



UNITED
COMMUNITY
MINISTRIES

UCM

At the Heart of Community

EARLY LEARNING CENTER

United Community Ministries
Early Learning Center

Parent Handbook

Policies and Procedures Regulated by
Virginia State Licensing and United Community Ministries



UCM Early Learning Center
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CFC #37839



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United Community Ministries and is funded in part
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United Way
of the National Capital Area
UW #8199

Dear Families,

On behalf of the United Community Ministries Early Learning Center, we welcome you. The preschool was established in 1986 as a safe, nurturing, educational environment for children and their families. We are here to provide positive experiences throughout the day that have a life-long impact. We are very excited that you will be joining us!

You are always welcome to visit our classrooms and meet with the teachers. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to speak with the administrative staff; our doors are always open.

Thank you for making our center your choice for early childhood education, a place where learning and fun meet!

UCM Early Learning Center Staff

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About Us

LICENSING AND ACCREDITATION

- Our center is licensed by the State of Virginia to provide care for 82 children **ages six weeks through five years**.
- Our license is renewed every other year.
- Our center is a program of United Community Ministries, which is a non-profit social service agency serving the southeastern region of Fairfax County.
- UCM Early Learning Center participates in both the **Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI)** Program and **Virginia Preschool Initiative** Program, which demonstrates our centers' emphasis on providing quality early learning and care to all children and families.
- **Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI)**: VSQI was created to provide a consistent way to distinguish the level of quality in early care and education programs, allowing parents to make more informed choices when selecting child care. Participation in the initiative is voluntary. UCM Early Learning Center has chosen to participate in the VSQI program for the past several years.
- **Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)**: VPI is a state initiative that provides access to quality preschool programs for low-income 4 year olds. VPI supports school readiness and success through- quality early childhood education programs, health and mental health screenings and follow up as needed, and experiences that result in smooth transitions to Kindergarten (for more information please ask an administrator for a copy of the VPI brochure).

UCM EARLY LEARNING CENTER PHILOSOPHY

Children between birth and six years of age are going through one of the most important periods of their lives. It is during this time that there is significant brain development, attitudes are developed, patterns are formed and basic feelings about the self and others are established.

At UCM Early Learning Center we believe in a holistic approach to development and learning. We strive to provide positive experiences within a safe and secure environment that stimulate a child's natural curiosity. A variety of experiences that engage the child's five senses are offered in every classroom. It is through touch, taste, smell, sight and sound that a child interacts with and learns about the world. Play is indeed the work of the child. Through the framework of play, a positive perception of both the world and of self is gained. Here at UCM Early Learning Center we foster an environment where the child can express his or her needs, learn self-control, learn to respect others, and learn about the world.

Lastly, it is our belief that to educate a child there must be shared experiences among children, parents, teachers, and the community. Together, we can support each child in becoming prepared for a lifetime of learning.

UCM EARLY LEARNING CENTER GOALS

- Create positive classroom experiences that stimulate your child's curiosity and holistically foster development.
- Provide a safe, nurturing environment where children learn through play.
- Encourage exploration through the five senses.
- Create classroom settings that allow children to freely and comfortably express needs, cultivate self control, respect for others, and--most importantly--develop a positive self-image.
- Maintain open communication between center staff and families.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Each family's personal files are locked in a secure location, which only administrators can access. This includes enrollment information, contact information, and medical information.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

UCM's Early Learning Center is committed to providing children with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all programs, services and activities offered. Federal and state laws define disabilities as physical or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities, such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.

Educational Program

CURRICULUM

UCM Early Learning Center implements the Portage Curriculum center-wide. The Portage Curriculum focuses on five main areas of development: Language/Literacy, Social/Emotional, Purposeful Motor, Approaches to Learning, and Sensory Organization. All classrooms create and post a weekly lesson plan based on these five areas of development .

PORTFOLIOS

All children enrolled at UCM Early Learning Center will have a portfolio created for them by their classroom team. Each portfolio contains an "All About Me" section, anecdotal notes, the Portage Tool for Observation and Planning (TOP), work samples, and photos of your child engaged in activities. Early Learning Center staff will share portfolios with you during scheduled Parent-Teacher Conferences, and you may request to review your child's portfolio at any time. Your child's portfolio will follow them throughout each classroom as they transition, and when they graduate from our Pre-K II classroom, the contents of the portfolio are yours to keep.

TYPICAL DAILY SCHEDULE

The typical daily schedule is posted in each classroom for parents' reference. Please note that schedules are flexible based on the children's needs and interests.

TOYS/ITEMS FROM HOME

The Early Learning Center does not allow any toys or items from home in our classrooms. The only exception is if a teacher announces there will be "Show and Share" on a certain day. If your child brings a toy to school, it will be collected and placed in the Director's Office until the child is picked up by the parent or guardian. **UCM Early Learning Center is not responsible for lost or broken toys.**

BIRTHDAYS

UCM Early Learning Center celebrates birthdays during snack time at 3:00 pm. If you would like to bring food to share for your child's birthday, please bring only nutritious, store bought items that list all ingredients. **Candles and balloons are not permitted.** Please inform your child's classroom teacher the day before if you plan to bring food.

TRANSITION POLICY/CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENTS

Transitions are a collaborative decision between the child's parent(s)/guardian(s), the child's teachers, and Early Learning Center Administration. As your child grows and develops, he or she will be transitioned to the next class. It is very important to us that you have a part in the transition process. A child will not transition to the next class without your written consent. Your child's teaching team will provide you with a transition letter the month prior to transition, which offers the option of meeting with your child's next classroom teacher.

Transition is based on several factors, including child's age and development. Factors can also vary depending on the class, which is why it is a collaborative decision among Early Learning Center teachers, Administration, and your family.

When changes are made, there is always an adjustment period. Early Learning Center staff will work with your child and your family to ease the adjustment process.

EARLY LEARNING CENTER AND FAMILY SERVICES

We have high expectations for your participation in your child's education. Please ask questions, be an active participant in goal planning for your child by partnering with staff and attending Parent/Teacher conferences. Cultivate your own ways of becoming involved (through volunteering or conducting an activity in your child's classroom).

Tool for Observation and Planning (TOP): The TOP is the developmental checklist utilized as part of the Portage Curriculum. TOP assessments are conducted by classroom staff four times a year. These assessments are kept in your child's portfolio and will be shared with you during parent-teacher conferences. We invite you to ask your child's teacher or the Child Development Specialist for a blank copy of the TOP to be completed at home before conferences.

Parent/Teacher Conferences: We offer conferences at least twice per year (in the Fall and Spring) to discuss your child's progress. At any time, parents may request additional conferences. The Child Development Specialist or Early Learning Center Director may also request a conference with the child's teacher and parent(s).

Health and Developmental Screenings: When your child graduates UCM Early Learning Center and begins kindergarten, we want him or her to be prepared in every way. We conduct health and developmental screenings throughout the year. This includes: vision, hearing, and dental screenings, as well as screenings for speech and developmental progress (DENVER Screening). We share results of all screenings with you. If necessary, we can refer you to special services to strengthen your child's abilities. If you know that your child requires special testing or services, please let us know. This will help the teachers best support your child and family.

DENVER II Screenings: DENVER II Screenings are conducted by the Child Development Specialist on children ages 3-5 in the fall or within 30 days of enrollment to gauge where they are in four areas of development. This screening tool was designed to compare a given child's performance on a variety of tasks to the performance of other children the same age. The DENVER II is not an IQ test, and is not a definitive predictor of future intellectual ability. It is used at UCM Early Learning Center as a tool to assist with personalizing lesson plans.

Parent Workshops: UCM Early Learning Center holds fun, brief parenting workshops on a variety of topics, such as "Positive Discipline" and "Ages and Stages". They are coordinated by the Child Development Specialist and typically offered every few months. Please let us know if there are particular topics you are interested in.

Family Involvement: Parent suggestions and involvement are always welcome! We invite you to participate in our Early Learning Center Parent Advisory Council, Back to School Night, holiday celebrations, field trips, classroom activities, and other special events.

UCM Services: Early Learning Center staff work closely with all of the United Community Ministries (UCM) services to meet your needs. Other UCM services include: Basic Needs Assistance, Employment Services, the Back Porch Thrift Store, Healthy Families Fairfax and more. Please ask the front desk or Child Development Specialist for more information. You will also be provided with this information during your intake interview.

Classroom Welcome Packets: Each classroom provides newly-enrolled families with a welcome packet, containing specific information about your child's classroom.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE PHILOSOPHY

- Treat each child with dignity and respect.
- Recognize and consider the individual needs of each child.

What is Positive Discipline?

1. Discipline comes from the Latin word meaning "to teach, or to follow the teachings of another."
2. Discipline and guidance are sets of attitudes and methods that adults use to help children develop self-control and follow rules.
3. Discipline is something adults do **with** children.
4. Discipline is preventive, not reactive.

Positive Discipline Model

The following model is used at the UCM Early Learning Center:

- **Prevention** of possible conflict is promoted center-wide through the following methods:
 - Staff encourage and model problem-solving skills with children, so children learn to resolve conflicts.
 - Classroom rules are created and discussed **with** children and these rules are re-visited daily.
 - Staff model appropriate behavior and positive interactions throughout the day.
 - Classrooms focus on feelings and talking about appropriate ways to express different feelings.
 - When challenging or inappropriate behavior is displayed, the behavior will be re-directed.
 - If behavior becomes a concern or safety issue, staff will schedule a meeting with the child's parents, teacher, and the Child Development Specialist to come up with additional strategies and supports for the child and his or her family.
 - The Child Development Specialist will refer to the appropriate resources, as needed.

At any stage, the Child Development Specialist may be asked to confer with you, your child's teacher, and the Director to develop a plan to support your child's behavior if necessary.

After all of these steps have been exhausted, the next step is disenrollment.

Unacceptable Discipline

UCM Early Learning Center **does not**, under any circumstances, permit physical punishment, humiliation, intimidation, or ridicule.

INCIDENCE OF BITING

Should the unfortunate occasion occur in which your child is bitten by another child, you will be notified via phone call and provided an Accident Report Form when you pick up your child. Should your child's skin be broken by the bite, we will notify you immediately by phone, as well as contact the parent of the biting child. It is recommended that you call your child's physician in the case of broken skin. The Child Development Specialist, teacher, and parent will work collaboratively to develop a plan of action to decrease the child's biting with the goal of eliminating biting incidents.

Although it is rare that a child is disenrolled for biting or other inappropriate behavior, it may become necessary if the behavior endangers the child, other students, or staff. Before disenrollment, the child's parents are asked to meet with the child's teacher, the Child Development Specialist and Early Learning

Child Care and Health

MEALS

The Center participates in the Virginia Department of Health (formally USDA) Food Program to ensure high quality, balanced nutrition for all students. Meals are available to all enrolled children at no additional charge, regardless of race, sex, age, disability, creed or national origin. UCM Early Learning Center is eligible for free and reduced meal reimbursement, based on household income.

A nutritionally balanced breakfast is offered to children arriving before 8:45 am. Lunch and afternoon snack are also served. Lunch is served family-style in the preschool and pre-kindergarten rooms. Snack consists of juice and crackers, fruits, vegetables and cheese. At UCM Early Learning Center, we serve whole milk to children age 12-24 months and 1% to children ages 2 through 5. We make every effort to encourage children to try new foods and use table manners. Before eating lunch, a moment of reflection is provided.

Menus are posted in the classrooms and office. If your child has any type of **food allergy**, please alert the office so substitutions may be made. You will be asked to have a form completed by your child's physician. If your child is allergic to milk, you may bring a milk substitution from home. For milk substitutions, a physician's note is not necessary; however, we do require a note signed by the parent or guardian. Please write your child's name on the container. No extra meals are offered to children who miss a scheduled one. **Children are not permitted to bring food from home.**

YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH

Your child's health is a matter of major importance. An up-to-date immunization record signed and dated by a physician, is due upon enrollment. A physical form, signed by a physician, is due within 30 days of enrollment and must be .

Your child will not be accepted for care if he or she demonstrates symptoms of illness. If your child becomes ill, he or she will immediately be isolated from the other children and staff will notify the parent or emergency contact. The parent **must pick up the child within one hour.**

WHEN TO KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME /PICK YOUR CHILD UP:

Keep your child home if he or she has:

A Fever —The child's auxiliary temperature (under the right arm) is 100.0 degrees or above. The child must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before returning to UCM Early Learning Center.

Conjunctivitis (pink eye)— The child's eye appears red, burns and/or itches, and there is thick yellow drainage being secreted.

A Rash—Children who have rashes that cannot be identified or that have not been diagnosed by a physician may not attend the Early Learning Center. A physician must verify in writing that the rash is not contagious.

Impetigo— This is a very contagious skin rash which shows up as red pimples. These eventually become small vesicles surrounded by a reddened area. When the blister breaks, the surface is raw and weeping.

Diarrhea/Vomiting – If your child has had two or more incidences of diarrhea or vomiting (either at home the night before, in the morning before coming to school, or at school) you will be asked to take the child home (or keep the child at home).

Cold with fever—The child is sneezing or has non-clear nose drainage.

If your child has any other sickness that noticeably changes his or her behavior, he or she should be kept home. In this case, a child may look and act differently. They may lack appetite, behave irritably, look pale, or have dark circles under the eyes.

With contagious diseases, a child must be kept home until a physician verifies in writing that the child may return to school. These include: measles (red or German) and rashes.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL: With any of the symptoms stated above, the child may have a communicable virus. He or she must be free of these symptoms for at least 24 hours before returning to the Center and will not be admitted without a doctor's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and is able to return.

24-HOUR CALL-IN: You are required to contact UCM Early Learning Center within 24 hours of diagnosis of any contagious illness in your household.

SAFE INFANT SLEEP IN CHILD CARE

Providing infants with a safe place to grow and learn is very important. For this reason, **UCM Early Learning Center** has created a policy on safe sleep practices for infants up to 1-year-old. We follow the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to provide a safe sleep environment and reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is "the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age, which remains unexplained after a thorough investigation." The staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at **UCM Early Learning Center** follow the AAP Safe Sleep policy.

Sleep Position:

- Infants will be placed flat on their backs to sleep, unless there is an up to date physician, practitioner or clinician-signed sleep position medical waiver on file. In the case of a waiver, a waiver notice will be posted at the infant's crib without identifying medical information. The full waiver will be kept in the infant's file.
- Infants will not be placed on their side for sleep.
- Devices such as wedges or infant positioners will not be used, since such devices are not proven to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Infants who use pacifiers will be offered their pacifier when they are placed to sleep, and it will not be put back in should the pacifier fall out once the infant is asleep.
- Pacifiers will be cleaned between each use, checked for tears, and will not be coated in any sweet or other solution.
- Parents are asked to provide replacement pacifiers on a regular basis.
- While infants will always be placed on their backs to sleep, when an infant can easily turn over from back to front and front to back, they will be allowed to sleep in whatever position they prefer.

Sleep Environment:

- Our program will use Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines for safety-approved cribs and firm mattresses.
 - Crib slats will be less than 2 3/8" apart
 - Infants will not be left in bed with drop side down
 - Playpen weave will be less than 1/4"
- Consumer Product Safety Commission safety-approved cradles and bassinets may also be used for sleeping if the infant meets the weight and height requirements.
- Infants will not be placed to sleep on any standard bed, waterbeds, couches, air mattresses, or on other soft surfaces.
- Only one infant will be placed to sleep in each crib. Siblings, including twins and triplets, will be placed in separate cribs.

- The crib will have a firm, tight fitting mattress covered by a fitted sheet and will be free from blankets, loose bedding, toys, and other soft objects (i.e., pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, etc.)
- To avoid overheating, the temperature of the rooms where infants sleep will be checked and will be kept at a level that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Sleep clothing, such as sleepers, sleep sacks, and wearable blankets, may be used as alternatives to blankets.
- Bibs and pacifiers will not be tied around an infant's neck or clipped on to an infant's clothing during sleep.
- Smoking will not be allowed in or near **UCM Early Learning Center**

Supervision:

- When infants are in their cribs, they will be within sight and hearing of staff at all times.
- A staff member will visibly check on the sleeping infants frequently.
- When an infant is awake, they will have supervised "tummy time." This will help babies strengthen their muscles and develop normally.
- Infants will spend limited time in car seats, swings, and bouncer/infant seats when they are awake.

Training:

- All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at **UCM Early Learning Center** will be trained on safe sleep policies and practices.
- Safe sleep practices will be reviewed with all staff, substitute staff, and volunteers each year. In addition, training specific to these policies will be given before any individual is allowed to care for infants.
- Documentation that staff, substitutes, and volunteers have read and understand these policies will be kept in each individuals file.
- All staff, substitutes, and volunteers at **UCM Early Learning Center** will be trained on first aid for unresponsive infants, as well as what to do when they have a question or need assistance before they are allowed to care for infants.

When The Policy Applies:

This policy applies to all staff, substitute staff, parents, and volunteers when they place an infant to sleep in **UCM Early Learning Center**.

Communication Plan for Staff and Parents:

Parents will review this policy when they enroll their child in **UCM Early Learning Center** and a copy will be provided in the parent handbook. Parents are asked to follow this same policy when the infant is at home. These policies will be posted in prominent places. Information regarding safe sleep practices, safe sleep environments, reducing the risk of SIDS in child care, as well as other program health and safety practices will be shared if any changes are made. A copy will also be provided in the staff handbook.

Any individual who has questions may ask:

UCM Early Learning Center Director, **Torria Baker**

ABSENCES

Please call the Early Learning Center if your child will be absent. It is especially important to inform staff if you expect your child to have an extended absence due to illness or vacation. If your child is unexpectedly absent for more than two days, and we cannot communicate with you, we may disenroll your child. You will be asked to complete an absentee form upon your child's return for our attendance records.

Families must pay tuition when children are out sick or on vacation. During extended vacations, your child's slot will be reserved only if his or her tuition is paid in full, in advance.

Note to CCAP Families:

Families with Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) subsidies through Fairfax County are permitted **twenty (20) absences per year** for illness, vacation, transportation problems, and similar reasons. OFC pro-rates the number of absences depending upon when the family's assistance began. This means that if a family transfers from another center, the 20 yearly absences does not reset; the absences the family accrued at the previous center will count against the 20 absences permitted per year. Your OFC worker can confirm the number of absences you have remaining when you enroll at UCM Early Learning Center. **CCAP will not pay for any additional days of absence, therefore, families will be charged full tuition for any absent days over the twenty, or your pro-rated days allowed.**

Each quarter, staff will notify parents of the number of days their child has been absent year to date. This information is also available upon request. If you receive a subsidy, please keep track of the number of days absent so that you will not incur additional tuition costs. We suggest you limit your absences to one day per month, to reserve some for emergency closings.

****Additionally, according to OFC policy, children may not receive child care when a parent is not at work or school. If a child is brought to UCM Early Learning Center and the parent is not at work or at school that day, the parent will be charged full fee tuition for that day.****

MEDICATION POLICY - ONLY THOSE STAFF WHO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION TRAINING ARE PERMITTED TO ADMINISTER MEDICATION.

Classroom staff have the appropriate forms to fill out in the event that your child requires medication during school hours.

With the exception of diaper cream, **No “over the counter” drugs may be administered at UCM Early Learning Center.** You must complete the required form in order for diaper cream to be administered.

In order for prescription medication to be administered, a parent or guardian must complete a medical authorization form. **If the prescription is extended or is to be administered for more than 10 days, you must have the doctor's signature.** Each medication requires a separate form. All medicine must be in its original container with the prescription label authorized by the doctor attached, along with a doctor's note regarding the necessity of the medication.

The label must list:

- The name of the medication
- The child's name
- Instructions for administering the medicine
- Fill date and expiration date

Medication will not be administered if we do not receive the proper documentation or if the documentation is not complete.

Additionally, during summer months, families are encouraged to apply sunscreen to children prior to arrival. If your child requires additional application, written parental consent is required on the UCM Early Learning Center Sunscreen Consent Form. AEROSOLE SUNSCREEN IS NOT PERMITTED.

Safety and Security

DROP-OFF AND PICKUP

☆☆☆It is Best Practice that a child **not exceed a 10 hour day** in a child care facility☆☆☆

Children must be dropped off between 7:00 am and 9:00 am each day. It is important for your child's development that he or she follows a regular routine and attends school consistently. Late arrivals can be disruptive. If you have an emergency that will delay drop-off, please inform the office staff immediately by

calling (703)765-0909, so that we can notify the classroom teacher. **If a parent attempts to drop a child off after 9:00am*, entrance into the program will be denied for that day.**

****The only exception is when the child has a morning doctor's appointment. The child must then be dropped off by 12:00 noon AND a doctor's note must be provided to the front office.*** Children will be denied admittance to the program after 12:00 noon, even with a doctor's note. No exceptions.

Drop-off is the time to communicate to the caregivers any pertinent information about your child that staff should know (i.e. accidents, bumps, bruises that they may have sustained at home). It is important for classroom staff to know about this upon your child's arrival at school. Although communication is encouraged and expected, please be brief as caregivers are also supervising other children.

To ensure the safety of the children in our program, children must be signed in upon drop-off and pickup. Please note all persons must sign their full name at drop-off and pick-up. Please sign your first and last name, not "mom" or "dad".

No child will be released to anyone other than those listed on the emergency form. Therefore, it is very important that at least four persons and their telephone numbers are listed (including the parent/guardians) in case an emergency pick-up is necessary. **Written authorization is required for changes to persons listed on the form upon initial enrollment.**

BE PREPARED TO SHOW A PHOTO ID. If it is your first time picking up a child or if staff does not recognize you, you will be asked to show photo ID.

LATE PICKUP

If a child is not picked up by 6pm a late fee will be assessed—regardless of the reason—according to our guidelines below. If this occurs, staff will also contact persons listed on the emergency contact form. If contact is not made with a child's parent(s)/guardian(s) or listed emergency contacts, Child Protective Services (CPS) will be contacted to pick up the child. If a dire emergency will delay pick-up after 6pm, you must call the Early Learning Center at (703)765-0909 and inform staff of an alternative arrangement for pick up.

In the event of a late pick up, **\$20.00 charge** will be charged to your account **for the first five minutes you are late and \$5.00 for each additional minute.** You or the adult who picks up your child will be asked to sign an overtime slip.

All emergency contacts must live or work within 30 minutes of UCM Early Learning Center. Please ensure that your emergency contacts know that they are responsible for picking up your child by 6pm if they receive a call. If your emergency contact is late picking up your child, you are responsible for paying a late pick-up fee.

EMERGENCIES

In the event of a major illness or accident, UCM Early Learning Center will attempt to contact a parent or guardian. If we are unable to reach you, we will call your emergency contacts. If we must call an ambulance, the Director or an assigned staff person will accompany your child to the Emergency Room. However, staff is not permitted to make any decisions about the care of the child. **All expenses incurred, including emergency transportation, are the responsibility of the parent or guardian.**

☆☆☆It is vital to your child's safety that you immediately inform UCM Early Learning Center in writing of any changes to your phone numbers, emergency contact persons and their telephone numbers, or any other pertinent information. ☆☆☆

CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS

UCM Early Learning Center staff cannot guarantee that an ex-spouse who not authorized to pick-up a child can be prevented from picking up the child without an official custody agreement. UCM Early Learning Center staff have been instructed to protect their own safety should a hostile situation occur. To that end, staff will not place their own safety at risk in this type of situation. Please speak with the Director for further information about custody agreements.

Staff reserves the right to ask anyone they do not recognize for valid photo identification. This includes parents who the caregivers have not met or do not recognize.

Staff are instructed to consult with their supervisor, or Early Learning Center Director prior to releasing a child into the care of anyone who appears intoxicated by alcohol or drugs.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Should Early Learning Center staff members suspect child abuse or neglect, we are mandated by the State of Virginia to report these incidents to the Child Protective Services (CPS).

POLICY FOR LIFE-THREATENING DISEASES

UCM Early Learning Center recognizes that any child enrolled with a life-threatening disease is a matter of common concern to other children in its programs, their parents and guardians, staff, and to the community-at-large. We also recognize our responsibility to provide a healthful environment for all our children and teachers and to treat those children who may have a life-threatening disease with compassion and understanding. To meet these objectives, the following guidelines have been adopted by the Early Learning Center and the UCM Board of Directors.

- A child suffering from a life-threatening disease will be allowed to attend UCM Early Learning Center if the Fairfax County Health Department, after review, concludes that the child does not pose a significant health risk to others in the program and if the Director of UCM Early Learning Center determines that the needs of the child can be met by the Center's program.
- Each case of a child suffering from a life-threatening disease will be reviewed and treated on an individual basis.
- UCM Early Learning Center is responsible for providing a safe environment for children enrolled in its programs and will take precautions to ensure that a child's condition does not present a health or safety hazard to the child or to other children enrolled in its programs.

Any information provided to the Early Learning Center by a parent or guardian of a child relating to the health condition of that child will be treated with sensitivity and the confidentiality required by law.

Operational Procedures

ENROLLMENT PROCESS

UCM Early Learning Center is open to all children who may benefit from our type of program, regardless of race, sex, ability, national origin or creed. Children must be at least six (6) weeks of age and under kindergarten age according to the standards of Fairfax County Public Schools. A child must turn five (5) years old by September 30th of a given school year in order to attend kindergarten. We do not provide part-time, before school or after school care.

The following items are required to enroll a child:

1. UCM Early Learning Center Enrollment Application (including consent forms)
2. Birth Certificate, Passport or Birth Letter From Hospital of Birth

3. Current Immunization Chart
4. Physical Form
5. Emergency Information and Contact Form
6. Rights and Responsibilities
7. Shelter In Place Form
8. Parent Payment Agreement Form
9. Office for Children Agreement (if applicable)
10. Income Eligibility Form for Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
11. Enrollment Form for CACFP
12. Infant Formula Form (if applicable) for CACFP
13. CACFP Letter and flyers
14. Intake Interview & Observation, to be completed by the Center's Child Development Specialist

**** All forms must be completed prior to your child's start date ****

WAIT LIST

UCM Early Learning Center maintains a waiting list of families desiring childcare. When openings become available, the family with the highest priority will be notified. Once notified, that family will have 24 hours to confirm their intent to enroll their child. If they fail to do so, the next family on the list will be notified.

REGISTRATION FEES

- \$100 Initial Registration Fee (per child)
- \$100 Annual Registration Fee (per child), due each September
- \$35 Returned Check Fee

Upon enrollment, all families are required to report their income so that UCM Early Learning Center may receive funding from Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) through the Virginia Department of Health. We reserve the right to request a family's most recent federal tax returns in order to verify income.

TUITION PAYMENT

Tuition payments can be made by check, credit, or money order. **CASH IS NOT ACCEPTED.** *If a check is returned, UCM Early Learning Center will no longer accept check payments from that family.* The Early Learning Center distributes statements to parents who have not made their weekly payment, or have an overdue balance. Statements reflect tuition fees, any previous unpaid balance, late fees associated with late tuition payments, and late pick up fees. UCM Early Learning Center accepts payments on a weekly or monthly basis. Your payment agreement reflects your payment preference.

All payments are due in advance of your child receiving care.

- Weekly payments are due no later than 6 pm Friday for the following week's care.
- Monthly payments are due by 6 pm on the last business day of the month for the next month's care. For example, December 2014 tuition is due by 6 pm on Friday, November 30th 2014.

LATE TUITION PAYMENTS

- Fees are assessed if your payment is late.
- If **weekly payments** are not received by 6 pm on Friday, a **\$10 late fee will be charged** to your account each week until you are paid in full.
- If **monthly payment** is not received by 6 pm on the last Friday of the month, a **\$40 late fee** will be charged to your account each month until you are paid in full.

Note to CCAP Participants:

If you are enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), UCM Early Learning Center is required to report any failure to pay tuition. As a resource center, we are obligated to report past due balances of two weeks to the Office for Children. This could result in you losing your subsidy.

Non-Payment of Tuition

At UCM Early Learning Center, we make every effort to assist families who may have difficulty paying fees, whether due to personal crisis, job layoff, etc. Families who are in need of assistance should make an appointment to speak to the Director immediately.

INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSINGS

UCM Early Learning Center is housed in a Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) building, and therefore, must follow their inclement weather policy. Should FCPS open late due to inclement weather the Early Learning Center will also open late. If there is a one hour delay, the Center will open at 8 am, if there is a two hour delay, the Center will open at 9 am. If the Center must close early due to inclement weather, you must pick up your child promptly or arrange for someone else to do so. We urge you to make emergency arrangements in early November and notify the Center. Otherwise late pick rules will apply.

Information about FCPS closings and delays can be found on cable channel 21, local radio stations, and on the FCPS website emergency page: <http://www.fcps.edu/news/emerg.shtml>. The BEL Center will post information about closings and delays on our outgoing phone message and on our website: <http://www.UCMearlylearning.org/> as well.

There is no discount or tuition credit for closings due to holidays or inclement weather.

EARLY CLOSINGS

If Fairfax County Public Schools close early for inclement weather, we will make every effort to contact parents. **You will be required to pick up your child within two hours of being contacted.** However, depending on the severity of the weather, you may be asked to pick your child up earlier. Please make sure that your emergency form is updated regularly. If we cannot get in touch with you, we will call those individuals whom you have listed on your emergency form.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS FOR THE 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

September 1	Labor Day
November 11	Veteran's Day
November 27	Thanksgiving Day
November 28	Day After Thanksgiving Day
December 24	Christmas Eve the ELC will close at 2:00 pm
December 25	Christmas Day
December 26	Day After Christmas
January 1	New Year's Day
January 2	Day After New Year's
January 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
February 16	President's Day
May 25	Memorial Day
July 4	Independence Day
1 week in August	TBA (Professional Development/ deep cleaning)

EARLY LEARNING CENTER STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In order to provide high quality early childhood education, members of staff participate in at least 34 hours of training per year. Twenty of these hours are provided by UCM during workdays and require a closure of the Center either partial or full days. *The training dates for the 2014-2015 school will be announced via memo to the parent email listserv and posted around the center shortly after the start of school.*

DISENROLLMENT

The Center must, on occasion, disenroll a student due to non-payment of tuition. In this case, the parent or guardian will be given no less than ten (10) business days notice so that they may find alternate arrangements for their child(ren). Notice to parents will be given verbally, as well as in writing. The Center is required to notify the Office for Children if a family participating in the CCAP leaves the Center with an unpaid balance.

Regretfully, the Center must, on occasion, disenroll a child due to behavioral issues. This is done only when we feel that the Center no longer can meet the needs of the child and all in-house resources to assist the child have been exhausted. Parents are involved at every juncture of this process.

WITHDRAWAL

Two weeks written notice is required before a child's withdrawal from the program. If adequate notice is not given, UCM Early Learning Center will charge tuition for those two weeks. Accounts must be paid in full upon withdrawal. Accounts not paid upon leaving the Center will be forwarded to a collection agency. The Center is also required to notify Office for Children, if the family participates in that program.

Family Communication and Involvement

CUSTODIAL RIGHTS/OPEN DOOR POLICY

- At any given time, a custodial parent has the right to visit the Early Learning Center during its operating hours (Mon-Fri from 7 am to 6 pm).
- We have an open door policy, and any parent or guardian has the opportunity to visit their child's classroom at any given time between the operating hours of 7:00 am and 6:00 pm. *However, if your child is struggling with transitioning you may be asked to limit the amount of time you spend in the classroom. Visiting for a prolonged period of time will delay the child's ability to develop a trusting relationship with teaching staff.*

PARENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

The following steps are to be implemented when parents have a question or concern about their child's program:

- Step 1.** Request a conference with the teacher.
- Step 2.** If not resolved, request a conference with the Assistant Director and teacher.
- Step 3.** Contact the Early Learning Center Director for conferences to help resolve concerns or questions if not resolved at Step 2.

To discuss center operations or staff concerns at any time, please feel free to arrange a meeting with the Early Learning Center Director.

VOLUNTEERS

UCM's Bryant Early Learning Center always needs and urges parents to volunteer at the Center and in their child's classroom. Parental participation and assistance with field trip planning and attendance, social events, and fundraising activities are always welcome.

Note: Volunteers who are not parents are required to register with the UCM Volunteer Coordinator. All must have a clean criminal and cleared child abuse record.

Additional Information

ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

UCM Early Learning Center is a program of United Community Ministries, a comprehensive, community-based, human service agency. This means that our families have access to a wider range of services beyond those provided by the Early Learning Center. Many of these services are available without regard to income. At enrollment, families receive a brochure of the services that UCM can provide you and your family. Please speak to an administrator for further information about UCM's various programs.

A FINAL WORD

Dear Parents,

We want you to know, understand, and discuss with us the Center's goals and objectives. We invite you to visit our busy, happy, noisy, creative rooms and see your child at play.

Together we can help your child develop his or her full potential. Together we can all make a difference in your child's life.

Sincerely,

UCM Early Learning Center Staff

Parent Handbook Verification

I, (*print name*) _____ have read and will be responsible for the terms of this handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Please return this to the UCM Early Learning Center's front desk PRIOR to your child's first day, and no later than on your child's first day. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Center Director.