GRADUATION..... Contingent on the venue
- FIELD TRIPS Contingent upon location
- DIAPER PROGRAM..... \$7 PER WEEK

IF YOUR TUITION IS PAST DUE YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO ATTEND ANY FIELD TRIPS UNTIL THE BALANCE IS PAID IN FULL.

DAMAGED PROPERTY

If your child(ren) damage any SFELC property it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to cover the expense of replacing the item/equipment. Parents will be provided with proof of cost for the item and will be expected to make payment within 7 days of notification.

Any child who jumps on their cot causing it to break will no longer be given a cot by the SFELC. Parents will be responsible for the replacement cost and must provide them with a mat for their rest time.

FORMS

Emergency Contact Information And Financial Agreement Updates

The center is requiring you to review and update both the Emergency Contact Information and Financial Agreement for your child/children.

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Code for Child Day Care Centers, you will be required to update these forms every 6 months or as a change occurs. These updates are scheduled to occur every September & March. **If your information changes at anytime other than the above months you must complete a new form.**

As always, we appreciate your cooperation.

Nutritional Development Services Eligibility Form

The center is required to have the NDS eligibility forms updated annually or annually by the NDS department and federal regulations. This information must be kept up to date in order for the Center to be charged the correct amount for all meals served. In order to avoid the meal costs being passed on to parents, all forms must be completed and returned to the Office in a timely manner.

NEED TO KNOW

Cubbies

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a “cubby.” Cubbies are labeled with your child’s name. Please check your child’s cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

Lost & Found

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-found Box located outside of the office. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

Toys from Home

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity.

Pets

No pets are permitted in the building at any time. If a pet accompanies any person during pick up or drop off they may not be left unsupervised on the property.

At NO time are pets permitted on the ramp or front steps with or without supervision.

What to Bring

- **Infants:** enough bottles for a day’s use, at least 6 diapers per day, and at least 2 changes of clothes per day.
- **Toddlers:** enough bottles for a day’s use (if applicable), six diapers and at least two changes of clothes per day.
- **Older Toddlers:** at least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program.
- **Preschoolers:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.

Please label all items brought from home with your child’s name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items.

Supplies

Please see the list provided to you at enrollment.

What Not To Bring

- Avoid large earrings or long necklaces. These items can cause injury to a child if yanked or becomes snagged on a toy.
- Avoid children bringing money in their pockets. The children tend to play with it or misplace it. If money is sent for field trips, please place it in a labeled envelope and turn into office.
- Lots of barrettes frequently come out and are lost.
- Sandals/Flip flops in the summer can lead to quick falls when children are running and skinned/scraped toes. No aqua socks!
- Tight belts make it very difficult for children to go to the bathroom quickly and independently.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

Immunizations

We require that children have current immunizations according to the American Academy of Pediatrics Guidelines and that we have updated verifications of health forms. Be sure to take the Health Assessment form with you when visiting your doctor and quickly return it to us. The form must be returned to us within 30 days of enrollment or your child will need to be withdrawn until we receive the Health Assessment form.

Our software program will keep track of all immunizations and physicals. We will print notices when immunizations are due and it will be placed in your child's cubby.

In addition to the Medical Examination and the immunizations required registration, the following must be observed:

If a child is absent for three or more consecutive days due to illness, a physician's certificate is required stating that the child is free from illness and is able to return to school.

- Germs from mucus secreted by nose are contagious. We request that your child stay home for 24-48 hours.
- Pink eye is very contagious. You must keep your child at home when this condition exists for a period of 24 hours while receiving treatment.
- Ring Worm is a common problem, when detected please keep your child home for at least 48hrs with treatment being provided.
- Head Lice is a common problem, when detected please keep your child home for at least 48hrs with treatment being provided.

If your child arrives at the center ill you may be required to take the child back home.

Symptoms, Which Require Your Child to Remain Home:

- Fever of 101 or more within the 1st 24 hours
- Signs of possible severe illness, including unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, or difficulty breathing
- Uncontrolled diarrhea that is not contained by toilet use
- Vomiting two or more times in the previous 24 hours.
- Conditions which could be communicable until they have been determined not so
For example: chicken pox, pink eye, ring worm, lice etc.

No medication will be accepted for administration in the Center unless a state required form is signed and completed with the following information:

- Diagnosis of the child's illness
- Dosage and times for administration clearly stated
- Medication must be in original container with directions attached
- Prescription medication, must be in child's name, not another family member
- Parent/Guardian Signature

Accidents And Emergencies

Despite our careful supervision and attention to safety issues, we recognize that accidents are possible and must be prepared for:

Minor Mishaps

Accidents such as bumps and minor bruises are a normal part of child's play. In the event of a minor accident we will administer First Aid and complete an accident report, which we will ask you to sign so that we are sure you have been notified of the accident.

More Serious Injuries & Medical Emergencies

In the event of an accident or illness that requires immediate medical attention, a staff person will notify you immediately. First Aid will be administered while a decision is made regarding the transportation of your child to Montgomery Hospital.

First Aid And Child Illness

The Center attempts to provide a safe environment for all of our children. If accidents do occur, the Director or a member of the staff will render first aid and notify parents or guardians as noted below. Any treatment beyond first aid will be the responsibility of the parent.

Parents Will Be Notified

- Whenever an accident takes place in which the child needs medical (first aid) attention, an incident report will be **sent home.**
- Anytime a blow to the head has occurred (sometimes intracranial pressure caused by swelling does not take place for several hours). Parent will be **called immediately.**
- Any injury that may indicate possible broken bones would necessitate the parent being **called immediately.**
- Any cut where excessive bleeding occurs would also necessitate the parent being **called immediately.**
- An incident report will be filled out on all accidents, regardless of severity by the person who witnesses the accident & parents are required to sign the form.

The Director or the Assistant Group Supervisors have the authority to call the Emergency Medical Service Ambulance, if deemed necessary.

Emergency Medical Service Will Be Called In The Following Cases:

- When the child is not breathing
- When the child is unconscious
- When back injury has occurred
- When hemorrhaging occurs

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Parent Involvement

Feel free to visit the school at any time. You are invited to participate in the program as much as your schedule allows. Parent participation is encouraged and necessary to foster positive relations and nurture children. You may:

- Come in and read a story
- Cook or bake with the children
- Help with lunch, snack or party
- Talk about a career or hobby
- Teach a game
- Special Activities
- Field Trips

Communicating With Staff

When you enroll your child at St. Francis Early Learning Center we share a challenging and rewarding responsibility - that of assisting your child to develop intellectually, socially, emotionally, etc. In order to do this, we need to maintain open communication with you.

Because time to talk can often be limited on both sides, we do the following:

- Post parent information boards, in the hallway and outside of each classroom with all updates and new information, Provides notes home if any problems arise.
- Send home a daily information sheet with each child every day to keep you updated on eating, sleeping, and potty habits as well as any upcoming events.
(Please take the time to read these daily notes).
- Hold quarterly parent meetings to introduce any new staff & discuss upcoming events.
- Please know that supervision of children is our first priority, therefore talking with you may not be possible at drop-off and/ or pick-up; therefore scheduling a convenient time may be necessary.
- Hold a “getting to know you” meeting within 45 days of enrollment
- Complete a child service report
- Hold conferences two times a year to update you on your child's progress and get your input on topics
- Provide parent workshops here at the center and information on workshops or classes offered by another department within the agency or within the community,
- Telephone you if your child seems ill or if we have other concerns.
- Provide a calendar, snack menu, and monthly letter of upcoming dates and events.
- Host a parent’s night out activity (no children)
- Send emails regularly
- Post updates on our Facebook page

Parents and teachers must **work together as a team** in order to accomplish our common objective of giving every child the best experience possible.

Cell Phones

The time you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with one another about your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child, other children and adults who may wish to communicate with you, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at anytime while visiting the center.

Toilet Training

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports your child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

Celebrations

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community.

We celebrate many holidays with the children throughout the year and encourage our families to share their cultures with our program.

TRANSITION POLICY

As children grow and develop we continually assess their preparedness for the next room or grade.

With the exception of Pre-K, the children will typically move to the next room when both their age and development allow for the move. When the time comes your child's teacher and/or the director will discuss the plans with you. If everyone is in agreement for the transition the children will be given the opportunity to spend some time in the new room to allow them to adjust to the new setting. After monitoring the child's interactions and comfort level in the new room parents will be notified of the move up date.

Pre-K children are working on preparing for Kindergarten throughout the school year. As the end of the school year grows near the teacher will discuss with your child the next step to Kindergarten. Working together we can make this an exciting and enjoyable experience for children and minimize the anxiety of going to a new, BIG school. We work with St. Francis School to allow the children to visit the Kindergarten class.

TRANSFER OF RECORDS

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.

SAFE PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF POINTS FOR CHILDREN

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Code for Child Day Care Centers, the following information concerns the safe routes to be taken when arriving and leaving the Center. We suggest that when at all possible, these routes be followed.

The center operates from 6:45 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Arrival is generally between the hours of 6:45 AM and 8:30 AM.

For vehicular arrivals there are several different options. To access the parking lot for drop off you **MUST** enter through the Hamilton St. entrance by Rectory and continue through to school lot, where you can drop off your child. The parking lot is open each morning between 6:45am & 9:00am ONLY. There is 15 minute street parking located on Hamilton. There is also parking available on Oak St. opposite side of the school. Parents and children **must** enter the center through the main entrance on the parking lot side.

When arriving at the Center to pick-up children in the evening, please follow the same procedures. If you are driving, **the parking lot will only be accessible after 4pm**. We suggest that you park as close to the Center as possible.

Children can only be picked-up at the main entrance. Upon arrival, please let the front office and the staff person on duty know that you are there to pick-up your child.

Always initial the sign out sheet.

For security reasons, children will only be released to authorized individuals. If the person picking up your child is not, recognized or on the authorized list, ID will be required and you may be contacted for confirmation. All parents should have the last 4 digits of their SS# on file for verbal authorizations.

PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY THROUGH THE PARKING LOT!!!!

NO PARKING

There is NO PARKING permitted in the area marked RESERVED. This is for STAFF ONLY. All parents/guardians/escorts are to park to the left of the building (if facing the building). There is NO PARKING in front of the steps or anywhere on the white lines. This is a serious safety issue when you are parking where families have to walk and the steps and ramps are being obstructed.

For your information, the Norristown Police Dept., located at 235 East Airy Street, Norristown, PA 19401-5048, supervises our district. Emergency Medical assistance is available at Montgomery Hospital.

Feel free to contact the Director with any questions or concerns you may have.

TRANSPORTATION

St. Francis Early Learning Center does not provide daily transportation to and from the Center. Field Trips are the only time the center will provide transportation through a contracted bus company.

Per state regulations, children under the age of 3 cannot be transported on the bus for any field trips. Parents will need to provide their own transportation if they wish to attend with their child who is under age 3.

WITHDRAWALS

Each parent/guardian has the responsibility to inform the Director in writing that your child will not be continuing at St. Francis Early Learning Center. The exact last day of attendance is needed in your letter or on withdrawal form. The forms can be obtained from the office. Please have all of your financial matters in order. If you wish to have your child's records released to another educational institution we require a release form to be completed. Both forms can be obtained from the office.

WE REQUIRE 2 WEEKS NOTICE.

If 2 weeks' notice is not received tuition will be billed and expected for the remainder of the enrollment time.

VACATION

Should you take your child/children for a vacation during the regular school year, you are expected to pay the regular tuition for that period of time. No credits are given. No exceptions.

SNOW POLICY

St. Francis early learning center follows the regulations of the elementary school.

Please consult KYW (1060 AM) radio for information on these specific days.
Listen for St. Francis's code number:

3177

The decision on delayed openings and/or closures may not be made until 6:00am. Please listen to the radio or try calling the center before leaving your home.

When the center is on 2 hour delay, we will open at 8:45am which is still before the 9:00am cut off. During inclement weather delays ONLY we will extend the arrival time until 9:45am.

Tuition is paid for all snow days -- Monday through Friday.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Parent volunteers are welcome to assist parent/staff committees for these special events!

Halloween Party
Christmas Program
Valentine's Day Party
Summer Program

Thanksgiving Lunch
Christmas Party
Easter Egg Hunt
Field Trips

*During these activities parents may be asked to sign up to provide items for the festivities. We require everyone's participation as these events are to benefit all children.



FUNDRAISERS

We have several different fundraisers (candy, candles, etc.) throughout the year. In order for these to be successful we need **ALL** parents' participation. All children benefit from the funds raised, therefore your support is **MANDATORY**. Those who do not participate will be asked to pay a fee to cover their participation. This fee must be paid by the designated due date.



BIRTHDAY PARTIES

If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday with his/her class we are happy to help. Please request, complete and return the birthday party request form which will let us know all the important details of the special day.

No food, snacks or treats with peanuts are permitted!

PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To: Parents/Guardian of Child

Please read, sign and return this statement to the Office.

I have received my copy of St. Francis Early Learning Center's Parent Handbook, which outlines the policies, procedures, and rules that are required of parents.

I will familiarize myself with the contents of this handbook. I understand that it constitutes the policies of the Center. I also understand that St. Francis Early Learning Center reserves the right to make changes at anytime to its policies.

I understand that the information in this handbook is to maintain a healthy learning environment for the children.

Parent Signature

Date