

Methodist Children's Village

PARENT MANUAL

Rights and Responsibilities

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NAEYC Accredited • Florida Gold Seal • United Way Agency

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Dear Parents,

We are so pleased that you have chosen to join the Methodist Children's Village (MCV)! We welcome you and your family to our Center and we are glad to join you on your journey of raising young children. As a nationally accredited, gold seal program, we believe you will find that we offer the best in early childhood education. We are proud to create an enriching, developmentally-appropriate environment for all children, striving to provide creative, play-based learning experiences during the most important years of development.

At MCV you will find many opportunities to share with others in this amazing journey called parenthood! We offer regular parent resource events, teacher conferences, fellowship experiences, resource ideas and more. Our staff is always ready to support your family in any way we can. And this is your Center, too! So, we welcome your ideas, talents, and concerns. Please come and share feedback, ask questions, volunteer, and get involved!

It is said that it takes a village to raise a child and we are honored that you have chosen to be a part of our Village!

Sincerely,
Kelly Paterno, M.S.
Executive Director

ADMINISTRATIVE CHART

Board of Directors
Parent Group Association
Executive Director
Program Coordinator
Volunteer / Resource Coordinator
Bookkeeper & Secretary
Teachers

HISTORY

Methodist Children's Village (MCV) opened in 1974 as a mission of the United Methodist Church and continues to serve families and children from birth to 5 years. The Center operates as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Center welcomes all children and families without regard to income, race, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. Employment is based on valid job requirements with equal opportunity in all aspects of employment including benefits, promotion, compensation and termination regardless of race, gender, color, sexual orientation or national origin.

CENTER GOAL

Combining the spontaneous play of children and the organized efforts of child development specialists in providing an optimal learning environment.

PHILOSOPHY

Children deserve the best that modern knowledge makes available about education, care and guidance.

BELIEVING learning to be a lifetime adventure,
PROMOTING the quality of educational childcare and practice,
FOSTERING concepts of courtesy, honesty and respect in building and maintaining relationships,
APPRECIATING children's learning and their creative expressions of those learnings.

MISSION:

MCV has one agenda, EXCELLENCE. Its mission is two-fold:

1. Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through nurturing, early intervention and developmentally based education,
2. Meeting the child and the family's interconnected needs by supporting parents.

VALUES

Our ethics and integrity reflect the highest professional and child care standards and our commitment to Christian family values. We strive to promote an environment of respect and compassion that is open and accepting of children and adults from all walks of life.

COMMISSION

As a mission of the church we offer our resources in meeting needs of families. No need is too small to be important or too great to be met. Priority enrollment is given to children and families in crisis.

ACCREDITATION AND AWARDS

Five Star Award from Guiding Stars of Duval
Florida Goal Seal of Excellence Award
National Academy of Early Childhood Programs
NAEYC - National Association for the Education of Young Children

EDUCATION PROGRAM

Teaching Goal: To provide a quality preschool learning environment every day.

Curriculum:

Teaching young children is a creative process. This means that the quality of the program will be defined largely by the environment and the teacher's knowledge of developmental stages. The teaching environment focuses on the following interest areas:

Blocks (construction, measure, math concepts)

Dramatic Play Center (dress-up, imaginative role play)

Puzzles & Table Toys (eye-hand coordination)

Art (paints, crayons, murals, play dough, etc.)

Discovery (nature, magnets, sand, water)

Library and Technology (books, writing table, listening center, computer)

Music and Movement (songs, rhythm, instruments)

Outdoors (climb, run, jump, balance, pedal, explore)

Curriculum in preschool is much more than one model or one approach to learning. Play is the primary vehicle through which children learn. Our daily learning plans involve both teacher-directed and child-driven play activities. We provide many opportunities for safe, creative exploration that enhance cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development.

Our daily activities are faith-based as well. All classrooms have a weekly scripture verse and the three and four-year old classes attend a weekly chapel time, called Pray & Play with our director. During these sessions we pray, sing, worship, and engage children with a non-denominational message of love, acceptance, and character education.

Resources include:

Wee Learn

Learn Every Day

Foundations for Success

Links To Literacy (ECS)

Born To Learn and Games to Play (Infant and Toddler)

ASSESSMENT and MEASUREMENT

Assessments are used to adapt the curriculum to meet individual needs of children as well as inform planning for program improvement. Parental permission is required and results are shared with parents at individual parent conferences. If further assessments are considered, the parent must make the initial request, give written permission and follow through with treatment for the child. If referral results in a treatment plan, we will work with the family to follow the plan as it pertains to the hours the child is in our care. All information concerning children is kept confidential except with written parental permission. The tools used at the Center for measurement and assessment are:

1. WORK SAMPLING

Dated samples of a child's drawings, shape representations, letter and number writing, children's inventive writings and illustrations, stories dictated by children, special events and performances.

2. SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION

Systematic observation, done both individually and in group settings, is deliberate listening, watching and recording of a child's behavior. Example: how s/he analyzes, attempts tasks, and how s/he interacts intellectually, emotionally, and socially with others. Observations are conducted at least two times per year.

3. CHECK LIST

A systematic checking every three months of preschool performance objectives and standards in correlation with the preschool standards for the state of Florida.

4. AGES & STAGES QUESTIONNAIRE

A developmental checklist is given during the first month of enrollment and continued at regular intervals to track development. This is completed by trained classroom staff with whom the child is familiar.

To safeguard against the misidentification of children, we use the child's full name, DOB, and date of screening and observations on assessments. Families are welcome to review the ASQ and speak with staff regarding how this assessment method will meet their child's needs.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

At MCV we believe the family/school relationship is extremely important. When parents and teachers are on the same page and have open, reciprocal communication the child sees a team working together for their benefit. Consistency in expectations between home and school provides children with a sense of security. In the event any difficulties arise between the family and school staff, the director will intervene and facilitate a resolution.

The director will listen to the concerns of everyone involved and work to resolve any miscommunication that might have occurred. Should a problem escalate further, the director may schedule a conference with both parties to have a more in-depth discussion.

FAMILY CONFERENCES

For parents of infants and toddlers, conversations, reports and interactions with teachers occur daily. For children ages 30 months and up, parents are asked to make an appointment for a teacher conference during the first week of SEPTEMBER and FEBRUARY. An additional conference is held in MAY for VPK students. Of course, you may at any time request a conference. The purpose of the conference is to talk with the teacher, see the child's individual work in his/her folder, assess progress, give comments and suggestions and make plans for educational goals for the next three months.

As a 5 Star, Gold Seal, accredited center we ask for families to evaluate the program in writing annually. The director also welcomes feedback and suggestions any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The confidentiality of children and families is a priority and requirement. In most circumstances, the medical and educational records and other information concerning children and their families may not be shared except with written permission from the parent or legal guardian. This information will, however, be immediately available upon request to the child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), appropriate teaching staff, and regulatory authorities.

ENROLLMENT

Pre-Enrollment Tour

We strongly encourage all parents to come in for a tour and to bring your child with you. This is an opportunity to look around, become familiar with the surroundings and determine whether our environment is a good fit for your child and family.

First Days

The first days in a new center may be an emotional time for all involved and we want to make the transition as easy as possible for your family. Please feel free to stay with your child for as long as you feel necessary to make your child comfortable. Be positive about the first days and reassure your child of your return. Some children may need two or three weeks to fully adjust to a new environment. Parents are welcome to call MCV anytime to check on their child or to drop in (be mindful of nap/rest time).

Enrollment Forms

Children enrolled at MCV must have:

1. Enrollment Application

2. Health, Nutrition, and Development Questionnaires

3. Physical and Immunization Forms (current)

Please note that a physical is valid for two years and IMMUNIZATION records must be UPDATED as indicated by the expiration date. Licensing is very strict and requires that a child may NOT attend group care past the expiration date.

4. General permission to participate in Center activities

5. Discipline Policy notification

6. Parent Agreement Form

7. Fee Schedule and Policy

8. Food Participation permission

9. Child Care Food Program papers

10. Consent for Developmental Screening

11. Covid Acknowledgement & Disclosure

Note: If your child has ALLERGIES, BEHAVIORAL or HEALTH ISSUES, please let us know about it upon enrollment so that we can take the correct precautions in providing for the safety and well-being of your child. **It is important to keep the Center informed of any changes in your child's health as well as changes in home address and phone numbers.**

HOURS OF OPERATION: Monday – Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

MEALS: Breakfast 8:00-9:00 a.m. *
Lunch 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
Snack 2:45 p.m.

*Note: Breakfast for children in the 4-year-old VPK Wraparound Care program is served only until 8:15 a.m. The VPK class starts promptly at 8:30 a.m.

**Note: The center may have modified hours of operation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please check with the office for the most up to date information.

Except for infants on individual diets, please avoid sending food to the Center. Nutritious meals and snacks are prepared, served and stored each day in accordance with the State Child Care Food Program guidelines. **If a child is allergic to any foods or if a child must receive food different from that listed on the menu, please see the office for a medical form for your doctor to complete.** Weekly menus are posted on the parent board just outside the kitchen door and in the classrooms. Your menu suggestions for meals and snacks are appreciated.

ILLNESS

Daily health checks are required. We are not licensed to provide care for sick children. Parents will be notified if there is exposure to a communicable disease. Regarding lice, the Center observes a “no nits” policy before a child may return.

Please keep your child home if s/he has had a fever in the past 24 hours, vomiting, diarrhea, pinkeye, wheezing, rash on body, severe nasal discharge or symptoms of a disease such Hand, Foot, & Mouth. If a child becomes ill while under our care, we will

contact you. Please come immediately or within the hour. Licensing policy states that any child sent home due to illness must be free of symptoms for 24 hours prior to returning to school.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Our licensing policy requires that all children's immunization records and health forms must be kept up to date. We will do our best to assist you in keeping track of expiration dates on these forms, however, it is ultimately the family's responsibility to ensure their child's forms are in compliance. If a child has been exempted from immunizations due to religious reasons, the family will be required to provide the Center with proper documentation from the Department of Health. If the family has opted for a modified immunization schedule ('underimmunized') and a vaccine-preventable disease occurs in our program, the child will be excluded from care until it is determined that there is no longer a threat of illness to the child.

MEDICATIONS

Before any medications can be given to your child, we must have written authorization from you, signed and dated, concerning amount and time to be given. This includes sunscreen and insect repellent furnished by the parent. Sunscreen must be SPF 15 or higher and insect repellent must contain DEET unless a doctor's note is provided for an alternative. Insect repellent can be applied only to children over two months of age. Medication authorization forms are available in the office and classrooms. All medication brought to the center is kept in a locked cabinet or container.

A medication form is valid for the duration listed on the prescription only. Expired medication will be returned to the parent or guardian. Prescription medicine must be in the original container and must have your child's name on it with the dosage stated on the label. Please do not ask us to give over the counter medicine without a doctor's order. Please send in only medicine that must be given while the child is here. Some medication can be given in the morning and evening to avoid bringing it to the Center.

INJURIES

We take all precautions to prevent injuries, however they are a normal part of growth as children learn to test their abilities and limitations. In the case of injury, even those accidents that are considered minor, a written report will be made by the teacher and parents will be asked to read and sign the report verifying that they are aware of the injury and the first aid procedure taken. All lead teachers have current Pediatric CPR and First Aid training. In the event of serious injury, parents will be notified immediately and necessary steps will be taken to obtain medical aid.

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, and LATE ARRIVAL

Please call the office when your child will be absent or late. If your child will be late, it is important to call the office before 9:00am so that we can plan staffing for the appropriate number of children. Please bring a doctor's excuse when your child must be absent 3 days or more.

Subsidized Care (ELC vouchers):

Families that are receiving tuition support, please be aware that you are allowed **only three (3) absences per month or up to (5) absences with a doctor's note**. After that you are responsible for the full fee. Please make sure all records for subsidized care are returned in a timely manner to prevent being terminated from the program.

LATE PICK UP FEE

When you are late picking up your child, MCV faces staffing and licensing issues. As a result, **we charge a late fee of \$5.00 per child one minute after closing time and an additional \$1.00 per minute per child thereafter**. When a child is left after hours and there is no call from the parent, every effort will be made to locate the family. If we do not hear from the family or guardian within a reasonable time, the child will be released into the custody of protective service officials. The Center is licensed to operate only during certain days and hours as designated on the license certificate.

HOLIDAYS

We are closed on New Year's Day, M. L. King Day, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving and day after, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, as well as occasional staff training days.

EMERGENCIES / INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSING

In case of fire, severe weather or other emergency, it is crucial for children to react in a safe and orderly fashion. We practice routine drills so children and adults will know what to do should a real emergency occur and escape routes are posted in each classroom. Teachers are trained in safety rules and regulations. Generally when Duval public schools close due to "Emergency Weather Conditions" the Center will close also. Please listen to local radio or television stations for school closings in this area., and monitor email and social media

SECURITY / PICK UP PROCEDURES

At both drop-off and pick-up, parents and children are greeted by a member of the staff. This family/staff interaction is an important part of our day. We are also very serious about safety and security. You are required to *legibly* sign (your first and last name - not initial) your children into the Center when you bring them and sign (not initial) them out when leaving. Each family will be provided with a security code to enter the building. We ask that you only share this with those adults who will be picking up your child. Remember that we can only release your child/children to YOU or to those individuals, over 18 years of age, whom you have indicated on the child's enrollment form. We may also require a picture I.D. When an authorized person insists on signing a child out, and there is any indication that the person is intoxicated or otherwise impaired, MCV will report the incident to local authorities.

When dropping off and picking up children, please refrain from letting your vehicle idle in the parking lot unnecessarily. This helps us ensure the air quality around the children.

PARENT PARTICIPATION & VOLUNTEERING

Parents are encouraged to participate, observe and serve in decision-making roles in the program through the ***Parent Group Association*** as well as make decisions about their child's care and education through regular teacher/parent conferences. Reciprocal relationships between teachers and families require mutual respect, cooperation and negotiation toward achievement of shared goals. We love and value your cooperation and involvement. You are welcome to come for lunch, share a hobby or talent, come to play, read a story or just come and see what we do each day. (Please be mindful of nap and rest time schedules). Our door is ALWAYS open to you.

TUITION POLICY & CHILDCARE VOUCHERS

You will be provided a current fee schedule. Fees are due in advance for the following week. There is a multi-child discount available. A late charge of \$10.00 will be posted on Tuesday for fees not paid. Fees are collected whether your child is in school or absent, whether due to illness, vacation or school holiday. Weekly fees are charged on Friday for the following week. Upon advance request, you may after 90 days enrollment, receive vacation reservations at one-half cost (up to two weeks). Personal checks, money orders and cash are accepted, or you may pay electronically through our software app, Smartcare. In the event a check is returned, you may be charged \$30.00 returned check fee and be requested to make all future payments with cash or money order. If a child fails to attend the Center for one week and the Center receives no notification or payment from the parent, the child may be terminated and the space given to another.

We do accept subsidized funding from School Readiness (voucher), the Florida Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program (VPK), and Success By Six, however, the application and enrollment process for these programs are coordinated by the Early Learning Coalition.

NECESSITIES

1. Dress children in comfortable play clothing s/he can easily manage at bathroom time.
2. Children should wear tennis shoes or buckle sandals. Thongs, flip-flops and backless shoes are very UNSAFE for play.
3. Provide a change of clothing including socks and underwear. Please check your child's cubby frequently for completeness and seasonal appropriateness.
4. Diapers/ pull-ups (up to six (6) per day) for Infants and Toddlers.
5. Sweaters, coats and clothing that are labeled with child's name are not apt to be lost or claimed by someone else. Many articles are alike.
6. Please do **NOT** send food, candy, gum, money, or toys without prior arrangements for parties or special days.
7. Families are not required to provide supplies to the classroom, however, donations are always appreciated.

PARENT INFORMATION EXCHANGE

All parents are welcomed and expected to attend the **Parent Information Exchange (P.I.E.)** meetings at least four (4) times a year on campus in the Family Focus Center. Meetings will be announced in advance and the Center will provide childcare for currently-enrolled children. A sign-up list for each meeting will be posted in your child's classroom.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Physical punishment or the **THREAT** of physical punishment is **NOT** allowed. Behavior is a learned skill, like potty training or reading. Children copy the adult behavior they see and hear. Therefore, teachers emphasize positive behavior and guidance techniques that include:

1. **Modeling** and encouraging appropriate behavior.
2. **Redirecting** ("Blocks are for building, like this; not made for throwing.")
3. **Setting clear, consistent limits:** ("Walk indoors. Run outdoors")
4. **Respecting children's developing capabilities** while considering adult expectations.
5. **Renewal time is provided:** ("Pause and think about how you wish to play and with whom you wish to play.-----Then tell me your plan".)
6. **Providing many opportunities** for children to develop social skills such as helping, cooperating, negotiating, and talking to solve interpersonal problems.
7. **Teachers facilitate developing social skills** through intervention and planning ahead to prevent problems.
8. The **dignity of the child** is respected at all times.

EXPULSION POLICY

MCV strives to avoid suspension and expulsion altogether, as it is not in the best interest of the child. Our aim is to teach children, not punish. However, there are circumstances in which the director may determine that MCV is not the right fit for a particular child or family. Below are some reasons an alternate childcare placement may need to be made:

Child Actions for Expulsion:

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to children or to self
- Uncontrollable tantrums or angry outbursts
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children
- Excessive biting or excessive hitting

Parental Actions for Expulsion:

- Failure to pay or habitual lateness in payments
- Failure to furnish required forms including child's immunization records
- Habitual lateness when picking up child
- Threatening, intimidating, or inappropriate actions toward staff

Prior to expulsion the parent will be called and correspondence stating the problem will be sent home. Repeated attempts to correct the problems will always be made by the teachers, office staff and director. A lengthy process of documentation, intervention, improvement plans, community referrals, and parent communication would take place prior to considering expulsion.

In the rare case that expulsion is deemed necessary, every effort will be made to avoid a hardship on the family. Program staff will offer assistance to the family in accessing needed services and/or an alternate placement.

MCV is committed to complying with all federal and state civil rights laws.

SUSPECTED MALTREATMENT OF A CHILD

At Methodist Children's Village, we are mandated reporters of child abuse. If we suspect a child is being harmed, neglected, injured or abused by a staff member or guardian, our staff are trained to bring all such concerns to the center director or other personnel in charge. A daily health check is done on each child upon arrival. If there is any evidence of physical

harm and a child is in urgent need of medical care, our staff will call 911 and then contact the parent/guardian.

In the case of suspected abuse by a staff member, the action will be brought to the program director's attention. Once the child has been removed from the classroom, the staff member will also be removed and may be put on suspension until further investigation is conducted by administrative staff and DCF.

Regarding protecting children and supporting families, the Center follows the reporting policies of the Department of Children and Families. Our staff is required by Florida Statutes to report any suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect. The Child Abuse Hot Line is 1-800-962-2873.

INJURIES OR ILLNESS REQUIRING HOSPITALIZATION OR EMERGENCY TREATMENT

In the event a child becomes extremely ill or injured at school, our teachers will remove the child from the classroom to assess the situation. They will call the director or other personnel in charge to administer first aid. At MCV, all staff is certified in First Aid & CPR. If deemed necessary, a staff member will call 911 and then will place a call to the legal guardian. If the EMT has to transport the child to a nearby hospital, a staff member will ride with the child until the parent arrives.

LOST OR MISSING CHILD

At MCV, our first priority is the health and safety of all the children in our care. Our teachers are trained to visually supervise children at all times and count heads continuously. When children are old enough, they are taught to stay with their group. In the event a child becomes separated from the group, we would take the following steps:

- 1) Once all other children are secured with a responsible adult, the person(s) in charge will announce the name of the child missing. All other available staff will then thoroughly search both the interior and exterior of the building, taking care to check all areas.
- 2) If the child is not found, a staff member will call the police and provide them with all pertinent identifying information about the child, while other staff members continue to search the surrounding areas. This staff person will then call the parents or legal guardians.
- 3) Once the child has been found, the director will call the guardian and inform all other staff.
- 4) The director will then communicate with all responsible parties to assess the incident and review what changes could be made to avoid future incidents.

INTRUDER POLICY

MCV has a security system in place to prevent intruders. All exterior doors are locked at all times on our campus and our main entrance is equipped with a keyless entry system that requires a 5-digit code for entry. Once enrolled, you will receive a personal code to use when dropping off and picking up your child. We ask that you please only share this with those responsible adults who need it for this purpose. Anytime children are unenrolled from our program their family code will be disarmed.

This security system makes it very difficult for any unauthorized visitors to enter our building. However, in the event an intruder does gain entry, our staff will take immediate steps to identify the intruder and assess the situation. First, the staff member would identify themselves and ask questions of the visitor to gain information and keep the conversation in their control. They will assess the behavior and demeanor of that person, while attempting to redirect the intruder off campus. If the intruder refuses to leave, the staff member will call for help and ask another staff member to call 911. In the unlikely event that the intruder becomes violent, the staff member will do everything in their power to maintain the safety of the children. Staff is trained annually on emergency lockdown procedures.

DEATH OF A CHILD OR STAFF MEMBER

In the unfortunate event that a child or staff member of MCV were to pass away on our premises, we would take immediate steps. At first sign of a medical emergency, all other children and staff would be cleared from the area to accommodate privacy and safety. A staff member would then call 911 immediately while someone else is performing CPR until paramedics arrive. Staff will keep the children as calm as possible during the situation. Administrative staff will notify parents/guardians of the children in the affected classroom as soon as they are able to do so and may ask for children to be picked up from the facility, if necessary. Grievance counselors will be made available for children, staff and families following the incident, as appropriate. We do not foresee any of these unfortunate events taking place at our facility, however, we would like parents and staff to understand the policies we have in place. The health, safety, and well-being of the children, parents and staff is our very first priority.

Parent Rights & Responsibilities

We believe that parents have rights and that their concerns are reasonable and important.

A Healthy Learning Environment

- Parents have the right to know that their child will be safe at school, both physically and emotionally.
- Parents have the right to know that all children will be treated fairly regardless of race, creed, national origin, economic status, gender, or age and that each child will be treated as an individual.
- Parents have the right to know that the staff is experienced and trained in child development.
- Parents have the right to know that any negative or cruel behavior among students or between students and staff will not be tolerated.

Clear, Courteous Communication

- Parents have the right to be treated with courtesy by all members of the staff.
- Parents have the right to participate in meaningful parent-teacher conferences to discuss their child's school progress and welfare.
- Parents have the right to visit schools and classes.
- Parents have the right to know that they can approach a staff member with a concern and that the staff member will listen carefully and will do everything possible to address the issue.

Information on School Policies

- Parents have the right to information on academic requirements of the school program.
- Parents have the right to inspect their child's record and respond to any statement.
- Parents have the right to be informed of and to appeal school policies.
- Parents have the right to be informed of and to appeal administrative decisions.

Your Responsibilities are to

- ◆ Be involved in your child's education and learning.
- ◆ Let the teacher know you are concerned and interested in your child and his progress.
- ◆ Set goals with the teacher and share in decisions about your child's care.
- ◆ Share information about the child and home that may affect behavior.
- ◆ Discuss problems and concerns with the teacher first.
- ◆ Show appreciation for teachers.
- ◆ Continually upgrade your parenting skills and understanding of children.
- ◆ Volunteer to assist the teacher in some way.
- ◆ Follow the child care program's policies and reread contract and parent manual regularly.
- ◆ Keep your child home when sick unless sick care is provided.
- ◆ Read to your child and spend time talking and playing together.

