



Charleston Community
Early Learning Center

Where learning and discovery go hand in hand.

Family Handbook

July 2025

Charleston Community Early Learning Center

FAMILY HANDBOOK Program & Policies

Revised Printing
July 2025

A community supported and operated program admitting children regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, nationality or religious background.

Children with physical and/or emotional disabilities shall be accepted if it is determined that the Center is able to meet the individual needs of the child with no adverse effects upon the group.

THIS HANDBOOK IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES,
IT IS SPECIFICALLY NOT A CONTRACT BETWEEN THE
CHARLESTON COMMUNITY EARLY LEARNING CENTER
AND
GUARDIANS, FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

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ABOUT US

The Charleston Community Early Learning Center (CCELC) is a not-for-profit organization licensed by the State of Illinois for 109 children between the ages of six weeks and ten years.

We are given rent-free use of the Wesley United Methodist Church (WUMC) educational wing but share the expenses for utilities and maintenance of the facility by paying the church a substantial monthly reimbursement.

A board of directors, whose composition is one-part community members, one-part parents/guardians of children attending the Center, and one-part members of WUMC, oversees the total operation of the Center; they are responsible for policy, budget, etc. The Administrators (Executive Director and Assistant Director) are given the responsibility of the day-to-day operation of the Center and its programs.

The Center is a United Way Agency. Other special funding through community resources such as foundations is used to assist low-income families when it is available.

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PHILOSOPHY

The Charleston Community Early Learning Center Staff and Board of Directors believe that:

- Early childhood should be a time of fun, warmth, security, exploring and self-discovery.
- Children should be nurtured and encouraged to be creative and receptive to new experiences in a safe and supportive environment.
- The childcare atmosphere is based upon mutual respect for all parties (child, care giver and parent/guardian). This environment encourages social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth of each child.
- CCELC embraces diversity and respects each individual's beliefs and background.

Based upon our philosophy, the CCELC uses The Creative Curriculum® in its programming which includes:

- celebration of birthdays and holidays
- creative arts and craft activities
- exposure to shapes, colors, numbers, and letters
- field trips throughout the community and surrounding area

- finger plays
- food preparation
- games and large muscle activities
- science and nature activities
- sharing and conversation time
- songs
- stories
- visits from interesting individuals from the area

WAITING LIST

State licensing sets enrollment limits. When a classroom is enrolled to its maximum capacity, a waiting list is maintained. When children are moved off the waiting list into classrooms, preference is given to additional children of current families, as well as children referred to the Center by various state agencies, such as the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Charleston Community Early Learning Center is a full-day, year-round Program, open from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

DCFS LICENSING

The Center is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). A set of regulations governing various policies and procedures to be observed by Child Care Centers is provided by DCFS in the form of Licensing Standards. Areas covered by these Licensing Standards include staffing, discipline, health and safety, nutrition, curriculum, equipment and materials, transportation, records, and reports. A copy of the Licensing Standards is available for your review in the Center's office or your child's classroom, or online at the DCFS Sunshine web page under Rules for Child Care Centers: <https://sunshine.dcfs.illinois.gov/>. Compliance with regulations is done by DCFS through unannounced visits and scheduled re-licensing visits.

The Center is continually working on the Circles of Excellence, Illinois' new measure of quality for childcare programs through ExceleRate Illinois. Check out this program at: www.excelebrateillinois.com or ExceleRate Illinois on Facebook. Staff, with assistance of Child Care Resource and Referral Specialists, conducts yearly assessments with the Environmental Rating Scales. The use of this assessment tool helps staff evaluate the programming and environment.

PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

The Center staff and board of directors recognize that family is a child's first teacher. The Center encourages and supports parent/guardian involvement by offering suggestions for parent/child activities aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Standards. We encourage parents/guardians to stay involved in their child's learning. Information will be shared both in writing and verbally so that parents/guardians are kept informed about their child's activities at the Center. We sponsor special programs such as Pre-K graduation ceremonies, Thanksgiving Feast Day, Fourth of July parade, Doughnuts with a Grown-up, among other activities.

We encourage parents/guardians to participate in our Program at a level comfortable to them. Some of the volunteer activities include assisting with field trips; assisting Parent/Teacher Committee with organization of social events, parent /guardian activities, community activities, etc.; assisting in classrooms; participation in suggested parent/child activities at home; donations to the classroom/program; reading of newsletters, special notes, etc.

It is our desire to work with parents/guardians and their children to provide positive learning experiences in a high-quality early education-based childcare setting. Ongoing communication will be conducted between staff and parents/guardians through newsletters, daily report sheets, telephone calls, bulletin boards, Facebook posts, personal visits and/or conferences. At the time of enrollment, we ask that each family, if they so choose, complete a form regarding dual language. Please stop by and visit and/or receive a tour to meet the staff and learn how we can work together. Extended family members are welcome with prior notice from the parent/guardian.

CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

General: Help children and teachers when assistance is requested, watch how the teachers interact with children in the classroom, and be a positive role model for the children.

Specific: Sit with the children. Listen and work with them. Sit at their level at the tables or on the floor. Talk with the children during meals. Ask questions about what they want to do or what they have done at school, etc. Help the children when they ask for assistance during routines like hand washing. Assist children with achieving self-help skills. Read stories and books to the children or ask them to "read" the story to you. Always feel free to ask a teacher for guidance and suggestions in dealing with day-to-day situations.

VOLUNTEER CODE OF ETHICS

Volunteers are very important to our program. Children enjoy having people work with them, and teachers also find volunteers' help very valuable. When volunteers work with the children within their daily classroom routine, everyone wins! It is important for guardians and family volunteers to understand and follow classroom rules. It is important to ask teachers about specific classroom instructions to help the volunteers feel comfortable working in the classroom.

Following the classroom guidelines will ensure the volunteering time can be an enjoyable learning experience for both the children and the volunteers. Teachers count on volunteers. If you sign up for a particular activity for the classroom, please follow through with that commitment. If volunteers are unable to attend, please let the teachers know ahead of time so changes in activities can be made prior to the beginning of class. Volunteers' time in the classroom should be spent with the children. Always ask what can be done and the teacher will gladly make suggestions. The teachers also need to work with the children, so the time to talk with the teachers is before or after the class time or during a scheduled conference. When volunteering, adults may see or hear something that concerns them. Please speak directly with the teachers or the administration as they are familiar with the issues which frequently concern children and the dynamics of the particular classrooms. Teachers will not discuss specific families or children (except to explain their behavior), as that would violate confidentiality. Volunteers are expected to speak ONLY to the teacher or administration concerning situations so as not to breach confidentiality. Volunteers are also asked to respect the confidentiality of others. Above all, volunteers are a valued resource for the program. The time volunteers spend in the classroom is greatly appreciated by the children and teachers alike. If you wish to volunteer on a regular basis, the Center has volunteer forms that must be filled out to meet State of Illinois requirements. A background check must also be done.

FEES

Payment of weekly fees is due on Monday of each week for that week's service (or first day of attendance). Payments received after Tuesday will be assessed \$1.00 per day late fee charge. Checks/Money Orders should be made out to CCELC.

Fees are charged for the time reserved for each child whether present or not. The Center must continue to operate its program according to licensing requirements; thus, tuition refunds are not given for days the child is absent.

Each family shall pay a non-refundable \$20.00 per child Supply Fee four times a year: January, April, July and October. Payment is expected at the time of enrollment and each quarter thereafter as indicated.

On legal holidays, stated as follows, the Center will be closed, and the full week's fees will be paid as usual. If the holiday falls on Saturday, the Center will be closed Friday. If the holiday falls on Sunday, the Center will be closed on Monday:

- **New Year's Day**
- **Memorial Day**
- **Independence Day**
- **Labor Day**
- **Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following**
- **December 24th and December 25th**

The Center will be closed on at least two non-consecutive weekdays for staff training each year. The full week's fees will be paid as usual during the week of such a closure. These will tentatively be, although not guaranteed to be, a Thursday in April and a Wednesday in October.

In the event of a closure, including but not limited to weather related closure, of two or fewer days during a week, the full week's fees will be paid as usual during the week of such a closure. The issue of any refund or pro-rated amount due as the result of a Center closure of greater than two days in a given week shall be in the discretion of the Director and/or the Board.

If a child is absent AN ENTIRE WEEK OR MORE due to illness, one half the weekly fee may be paid upon the child's return (limited to one week per calendar year).

Accounts two weeks behind can result in termination of a child's enrollment.

An accurate record of scheduled drop off/pick up times is essential for staffing purposes throughout the entire day. Changes and adjustments to scheduled times should be made in advance with an administrator. For questions regarding this policy, call the Center at 217/345-3111. No exceptions permitted for late pickup after the 5:30 p.m. closing. If a child is dropped off earlier than scheduled or picked up later than scheduled, an additional fee will be assessed. Children scheduled for "morning only" must be picked up by 12:30 and children scheduled for "afternoons only" must not be brought in before 12:30, unless extenuating circumstances exist. Part-Time is considered less than 5 hours per day and Full-Time is considered five or more hours per day.

Funding sources are available to families who qualify. If you believe you may be eligible for funding, please check with the Director for further information. The funding agency, such as Child Care Resource and Referral or the Department of Children and Family Services, will determine your eligibility based upon relevant criteria such as family income and work/student status. Families are responsible for payment of fees until the funding agency approves payment.

LATE PICK-UP

As our staff are scheduled to work only during operational hours **6:30 am and 5:30pm**, after hour fees will be assessed if a child is not picked up by closing time. The late charges are \$5/child for the first five minutes and \$10/child for each five minutes thereafter. All late fees are to be paid before the child returns to their classroom the next day.

Should a child be left at the Center after closing time, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Staff members will make all-due effort to contact parents/guardians or emergency contacts listed on the enrollment emergency card. (Please see that the Center has valid, up-to-date emergency contact numbers on file.)
2. If 30 minutes has passed after the Center has closed and the parent/guardian or emergency contacts have been unable to be reached, the local law enforcement office will be contacted.
3. The Center staff will accept responsibility for the child's protection and well-being until

the parent, guardian or an outside authority arrives. The Center staff will not hold the child responsible for the situation and the discussion of this issue will only be with the parent or guardian, not with the child.

REFUNDS

Any parent/guardian who has paid in advance for their childcare services and has an outstanding credit upon withdrawal will have that unused amount refunded at the time of withdrawal.

RETURNED CHECK

A \$15.00 service charge will be assessed for all checks returned by the bank. This charge will be automatically added to the families' fee page and payment is expected to be made upon receipt of notice. If two checks do not clear, future payments must be made by money order, cashier check, or cash.

TAX RECEIPTS

End of the year tax receipts will only be printed and given upon request.

NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Families are responsible for notifying the Center if their child will be absent. The Center does have voicemail so after-hours calls can be made. Notifications assist in staffing and meal preparation. Consistent school attendance helps children feel secure in their learning environment and establishes a strong foundation for future learning. It is extremely important that your child attend on a regular basis.

If your child is absent due to a contagious illness, please let us know so we can properly inform other families of symptoms for which they should be aware.

If your child is absent for one week without parental/guardian notice, you will be contacted by the Center's Administration. If you cannot be reached by phone, a letter will be mailed asking you to contact the Center's Administration. If you cannot be reached by phone and the letter goes unanswered for more than two weeks, your child's slot will be filled with another child. Spaces may not be held since absenteeism prevents other children and families from benefiting from valuable classroom experiences. Failure to communicate with a Center Administrator can result in losing your childcare slot at the Center unless extenuating circumstances prevail.

VACATION REQUESTS

With advance notice to the Center's Administration, each family is allowed to take one full week of vacation per year with no charge. **PRIOR NOTICE IN WRITING IS REQUIRED** if you do not wish to be charged for that vacation. Vacation time must be taken as 5 consecutive weekdays.

SCHEDULE CHANGES AND WITHDRAWAL

All requests for schedule changes must be discussed with and approved by the Center's Administration, not the classroom staff.

Additional days of care may be available depending upon program space. Please discuss this with the Administration for availability and additional fees.

If a family chooses to withdraw their child from the Center, the Administration should be given a two-week notice in writing, and the family shall assume financial responsibilities for the child's reserved space for those two weeks whether the child is in attendance or not. These procedures allow the space your child will be leaving to be filled; this allows for minimal loss of revenue. The Center must continue to operate and pay expenses whether your child is here or not.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

At the time of enrollment, parents/guardians are requested to visit the Center for a tour, walk through the child's classroom, meet Staff and Administrators, and receive the Center Parent Handbook and other necessary enrollment paperwork. The parent/guardian will have the opportunity to review the book with a Center Administrator and ask questions.

Parents/Guardians will be asked to complete all enrollment forms before the child begins. Included are a Developmental Information Form, Immunization Record and Physical Form signed and verified by a medical professional, Federal Food Program Forms, Financial Agreement, and an Emergency Card.

Within 30 days of enrollment, the parent/guardian must provide a certified copy of the **child's** birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age of the child. The Center will make a copy and return the original to the parent/guardian. If a certified copy of the birth certificate is not available, the parent/guardian must submit a passport, visa or other governmental document as proof of child's identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate. If the parent/guardian fails to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate within the 30 days, the Center is required by law to notify the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement agency.

A newly completed physical must be submitted every two years. The Federal Food Program Forms must be filled out upon enrollment and yearly prior to each September 1. The enrollment forms must be updated every time there is a change in the parent/guardian's employment, residence or phone number. The information requested is required by the DCFS. Failure to turn in the forms in a timely manner will result in loss of childcare services.

STAFFING

In compliance with the DCFS Licensing Standards, Child Care Centers are required to maintain adequate staff/child ratios. We maintain or exceed these ratios. The Center is staffed with individuals with various educational degrees and levels of experience; however, all staff comply with the Licensing Standards. All staff work cooperatively in program design and implementation.

NURSERY (Six Weeks to Fifteen Months) – staff/child ratio: 1:4

TODDLER ROOM (15 – 24 months) – staff/child ratio: 1:5

TWO-YEAR-OLD ROOM – staff/child ratio: 1:8

PRE-SCHOOL I – staff/ child ratio: 1:10

PRE-SCHOOL II – staff/child ratio: 1:10

PRE-K – staff/child ratio: 1:10

BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL CARE (Kindergarten thru 4th grade) - staff /child ratio: 1: 20.

Full time care provided on early dismissal & non-school days and during the summer at an additional cost.

NON-SMOKING POLICY

For the children's health and safety, we have a non-smoking policy in our facility and parking lot in compliance with Federal/State Regulations. This applies to staff, parents/guardians, and volunteers.

ILLNESS/MEDICATION

A family should be prepared with substitute care or an alternative plan for times when their child is sick.

ILLNESS

- If a child is ill, DO NOT SEND him/her to childcare.
- If a child is sent home with a fever, diarrhea, or other contagious illness, they may not return until they are free of such illness or are no longer contagious. A written release from a healthcare professional may be required before your child can attend the Program if symptoms/signs of an illness are still present. Please notify the Center office if a child is ill and will not attend the program.
- If a child has an injury or condition which makes it impossible to participate in the Program with a reasonable amount of the teacher's help, the child must be kept at home.
- If a child becomes ill while attending the Program, a parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to pick up their child immediately. The child shall be picked up if any of the following are true (but not limited to):
 - child has an elevated temperature of 101 degrees or higher and for 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal

- child has contagious childhood disease such as measles, mumps, chicken pox, etc.
- child has diarrhea
- child has vomited
- child has head lice (child must be nit-free to return to the Center)

MEDICATION

- A Medication Authorization Form must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian in order for any medication to be administered. (See the form for details.)
 - The initial dosage of a new medication must be administered by the parent/guardian to ensure that the child is not allergic to the medication, unless a physician's written set of instructions for life-threatening situations accompanies the medication.
1. Prescription medication must:
 - a. Be brought directly to staff in its original prescription labeled container along with a Medication Authorization Form; it will be kept in a locked cabinet until administered.
 - b. Be currently dated.
 - c. Be properly labeled with child's name, date, and name of medication, doctor's name, and dosage. Under state regulations records of medicine must be kept by our staff.
 2. Medication will only be given for:
 - a. non-contagious conditions such as an allergy, asthma, etc.
 - b. non-contagious infections such as ear infection etc.
 - c. hives, burns, of other non-contagious skin conditions
 - d. a child who has been out for 24 hours or more and is recuperating but has not finished medication.
 3. We will NOT give:
 - a. Aspirin
 - b. anything to reduce above-normal temperature or severe pain.
 - c. over the counter medication labeled "consult your physician for children over the age of child"
 4. A Medication Authorization Form must accompany:
 - a. Over the counter medications, including sunscreen, and shall be in the original container labeled with the child's name, dosage, time and/or directions for distribution

The Center requires a note or FAX from the doctor giving the medication name, the dosage for the underage child, and when and why it is to be given.

Outdated medicine left at the Center will be disposed of by the Director; also, medicine left behind when a child is withdrawn from the Program will be disposed of if the parent/guardian does not pick it up from the office on the child's last day of attendance.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

If a child has been sent home with a communicable disease, the child will not be readmitted until it is determined that the child is no longer contagious. A doctor's release form may be requested before the child can return to the Center.

When a child is known to have a communicable disease, parents/guardians of the children who have been in contact with the ill child will be notified according to recommendations and/or regulations set by the County Health Department. In case of food poisoning the County Health Department will be contacted.

NEBULIZER USAGE

If an asthmatic child requires nebulizer treatments the following guidelines exist:

1. Parent/guardian will complete the Center's ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION FORM.
2. Parent/guardian will instruct the personnel on asthma symptoms and treatments prior to use of nebulizer machine by a staff person:
 - a. when child needs treatment (symptoms or time)
 - b. how to measure and/or mix medication for machine
 - c. how to use the machine

A child will receive treatments by staff as long as the child is able to cope with the group situation and daily routine.

Preventative treatments will be given at intervals of not less than four hours and at times when the entire class routine is not interrupted. Suitable times to administer nebulizer treatments would be: *naptime, playtime when two teachers are present making it possible for one teacher to take the child aside and away from busy activity.*

Sudden onset of an asthma attack will be treated as an emergency.

ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

All accidents that occur at the facility are recorded on an accident form signed by the witnesses to the accident and a Center Administrator. The report includes the time and place of the incident or injury and details about where it occurred. If the child needs emergency care because of an accident or illness that occurs while the child is at the Center, a Center staff member will attempt to contact the child's parent/guardian at the phone numbers provided for that purpose. If unable to locate the parents/guardians, the Center staff will make a record of the attempts that were made to reach the parents/guardians. A staff member trained in CPR and/or First Aid will administer First Aid to the child and assess the situation. Should the child require immediate medical attention, the child will be transported either by ambulance or the Center staff to the designated doctor or hospital. Any accident or injury requiring professional medical care, death

or other emergency involving a child shall be reported to the licensing office of the DCFS.

If a child is injured and clothing is contaminated by a blood spill, the clothing will be bagged and placed in the child's cubby. This is done to eliminate possible exposure to bloodborne pathogens for all Program staff and participants.

POLICY ON BITING

CCELC recognizes that biting is, unfortunately, not unexpected when infants/toddlers are in group care. Staff is always upset when children are bitten in our program, and we recognize how upsetting it is for parents/guardians. While we feel that biting is never the right thing for infants/toddlers to do, we know that they bite for a variety of reasons. Most of these reasons are not related to behavior problems. Our program does not focus on punishment for biting, but on effective techniques that address the specific reason for the biting. When biting occurs our three main responses are:

1. To care for and help the child who was bitten; and
2. To help the child who bit learn other more appropriate behavior; and
3. To work with the child who bit and examine current programming so the biting can be prevented.

When there are episodes of on-going biting, staff will attempt to develop a plan of specific strategies, techniques and timelines to address it. We do not and will not use any response that harms a child or is known to be ineffective.

When a child is bitten by another child, an accident report will be written, and a copy given to the parents/guardians. When the bite breaks the skin, a phone call will be made to the bitten child's parents/guardians to verbally explain what happened. The biter's parents/guardians will also be called, and an incident report will be written and given to that child's parent/guardian.

The name of the child who bit is kept confidential to comply with the privacy laws. This also avoids labeling and gives the teachers the opportunity to use their time and energy to work on stopping the biting.

Current resources on biting are available for both staff and parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are encouraged to bring their concerns and frustrations directly to the teachers and Administrators.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY POLICY

In Compliance with the DCFS guideline 407.21, sections (d) (3), children will be provided the opportunity to engage in outdoor activities daily. **If children are well enough to come to the classroom, it is anticipated that they are also well enough to go outdoors.** Therefore, parents/guardians need to send their children in appropriate clothing/shoes because the children will go outdoors. CCELC views outdoor play as an integral part of an appropriate curriculum for young children.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event of a medical emergency or an accident, we shall attempt to contact the parents/guardians and the child's doctor. If it is impossible to reach either and should emergency treatment be required, the child will be taken to Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center. Parent/guardian authorization for the Center to contact their family physician and take whatever emergency medical measures deemed necessary is part of the CONSENT FORM signed by parents/guardians and kept in the child's file.

The Center should be informed of changes in this authorization information. All medical expenses, including transportation, are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

BABYSITTING POLICY

It is Charleston Community Early Learning Center's policy that we strongly discourage the use of Center staff members for babysitting purposes. If a parent/guardian decides to hire a staff member to babysit, you must contact the Center Administrator and sign a release where you agree to hold the Charleston Community Early Learning Center harmless for any harm that might befall your child while under the care of a Center staff member you hire to babysit your child.

CHILD DROP-OFF & PICK-UP POLICY

Parents/Guardians or their designee **MUST**:

1. Ensure that the child is brought into the building and placed in the care of the assigned teacher or teacher presently on duty.
2. **Sign the child in** on the form provided outside the child's classroom.
3. **Sign the child out** with their signature on the same form as signed in on; the state governing agencies do not find initials acceptable.

The Center cannot be responsible for children dropped off and expected to enter the building, walk up the stairs, and find their class by themselves. Each child needs the security provided by parent/guardian accompaniment. Should their class not be present due to a walk, outside play, etc., arrangements must be made with the Administrator or teacher on duty for the child's supervision.

Children are not permitted to leave the building (other than with teacher/class) with anyone but parents/guardians. Possible exceptions:

1. Alternate person's name is written on the emergency card (THE GUARDIAN IS RESPONSIBLE TO KEEP THE EMERGENCY CARD UPDATED).
2. The parent/guardian has left written or verified verbal information with the head teacher or Administrator.
3. If the alternate pick-up person named by the parents/guardians is someone not known to the staff, a photo I.D. will be required to be shown. If verification cannot be made, the child will not be released to that individual.

4. The pick-up person shall sign the child out daily by placing their signature in space to right of child's name on the form provided on the clipboard outside the child's classroom or with teacher in charge of the group.
5. When children are picked up, please keep the following in mind:
 - a. encourage the child to walk in the hallways to avoid collisions or falls.
 - b. for each child's SAFETY, either leave them with the group so they are supervised or keep them by the hand; especially when their group is out of doors and you go upstairs to get items out of their cubby or bin.
 - c. staff do not send children into the Center without a teacher being with them, please help with consistency by not allowing children to enter the building without parental/guardian supervision.

Safety Precautions for After School Program

Parents/guardians of school-age children are requested to call the Center if their child will not be attending the After-School Program on any given day. If a child does not arrive at the Center as scheduled, and if a courtesy call from the parent/guardian has not been received to inform the staff of the child's absence, the following procedures will apply:

1. Staff will attempt to contact parents/guardians at home/work.
2. Staff will contact the school.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Center provides multiple opportunities for parents/guardians to communicate with the Center Administration and staff. A phone will be taken to classrooms to allow parents/guardians to talk to their child or their child's teacher when needed. Daily reports will be sent home for infants through Pre-K. Newsletters and timely information memos will be sent.

Parents/guardians can access the Center's Facebook page to see current listings of current events, photos, recalls, trainings, advocacy alerts and weather notices. Individual conferences may be scheduled with teaching staff and/or administration upon request as well as twice annually.

Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Surveys will be sent to all current families once a year.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

When parental/guardian concerns arise, they are encouraged to discuss them directly with their child's teacher. Conferences may also be scheduled at both parties' convenience to discuss any issues either in-person or by phone. If the issue cannot be resolved to the parent/guardian's satisfaction, a parent/guardian may meet, upon request, with a Center Administrator.

CURRICULUM

The Creative Curriculum® is used by Charleston Community Early Learning Center and is aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Standards.

The following are areas that each classroom includes in the daily activities of the children:

- **Language** – Expressive and receptive language experiences will be provided with availability of felt boards, videos, books, puppets, stories, conversations, CDs and tapes. Children are encouraged to write and/or dictate their own stories.
- **Dramatic Play** – Opportunities will be provided through the use of puppets, dress-up clothes, and a dramatic play area where children can engage in role play.
- **Large and Small Muscle Activities** – Physical play experiences to develop large motor skills are provided indoors and outdoors with the use of a variety of equipment: balls, boards, parachutes, climbers, etc. Small muscle skills are developed daily through the use of puzzles, stringing beads, crayons, peg boards, etc.
- **Math and Science Concepts** – Children will be exposed to activities that will help them gain an understanding of things such as size, shape, and color through the progressive use of sorting, graphing and manipulation of play and learning materials that help each child develop their problem-solving and observation skills.
- **Art** – Art is an activity that children should enjoy for the sake of doing and the process they go through to create, not just something to do to just represent something; children will be encouraged to express their own ideas and feelings with the art materials provided. Materials such as paper, crayons, markers, watercolors, paint, scrap paper, etc. are available daily and children are encouraged to work in groups when they can and to create 3-dimensional art when they want. All these experiences provide the child a chance to experiment, create, and express their emotions and feelings, while at the same time developing fine motor skills.
- **Music and Movement** – By providing opportunities for marching, singing and time to experiment with instruments and rhythm, children can develop their motor skills and auditory perception. Movement activities help develop vocabulary, social and emotional skills, as well as spatial concepts.
- **Socialization** – In these early years, the Program strives to provide a multitude of age-appropriate activities such as indicated above, that encourage the development of skills to get along with others, to express his/her feelings in appropriate ways, and to learn to discuss and solve their own problems. It is our goal to create and develop in each child the following:
 - Consideration of others
 - Opportunities to engage in small and large group activities
 - Opportunities to develop complex skills in the areas of social, emotional, and physical growth
 - Ability to problem solve
 - Opportunities to express oneself
 - A feeling of belonging
 - Self-Confidence and a positive self-image

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENTS & YEARLY SCREENING

The classroom teachers will assess each child based on developmental norms and expectations appropriate for the child's age in the area of cognitive, language, motor, social, and emotional development. Assessment and curriculum objectives will be discussed with parents/guardians in either a conference setting, through written documentation or by phone according to the parents/guardians' preferences.

In addition, Birth through two-year-old Screening through one of our local developmental therapist groups or Pre-School Screening of our three through five-year-olds done by the Department of Early Childhood of Eastern Illinois Area of Special Education are done on a yearly basis. Results of the screenings will be sent home with parent/guardian as well as a copy placed in child's file. Follow-up calls will be made to families should Early Intervention Services be needed.

On a yearly basis, the local Coles County Department of Public Health schedules Vision and Hearing Screenings for our three through five-year-olds. Follow-up letters will be sent to families should intervention be needed.

For a child to participate in the screenings, parents/guardians must sign a release form which will be sent to them by the Center at time of the screenings.

PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

We prefer that toys, jewelry, etc., not be brought to the Center from home. Young children have difficulty sharing their personal possessions and can be very disappointed to see a favorite items become lost or broken. The Center cannot be responsible for lost or stolen articles. The only exception will be the child's "Show and Tell Day." The items need to be labeled and will be put into the child's cubby before and after "Show and Tell." If a special blanket or sleeping toy is necessary for a restful naptime, an exception is made with the understanding the item will be kept in the child's bin at times other than naptime. Please take these items home periodically to be laundered.

FOOD

NO food or candy should be brought by children unless prior approval has been obtained from the Center Administration or Lead Teacher (breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack are provided). Special treats may be brought with advance notice given to the Lead Teacher. Food must come to the Center in original, sealed, and purchased packaging. According to Licensing Standards, NO homemade treats can be served.

Also, at any time, we may have children enrolled that have allergies to a particular food such as peanut/tree nut allergies. Please do not have children enter the Center eating or carrying peanut/tree nut products.

The Center participates in the Federal Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care

Food Program which spells out regulations for creating our menus and serving portions. Menus are posted weekly. Enrollment and Participation Forms are required to be completed at time of enrollment and annually thereafter.

The Center has a full-service kitchen which is inspected at least twice a year by the Coles County Health Department. Our full-time cook has a current Food Service Sanitation Certification, as do the Center Administrators.

Parents/guardians are not to bring food into the Center with their children. Please make sure children finish their drinks, food, candy, etc. before entering the Center and classrooms. The exception is, of course, babies who are on bottles.

Children with a medical condition or disability must submit a medical statement signed by a licensed physician for milk or food substitutions, listing specific items that may be served.

A form, Medical Exception Statement for Food Substitution, provided by the Child and Adult Care Food Program, must be completed, signed, and dated by the family physician before any substitution of food can be made based on medical reasons. Copies of this form are available in the Center Office.

If a child cannot eat certain foods due to religious convictions, the parent/guardian must provide a written statement verifying this fact and listing the foods that the child cannot eat.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program states that milk served must be consistent with the most recent version of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Therefore, fluid milk served to children two-years and older must be fat-free or low-fat milk. To comply with this ruling, all children two-years and older will be served skim or 1% milk. Formula will be served to children through 12 months and whole milk until the age of two-years.

Parents/guardians may request, in writing, non-dairy milk substitution without providing a medical statement if the substitute meets the Federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It cannot be requested just on the basis that the child does not like milk. The written request must identify the medical or other special dietary need that restricts the diet of the child.

Water will be made available to children during the day, but cannot be used as a substitute for milk.

Below are the times of meal service:

Breakfast	8:15 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.
Lunch	11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Snack	2:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

CLOTHING

Please dress your child in play clothes that can be worn while painting, playing outdoors, etc., as well as footwear that allows for climbing, running, and long walks. Flat soles, tennis shoes, sandals with back straps, etc. are acceptable. Flip flops and wedged heeled shoes are strongly discouraged.

All children should always have a change of clothing and extra underwear in their bins in case clothes become soiled. All clothes should be labeled, including sweaters, jackets, etc. The Center cannot be responsible for unlabeled clothing.

IF YOUR CHILD WEARS CLOTHING HOME THAT WAS PROVIDED BY THE CENTER, PLEASE LAUNDRY AND RETURN ITEMS TO THE CENTER WITHIN THE WEEK.

PARENT/GUARDIAN BULLETIN BOARDS

Check these boards regularly for news and information about the Center Program. The large bulletin boards hanging in the entryway and at end of the hall are used to display menus, notices, board meeting minutes and agendas, community information, etc. Teachers will display the child's weekly activities, individual classroom information and parent/guardian notes on the walls outside the child's classroom.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The Center's programming is designed to promote love and direction for each child based on the premise of mutual respect for child, parent/guardian, and caregiver. Discipline is to be administered with thought and care. Physical punishment will not be used, and children will not be shamed, humiliated, or left unsupervised for inappropriate behavior. No child will be punished for lapse in toilet training.

The following points are a part of the overall philosophy:

1. We will inform children of the rules and expectations for behavior.
2. Manners and respect for others shall be taught with care, considering each child's age and group abilities.
3. After developmentally appropriate warnings, staff will follow through with age-appropriate corrective action.
4. Redirection and verbalization with children shall be done at all age levels. It is our goal to explain why a particular behavior is not allowed, to suggest an alternative, and to then assist the child in engaging in an acceptable activity.
5. The following behaviors are normal, although not desirable, behaviors for children:
 - a. Very young children poke, slap, or bite each other
 - b. Very young children love to experiment with the world around them such as with food – smashing or dropping it
 - c. Children test each other and the adults around them

It is our responsibility to recognize these behaviors and redirect the children in their activities.

6. When a child's behavior is threatening to himself or others, that child will be removed

from the situation. The removal process interrupts his/her unacceptable behavior and allows the child time to cool down and regain control of themselves before re-entering the group. No child will be left unattended.

7. Our goal is to help each child learn the art of self-discipline. We want each child to feel good about themselves as individuals and to experience joy from their own accomplishments.

When the adults who discipline a child work together with similar techniques, children are most likely to respond to attempts of discipline when the adults involved are consistent in those techniques. Parents/guardians often find it difficult to be consistent at those times when family or financial pressures or other stresses seem more important than a child's misbehavior. The parent/guardian may feel keeping the child quiet, whatever it takes, is the only solution at that moment. However, there are other solutions. One of the many roles of the Center's staff is to work together with parents/guardians to help children develop appropriate behaviors. Parents/guardians are invited and urged to discuss their concerns about their children's behavior with teachers and Administration, and to plan together with consistent responses to problem behaviors. In this way, children will always get the same message from the important adults in their lives (parents/guardians and teachers) about behaviors that are acceptable and those that are not.

The Center operates on the premise young children are never "bad." The types of inappropriate behavior most often seen in children (including tantrums, refusal to cooperate, hitting other children, and failure to follow rules) are usually the result of the child's level of development. A young child simply lacks the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills to comply with many adult demands. Unacceptable ways of disciplining are hitting and yelling at children. Hitting is often misunderstood by a young child that does not always see the connection between a slap and some action on his part. Hitting as a form of punishment rarely stops an inappropriate behavior but does cause confusion and anger. Yelling usually frightens children and distracts them from the problem. Shouting, which is often accompanied by name calling on the part of the adult, also damages a child's self-esteem.

While the Center's staff respects the right of every parent/guardian to discipline their own child in a personal way (except where child abuse or neglect is concerned), parents/guardians who volunteer or work in the Center or when dropping off or picking up their children, may not hit or shout at any child including their own. Hitting or shouting at a child in the presence of others upsets everyone and disturbs the classroom routine. CCELC Staff are mandated reporters: therefore, failure to abide by this policy could result in a report being filed with the DCFS hot line.

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY

When a child's consistent, disruptive behavior puts other children, staff, and/or self at risk, staff will schedule a conference with parents/guardians and administrative personnel. The objective is to determine how to eliminate/manage this undesirable behavior. Together, parents/guardians and staff will develop a corrective action plan and create a schedule of follow-up meetings to discuss progress. If these behaviors are not corrected, parents/guardians will be counseled as to

alternative childcare and asked to remove their child from the Center. We reserve the right to implement disciplinary steps that could include, but not be limited to, a written warning, suspension, or termination.

You may also be asked to withdraw your children from the Center for any of the following reasons:

1. Failure to complete and turn in required forms.
2. Failure to pay fees on a timely basis.
3. Frequent and/or prolonged absences (more than 5 days), and no communication.
4. Failure of parent/guardian to comply with policies of the Center, abusive or vulgar language, and derogatory/negative attitude towards administration and staff.
5. Any other reason the administrative staff reasonably deems appropriate.

PARENTAL CUSTODY CONCERNS

The Center cannot and will not become involved in child custody battles between parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are to supply the Center with appropriate legal documents in cases of Order of Protection, Assignment of Custody Rights, etc. and we will follow the Orders of the Court. Since the Center has the best interest of the child in mind, do not ask staff to take sides or put the child or themselves in a compromising situation. In order to avoid confusion, we ask that parent/guardian please contact the Center Administration in advance before filing a petition for emergency order of protection.

REPORTING OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The Center's staff members are all Mandated Reporters of suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect. According to the "Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (Illinois Revised Statute Section 4, Chapter 23, Paragraph 2051), 'Any physician, resident, intern....schools personnel, truant officer, social worker, social services administrator....or child care worker having reasonable cause to believe a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may be an abused child or a neglected child shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the DCFS.' Section 4.2 states that 'Any other person required by this Act to report suspected child abuse or neglect who willfully fails to report such abuse or neglect shall be guilty of a class 'A' misdemeanor.'" Abuse and/or neglect need only be suspected of a report to be made. DCFS is responsible to determine if a report is unfounded or indicated. All persons who are presumed to be acting in good faith and are therefore immune from legal liability because of such a report. The hotline number for reporting abuse is 1-800-252-2873. The Center is dedicated to serving preschool children and their families. It is the intent of the Center to assist in raising the quality of life for families by providing information on area parenting education, public awareness programs, and other activities devoted to preventing child abuse and neglect. The Administration understands that life can become stressful. If that should occur, the Administrators are always available to talk to parents/guardians and offer suggestions and resources.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS THROUGH CCELC

- Referral services to various agencies in the area such as Eastern Illinois University Speech & Hearing Clinic, Public Health Services, etc.
- United Way and Local Assistance Programs to aid a limited number of low-income families.
- Children's book ordering services.
- Children's photographer twice a year in the spring and fall.
- Additional personnel available in rooms through some departments of Eastern Illinois University and Lake Land College, as well as summer work programs and Charleston High School Programs.

INFANT CARE POLICIES

Our Infant Room has a No **Uncovered Shoes Policy** to cut down on the transmission of disease and help maintain cleanliness of the room. We request that all parents/guardians and visitors respect this policy by either waiting by the door or placing disposable shoe covers over their shoes before entering the room. Please refrain from allowing siblings to enter the classroom in their shoes.

SIDS, an acronym for sudden infant death syndrome, is the sudden and unexplained death of a baby under one-year of age. Some people call SIDS “crib death” since SIDS babies are found in their cribs. To minimize the risk of sudden infant death syndrome, children shall be placed on their backs when put down to sleep, according to the following guidelines:

1. When an infant cannot rest or sleep on his/her back due to a disability or illness, the Center shall have written instructions, signed by a physician, detailing an alternative safe sleep or special sleeping arrangements for the infant. Staff shall put the infant to sleep in accordance with the physician’s written instructions.
2. Infants that can easily turn over from their back to stomach position shall be placed down to sleep on their backs but allowed to adopt their preferred position while sleeping.
3. No infant shall be put to sleep on a soft mattress, car seat or swing; and when awake, an infant shall be placed on his/her stomach part of the time and always observed.
4. No positioning device that restricts movement within the infant’s bed shall be used without written instructions from the infant’s physician.
5. Soft bedding, bumpers, pillows, quilts, stuffed toys, and other soft products shall be removed from their crib when infants are sleeping.

ROOM STRUCTURE, ASSIGNMENTS & SCHEDULING

Ages assigned to classrooms are merely guidelines. Since children develop at different rates, their skills, as well as social development, will be considered along with state mandated staff/child ratios when a child is assigned or moved into a particular classroom.

Each child is unique and deserves to have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

Children will be enrolled in the class that best meets their needs based on chronological age and developmental skills. Transition to a new classroom will be mutual decision of the parent/guardian and teacher based on chronological age and developmental skills. The parent/guardian and teacher must sign a Transition Form agreeing that the child will be placed in a new classroom. Prior to making the permanent move, the child will "visit" and spend time in the new classroom to meet the teacher and the other children, and to become familiar with the classroom routine. Parents/guardians are also encouraged to visit the new classroom and discuss the classroom routine with the new teacher.

When children are transitioned to kindergarten these steps will be taken to ensure an effective transition:

- CCELC will obtain information from the school district the child will be attending.
- CCELC will obtain pre-registration dates and any other pertinent information.
- Children will be prepared by the teacher with the reading of books, open discussions and the integration of kindergarten readiness skills into the daily curriculum.
- The teacher will notify parents/guardians with information on registration dates and the first day of school.
- A visit to a kindergarten classroom will be provided, if possible.

Please use the preceding room age and staff/child ratio as a general guide to the placement of your child. Since we are all partners in the child's daily growth and development, we encourage you to make frequent contacts with the child's teacher and staff to exchange information on the child's progress and daily activities.

Feel free to contact a Center Administrator with any comments or questions regarding the Program and the child's progress; especially during the child's first weeks at the Center.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

The Center rarely closes due to inclement weather, but should we need to delay the opening of or close the Center, we will notify the public by contacting WEIU-TV and Radio, as well as WMCI Radio, WCIA-TV and WAND-TV. If you will provide the center with your email address, a bulk email will also be sent out as soon as a decision is made. Make sure to like us on Facebook since the information will be posted there as well.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Charleston Community Early Learning Center conducts monthly fire drills and semi-annual tornado and earthquake drills. The facility has a central fire alarm system with a direct hook-up to a 24-hour monitoring system monitored through Detection Security to provide immediate response in an emergency. In the event of an actual emergency, staff will follow the procedures in which they have been trained. All administrative and teaching staff has been trained in Pediatric CPR and First Aid in the event of a medical emergency.

RADON TESTING

Per State Law, the center has been screened for Radon. The Center received a very minimal rating with no need for corrective action. Rescreening is required by DCFS prior to the relicensing of a program which currently is conducted every 3 years.

DONATIONS

As a not-for-profit 501(c) 3 organization, donations of equipment, cash, and some other article such as clothing assist our budget greatly:

- Equipment: Fisher Price Toys, etc.
- Board Books for 2 Year Old's and under
- Supplies such as paper, markers, crayons, art supplies, scrapbook supplies, etc.
- Underwear, swimsuits, shorts, and long pants
- Cash: for scholarships; for specific equipment; resource materials, etc.
- Out-dated office supplies such as paper, stickers, stamps, etc. that children can use for collage and other art projects

If you are in a position or know of individuals or organizations that could help us, please let them know about our needs and refer them to the Director or staff.

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

Charleston Community Early Learning Center may employ the use of overt video surveillance cameras in areas including, but not limited to, Center classrooms, common areas, entry ways, and playground as deemed necessary by the Director or Board. These cameras shall be used for the following purposes:

1. To better provide for the safety, health, and welfare of students, staff, and visitors.
2. For better detection, reduction, and/or prevention of occurrences of vandalism or theft.

Only the Director and those authorized by the Director will have access to ongoing operation and/or use of the video images.

Images may be archived if, in the opinion of the Director, the archive documents an event considered to be of such significance that a historical record is desirable.

PHONE DIRECTORY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Birth -to-Two Program..... (CCAR - Early Intervention Services)	217/348-0127
Child and Family Connections..... (State of Illinois Early Intervention Program)	217/423-6199
Coles County Department of Public Health..... (Immunization Clinic, Well Child Clinic, Visiting Nurse)	217/348-0530
H.O.P.E. of East Central Illinois	888/345-3990
Domestic Violence.....	217/348-5931
Community Online Resource Directory.....	www.cordlink.org
Department of Children and Family Services.....	217/348-7661
Department of Human Services.....	217/345-6625
Eastern Illinois University Speech & Hearing Clinic.....	217/581-2712
Head Start Program.....	217/345-6625
Lake Land College.....	800/252-4121
Poison Control Center.....	217/348-2551
Sarah Bush Lincoln.....	217/348-2525
Sexual Assault Counseling and Information Service (SACIS).....	217/348-5033
Woman, Infant & Child (WIC) Program..... (Nutrition supplement program)	217/348-0526
Child Care Resource and Referral Child Care Information.....	217/581-6698 or 800/545-7439
Child Care Assistance Program.....	217/581-7081 or 800/634-1026

Charleston Community Early Learning Center

Where learning and discovery go hand in hand.

**PLEASE RETURN THIS SIGNED VERIFICATION
TO THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE**

We (I) have received and read the July 2025 revised FAMILY POLICIES HANDBOOK.

CCELC reserves the right to modify or rescind any part(s) of the handbook at any time without prior notice, and your consent to this verification, unless subsequently revoked, will constitute your acceptance of any future changes.

I have read the CCELC Family Policies Handbook and while my children are enrolled in the Center, I will comply with the policies and procedures.

Guardian's Signature

Guardian's Signature

Date

Date

Administrator's Signature

Date