



An inspired, safe, and fulfilled child is our promise.

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Fun Square Early Learning Center



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1) Welcome

a) Introduction

Fun Square Early Learning Center Inc. is a private, Maryland Corporation whose primary purpose is to offer quality child development programs to children of working parents in Potomac, Maryland. FSELC does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national and/or ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, military status or economic status in the admission of students, the employment of staff or in the administration of policies under any of our programs or activities.

FSELC center is licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education- Office of Child Care. We strive to maintain outstanding levels of compliance in all areas of licensing.

The center director attends to the daily operation of programs. This includes such vital functions as:

- Staffing the programs
- Supervising staff
- Training staff
- Fostering communication with parents/ guardians and encouraging active involvement
- Observing the children and program daily
- Maintaining the center in compliance with all licensing regulations
- Maintaining inventories, requisitioning for all food, supplies and equipment
- Maintaining accurate administrative records

The center maintains an open-door policy at all times and parents/ guardians are encouraged to visit the program. Open communication between staff and families is an important goal in the success of our program.



b) Mission Statement

The mission of Fun Square Early Learning Center is to provide high quality child care/development programs for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years in Potomac, MD by

- ✓ Providing individualized programs that foster individual children's healthy emotional, social, physical, and cognitive growth and development.
- ✓ Providing individual child-centered and active-learning environment characterized by highly qualified teachers, low group size, and developmentally appropriate focused classrooms.
- ✓ Providing initial and ongoing assessment to foster development based on the specific needs of each individual child.
- ✓ Providing data-driven progress reports to demonstrate progress.
- ✓ Expanding our services in communities where the need is identified.
- ✓ Improving the quality of our programs through ongoing training for directors/staff.
- ✓ Advocating for increased support for quality child development programs by the government and community at large.
- ✓ Advocating for ongoing participation of parents.

c) EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVS

The mission of the administration and our center staff is to serve families in the community. We will provide comprehensive child development programs which meet the individual needs of each child, in an environment that promotes self- esteem and facilitates learning. Our program is based on the knowledge that young children learn through their direct interactions with their environment and the people within it and they learn best when they are interested, motivated, and engaged. Programs are based on each child's individual needs and strengths. An initial developmental screening tool will be administered upon registration to plan individual programs for each child to be implemented in their daily routines. Teachers will be taking data on a regular basis to provide comprehensive progress.



Our classrooms are arranged into different learning centers to encourage children to choose their own activities. These centers include but are not limited to art/crafts, science, writing, books, sand and water, dramatic play, manipulative, music, blocks, and the outdoor learning environment.

The teacher's role in a child centered learning environment is that of a collaborative learner and a facilitator and extender of the children's learning. The primary role of the teacher is to arrange the learning environment to encourage developmentally appropriate choices and to allow the children to work independently and in groups. Teachers provide opportunities by setting up provocation centers to encourage children to find their topic of interest and will provide learning materials and lesson plans to teach each concept in detail. In addition, the teacher interacts with the children while encouraging problem solving and language experiences through the use of open-ended language and questions. The teacher also spends a great deal of time observing the children during their play and then plans activities that extend the interests of the children. Such planning is flexible and short term to meet the needs of the learning group.

Literacy:

The development of literacy is encouraged through the use of music, science, math, art, drama, dance, reading and writing. We embed reading and writing opportunities in children's play and activities throughout the day and we encourage and accept the child's best attempt at reading and writing. In this way we encourage the children to take risks in their learning knowing that their work will be accepted and valued. We document children's work on a daily basis to be used in the ongoing evaluations and assessments.

The curriculum that results from this philosophy is open-ended and based on the children's choices. The curriculum is dynamic in that it changes with the interests and needs of the children. Individual skills are taught in small groups based on the specific needs of the children. Children are assessed individually to accommodate any specific areas that need to be targeted in small group structured activities. A large part of the day is comprised of free choice time where the children explore the classroom and the materials within it.



Goals and Objectives

- ✓ To encourage and foster the development of positive self esteem and self concept.
- ✓ To promote the development of each child into self-confident, risk-taking learners for life.
- ✓ To promote the development of positive social skills.
- ✓ To promote the development of fine and gross motor skills.
- ✓ To promote the development of cognitive and creative skills in the areas of **Science, Technology, Relationships, Engineering, Art, Math, Language/reading readiness, Inclusion, Nutrition, Exercise, and Drama.**
- ✓ To promote the development of independence, self-reliance and self-discipline.
- ✓ To promote the development of positive communication skills.
- ✓ To promote the development of sound health and nutrition.
- ✓ To promote the appreciation of diversity in community.
- ✓ To develop meaningful human relationships.
- ✓ To encourage acceptance and awareness of people with different abilities.

Program Options

Infant Program:

Full day programs for infants ages 6 weeks –18 months, which operate year- round expect for the statutory holidays and the break between Christmas and New Year. The maximum group size is 6 children. There are 2 staff members assigned to each class.

Toddler Program:

Full day programs for children ages 18 months – 2.5 years which operate year-round round expect for the statutory holidays and the break between Christmas and New Year. The maximum group size is 9 children. There are 2 staff members assigned to each class during the early morning and late afternoon when there are less children in attendance. There are 3 staff on duty during the major portion of the day. Facilitating self-help skills is a primary function in this group as is supporting toilet learning.

Preschool Programs:

Address: 12944 Travilah Rd, Potomac, MD, 20854
Tel: 240-454-5780
Website: fsqelc.com
Email: info@fsqelc.com



Full day programs for 2.5 and 3.5-year-old children which operate year-round round expect for the statutory holidays and the break between Christmas and New Year. The maximum group size is 12 children. There are 2 staff members assigned to each class during the early morning and late afternoon when there are less children in attendance.

Prekindergarten Program:

Full day programs for preschool children ages 3.5 - 5 years which operate year- round expect for the statutory holidays and the break between Christmas and New Year. The maximum group size is 16 children. There are 2 staff members assigned to each class during the early morning and late afternoon when there are less children in attendance. Children enrolled in this program are required to be toilet trained.

Part time enrollment may be possible for toddler, preschool, and prekindergarten programs depending on current enrollment patterns at the center. Part time may be Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesday, Thursday. Priority is given to full time students. Part day programs may not be available. The schedule is flexible and will be adjusted to meet the needs of the children in each age group. Adjustments to the daily schedule will be made to accommodate monthly field trips or special occasions. In the events of inclement weather, outdoor activities will be conducted inside. Classroom groupings are subject to change base on the child's developmental level, numbers of children, and adult to child ratio.

Part time program:

Part time may be Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesday, Thursday. Priority is given to full time students.

Teacher's Role

The role of the teacher(s) is based on the philosophy that young children learn through their own self-



directed interactions with their environment and the people within it. The role of the teacher includes the following.

- Designing and preparing the learning environment
- Observing the children and individualizing the curriculum
- Interacting with the children and prompting as needed based on the individual needs of the children
- Planning
- Rearrange the classroom in appealing corners or areas.
- Checking the content of the areas and make them more challenging.
- Introducing new and unconventional materials and activities.
- Identifying children's interests and offer activities that meet these.
- Supporting activities by stimulating inputs.
- Supporting their free explorations
- Improving the development of social/emotional skills.
- Identifying children with developmental challenges and supporting interventions to help with growth and development.

Preparing the Learning Environment

The preparation of the learning environment is, perhaps, the most important role of the teacher. As a child centered classroom, our classrooms are arranged so that children are encouraged to make choices and so the children can work independently within each learning center. Materials are placed so that the children can get them out, work with them, and put them back without the need for teacher intervention. Learning areas, materials, and facilities (drinking fountains, rest rooms, sinks, trash cans etc.) need to be accessible to all children regardless of abilities.

At FSEL C classroom environment is warm and inviting to the children. It encourages the children to explore and discover. The learning materials are kept in good condition.

The preparation of the learning environment is a dynamic process. The classroom and its arrangement change with the changing interests of the children and the activities that are generated from those interests. At FSEL C, children take ownership of their classroom arrangement and provide their own input.

The teachers make sure that all areas of the classroom are integrated. For example, an activity that



began in the block area can be extended to art and the writing center. This is especially true for literacy experiences. Teachers provide materials in each learning center to encourage children to extend their learning to other areas. For example, providing writing materials in the block area encourages the children to incorporate print into their structures. This could take the form of making signs for their buildings or street markers for their city.

d) Curriculum and Assessment Overview and Connection

Our program's curriculum is based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's guidelines for appropriate practice with young children. When planning activities, teachers take into consideration the unique needs of their groups and their individual children.

Our curriculum is emergent, which means that lessons:

- are based on a starting point that may be determined by the teacher but the teacher then follows the children's interests.
- are not predetermined or prescribed but rather a work in progress.
- are designed to meet the children's needs based on their temperaments and learning styles.
- take into account the children's family and cultural backgrounds.
- are based on observation of the children's abilities and interests.

Our curriculum for infants and toddlers is based on the belief that children are "hard wired" with an inborn learning agenda. They are intrinsically motivated to focus on:

- Building relationships that are nurturing and protective
- Developing large and small motor skills
- Learning language
- Engaging in social interactions
- Figuring out how the world around them operates.

Observing Children and Individualizing the Curriculum

At FSEL C teachers are able to observe children and then make curricular decisions from the information gathered from such observations. This allows the teachers to follow the children's lead when planning for the classroom.

The observation of children is a skill that takes practice and experience. Such observations should provide the teachers with the following information:

- Which materials do the children choose and use the most? Do different children use the same materials in different ways? Are there enough materials?



- Which children tend to play together? How well does each child interact with the other children and adults in the classroom?
- What is the learning style of each child? Does the classroom arrangement meet the needs of each child's learning style?
- What are the behavioral patterns for each child? How does the classroom arrangement and schedule affect these patterns?

The information gathered from observing the children is documented through the use of anecdotal records, which are simply descriptions of episodes occurring in the classroom. Gathered over a period of time, these records allow the teachers to evaluate each child in regard to cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. These records should reflect observations done at various times of the day and during various types of activities. Anecdotal records include:

- The date and time of the observation
- The child's name
- The setting where the observation took place
- Other children or adults involved in the episode

Learning is a social event and takes place within a social context. The teacher is part of this social group. Rather than being solely a director of activities, the teacher must act as a collaborative learner in the classroom. Children need to see the teacher as part of the ongoing learning process.

- Work with children as an equal when interacting in their chosen activities. Avoid being the "leader".
- Let children know that everyone, including adults, learn through their mistakes. Mistakes are a natural part of the learning process.
- Let children see the teacher reading and writing.

Planning

At FSEL, the plans are generated by the interests of the children as observed by the teachers. These plans are specific to the group of children in each respective classroom. Because the interests and needs of young children change, planning for any classroom is flexible and open ended. Also, since child centered curricula are based on choices, planning is done so that children have a choice



in regard to participation in a given activity.

Assessment

Assessing children's progress requires using an objective, systematic procedure, and communicating the results with the children's families. We use research-based assessment that measures the children's growth in a natural setting of their everyday life. The main tools we use are: samples from children's work (ex. drawing) and notes from informal observation and communication with families, and the developmental screening and assessment tool.

The connection between curriculum and assessment

As Early Childhood Educators for children ages 0-5 years, we acknowledge and embrace three key steps to facilitating children's development: Communication and Goal Setting, Planning and Implementing Curriculum, and Assessment.

- Communication and Goal setting is accomplished by family conferences, general developmental information, parental/family input, and teacher observations & knowledge.
- Planning and Implementing Curriculum is accomplished by utilizing Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland's Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy Birth to Age 8 for Children birth to five, teacher knowledge, observations, and expertise, and children's interests.
- Assessment is accomplished by utilizing observations, data collection (photos, anecdotal records, children's work, etc.), Brigance developmental screening and assessment tools.

At FSELC we repeat these key steps in a cycle for the continued education and development for each child over the time that they are enrolled in our program.

Family Conferences

At Fun Square, we offer three formal conferences to each family:

Summer/Fall = Welcome/goal setting



Winter = Family receives a written report of child's developmental progress
Spring = Family receives a full developmental profile outlining child's growth and development throughout the year.

2) THE TEACHERS AND STAFF AT FSELC

a) Management

Fun Square employs an experienced Director to ensure that the administrative aspects of the center are handled so the teachers can focus on caring for the children. Zoe Ahmadzadeh is Director of the Program. Zoe holds a master's degree in child development/education and applied behavior analysis and is a board certified/licensed behavior analyst with more than 15 years of experience working with children in different settings.

b) CLASSROOMS

Each classroom maintains the following Adult-to-Child Ratios:

Infants (6 weeks to 18 months): 2:6

Toddlers (18 month-2): 2:9

Preschool (2-3): 2:12

Prekindergarten (3-5): 2:16

c) Visitors

All visitors to the Center are to sign in and out at the office and let personnel know they are in the building.



3) ENROLLMENT POLICIES

a) Enrollment and Registration

Applications for enrollment are accepted at any time. Application materials are available by calling the Center. The Center maintains a waiting list for open spaces. Families are encouraged to place their child on the waiting list as early as possible since enrollment decisions are based primarily on the date a child was placed on the waiting list. A special enrollment period is held each spring for all current enrollees. Families who want to re-enroll their child for the following year must submit their intentions at this time.

b) State Regulations

Prior to your child first day at the Center, as per Maryland State Licensing Regulations, the following information must be on file:

- Registration Form, completed and signed
- Child Developmental History, completed and signed
- Emergency Medical Treatment Form, completed and signed
- Recent Physical and Record of up-to-date immunizations (see Director regarding religious and medical exemptions) *within 30 days of enrollment.*
- Licensed Child Care Consent Form
- Child's Birth Certificate or other legal proof of age (i.e. passport)
- A copy of any relevant court orders that affect the child to be enrolled
- Signed copy of the Payment Policies & Contract
- Signed permission form for preventative products (sunscreen, diaper cream, lip ointment, insect repellent)
- Signed Extra Curricular Activity Permission Form
- Permission or Refusal of Photo Release
- Permission or Refusal of Video Taping Release
- Infant Feeding Plans



c) Transitions

A period for your family's gradual introduction to the center is planned before your child starts the program full time. During this time, you are requested to stay in the classroom with your child. This is a special time for you both to get to know the caregivers and the environment as well as understand the routine. Feel free to ask questions and involve yourself in the classroom as much as possible. Following the child's behavioral cues, teachers and family members will determine the right time for parents to make shorter visits to the classroom, eventually leaving the child to play all day. This process can take anywhere from 3 days to a week.

d) Payment Policies

Fees are due on the 25th of prior month. If there will be a third-party payment, as from an employer or the county, a special payment schedule will be arranged and detailed in the contract. Parents will be responsible for any specified co-payments or unpaid amounts. A full-time rate is offered for children who are scheduled to be in care five days per week. A part-time rate is charged if children are scheduled to attend fewer than five hours each day, or fewer than five days per week. There will be an extra fee assessed for late payment or late pick up of a child. No refunds will be given for days when children do not attend due to illness or other reasons.

e) Inclusion Policies

At Fun Square Early Learning Center, we actively promote inclusive practice in order to best meet the needs of the children, families, and staff at our center. All children are welcome to attend our school regardless of ability, need, background, culture, religion, gender, or economic circumstances. Through inclusive practice, we aim to reflect our wider community and promote positive attitudes to both similarities and differences in each other. The curriculum, activities, books, material and environment are used to reflect the diversity of all children, families, and the wider community. When necessary, we will provide modifications and adaptations to help all children achieve success in our program. We are happy to work with students who have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), and can assist parents with securing additional help and resources when there are mutual concerns about a child's development.



In order to provide the best care for our students, we will be participating in a state-approved screening process for all students. Parents will be asked to fill out a screening survey in the first month of school, which will be used to determine if your child has any patterns of behavior that represent a concern for his or her development. Any concerns that are identified by the staff will be shared with parents immediately in confidence in an attempt to create a working plan of action to provide assistance or identify additional resources that may be available to help your child. We are happy to partner with parents in helping every child achieve success in our program.

4) ATTENDANCE

a) Arrival/Departure

Fun Square Early Learning Center opens at 7:00 a.m. and closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. entering the code on the device installed on the door pad in the entrance. Then come into the classroom with your child and help him or her to get settled in for the day. He may need to take off his coat, mittens, hat, and boots and put them in his cubby. She may need you to help her find an activity to get involved in before you leave. You and your child may want to tell one of the teachers a funny story about what you did last night. It will be helpful to the teachers if you let them know what kind of a morning you and your child have had (relaxed and happy, or harried and stressful?), as this will help them know how best to help your child throughout the day. You can also relate important information to the teachers such as who will be picking your child up at the end of the day, if your child needs to leave early because of an appointment, or if your child went to bed late last night and may need a longer nap. At any rate, please do not leave your child until the teachers have at least seen you and greeted you. That way, you and we can be reassured that your child is under the supervision of an adult at all times.

When you come to pick up your child at the end of the day, please come into the classroom to get him. Again, please make sure one of the teachers has seen you and said good-bye before you leave, and remember to sign him out on the sign-in sheet near the door.



If your child or you have a disability and require special assistance from us for arrival and departure, please let us know in advance. Accommodations can be made to address most needs.

Due to health, safety and legal considerations your child must be signed in and out each day by yourself or an adult (must be at least 18) who is authorized by you.

b) **Absences**

We become concerned when children are not here when expected. If your child will be absent, we ask that you call to notify us before 9 AM. If your child is absent due to an illness, please inform us so that we can take proper precautions and notify families of illness in the center if necessary.

c) **Release of Child**

We will release your child **only** to those authorized by you. In order to do this we need to have your authorization on file and prior notification that someone other than yourself will be picking up your child. Notification of Pick-Up forms are available in the office and in each classroom. Please fill these out and return them to your child's teacher. If this will be the first time for this person to pick-up your child, please inform them to bring a photo ID because we will ask for it.

d) **Release of Child to Intoxicated or Impaired Adults**

Fun Square will make every effort to protect a child from getting into a car with an adult who seems to be impaired in any way, including calling the other parent or emergency contacts. If a parent or legal guardian insists on taking the child from the center, the staff will immediately report the incident to the local police.

5) HEALTH PRACTICES



a) Health Policies

When it is Necessary to Exclude Sick Children from Care?

A child may be excluded from care if: The child's illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities that the facility routinely offers for well children or mildly ill children.

- 1) The child is displaying any of the signs and symptoms that require an evaluation from a health care provider as indicated by the child's age and condition. In this situation the parent is notified of the need for immediate emergent or urgent issues.
- 2) The illness requires more care than the child care staff is able to provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group.
- 3) The child exhibits an acute change in behavior, and examples include lethargy/lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or having a quickly spreading rash
- 4) The child with fever: Temperature at or above 100.0° F orally, 101 ° F rectally or temporally (Temporal Artery Forehead scan), or 99.5° F axillary (armpit). Exclusion due to fever should be based on disease-specific guidelines or other clinical guidance from the child's health care provider.
- 5) The child with Diarrhea: Loose or watery stools of increased frequency that is not associated with change in diet. Stools that is not able to be contained by a diaper or be controlled /contained by usual toileting practices. Exclude until diarrhea has resolved and child is diarrhea-free for at least 24 hours; or until cleared by medical provider.
- 6) The child with Vomiting: Two or more episodes of vomiting in a 24 hour period. The child should be excluded until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider clears for return.
- 7) The child mouth sores with drooling unless the child's primary care provider or local health department authority states that the child is noninfectious.
- 8) The child with rash with fever or behavioral changes, until the primary care provider has determined that the illness is not an infectious disease.
- 9) The child with Impetigo/Scabies, until treatment has been started.
- 10) The Child with Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease: Fever, uncontrollable "hand to mouth" behavior, not able to contain their secretions, such as ulcers in the mouth and the child is drooling, or draining sores that cannot be covered.

If child care staff is uncertain about whether the child's illness poses an increased risk to others,



exclude the child until a health care provider notifies the child care program that the child may attend. If a child's illness does not meet any of the above criteria or infectious disease criteria for exclusion as listed in the DHMH Communicable Disease Summary, the child should not be excluded.

Children should be picked up within two hours of when the parent is contacted. If the child is not picked up within that time frame, the emergency contact person on the child's enrollment form may be called. Children may return to the center when they are symptom-free, have been appropriately treated or have been given medical approval to return to child care. We will follow procedures on personal cleanliness and communicable diseases in accordance with licensing rules and the guidelines for exclusion of children from child care as adapted from the Department of Health. We will report all communicable diseases, when required, to the local health department and to parents of all enrolled children. Parents of all enrolled children will be notified when their child has been exposed to an illness other than a communicable disease. All providers have received training in first aid and will follow standard emergency medical procedures for treating injuries. All teachers have taken medication administration training. A head injury will be treated as a serious injury, and parents will be notified as soon as possible. Superficial injuries will be washed with soap and water and covered with a bandage or treated with ice. Parents will be told about the minor injury when they pick their child up. If there is a need for emergency medical treatment, 911 will be called. Should an ambulance be needed, parents will be responsible for any costs. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible after contacting 911. All medication administered, accidents or injuries occurring during the time the child is in our care, marked changes in behavior or appearance and any observation of injuries to a child's body received outside of our care will be entered into the center's medical logbook. As a licensed care provider, we are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the local authorities.

b) Medication

A written order or prescription from your child's physician is required before we can administer any medication to your child, including over-the-counter medications. The medication must be delivered to the center in its original container. If it is a prescription, the pharmacy label must show your child's name, the physician's name, the prescription number, the date it was filled, and instructions for use. If it is an over-the-counter medication, the written order from the doctor needs to include this information and why it is to be administered. Parents must sign a medicine



release form in order for staff to administer any medication.

c) Nutrition

Parents must provide their own children's meals and snacks. If your child has special dietary needs (medical condition or personal choice) or has food allergies, parents must provide written notification. Parents must provide a meal that meets all the aspects of the food pyramid. If you have questions on what to provide, please ask. If you send nuts, clearly inform us by labeling and verbally telling us because kids under 12 months may be allergic. We will provide 1% milk for all children ages two and up. Filtered water is provided to all children. Daily records of meals and snacks are available for your review.

d) Physical and Immunizations

Within 30 days of enrollment documentation of a physical that has a date of no longer than 12 months prior to admission and up-to-date immunizations must be provided for continued enrollment of the child. For children under two years of age, records of updated immunizations and physical shall be provided to the center after each Well Child visit. After age two, upon any immunization updates, records will be provided to the center. If a child has medical reasons for a delayed schedule for immunizations a note from the doctor must accompany the immunization record. For families who are choosing not to have their child immunized for religious reasons, a letter from the family must accompany the record of physical. In instances where a child is “under-immunized” because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family’s beliefs, and a vaccine-preventable disease occurs in the program, the child(ren) will be excluded promptly from the program until the threat of exposure is over.

When a child is overdue for immunizations or routine health visit, the parent or legal guardian shall provide evidence of an appointment to ensure enrollment or continued enrollment, except for any immunizations for which a family has a religious or medical exemption.

e) Emergency Procedures



Fire drills shall be practiced with the children every month. In case of an emergency that would require an evacuation, children will be evacuated through the nearest safe exit. The attendance form and list of phone numbers for parents and emergency contacts will be taken along to ensure that all children are accounted for and all families notified. In the event of a lost child, we will check all areas of the center. If the child cannot be found, the child's parents and/or emergency contact and the police will be notified immediately.

6) YOUR CHILD'S DAY

As stated in our Philosophy of Education, we structure the day at Fun Square Early Learning Center in a way that allows the children the opportunity initiate activities related to their interests. A large part of your child's day is spent in structured and free choice time offering them opportunities to learn through their play. Each classroom has a daily schedule posted, as well as curriculum plans that the teachers design according to their observations of the children and children's interests.

a) What to Bring

Your child should attend each day dressed to play. A wide variety of activities take place at our center every day. We recommend clothes that allow for freedom of movement and full participation in messy activities. All your child's belongings should be labeled if brought to the center. Please provide the following for your child while at the center:

- At least one seasonal change of clothes
- We recommend safe footwear for children at all times
- Disposable diapers in unopened packages. Teachers will inform you when your child's supply is low.
- In the early stages of toilet learning, plenty of extra underwear!
- A blanket for resting and making the transition to school easier
- A small crib sized sheet and crib sized blanket. Sheets are provided in the infant & toddler room.
- Boots mittens, hat, warm coat and snow pants or snowsuit during cold weather. Scarves



present a choking hazard and are not recommended for young children.

- Swimwear, hat, water shoes, during warm weather for outdoor water play.

b) **What To leave At Home**

We ask that you leave candy, money, food, gum, electronic games, and toys (other than a soft friend for rest time) at home or in the car.

If your child's eating habits seem to be unusual or abnormal at any time, one of your child's teachers will notify you. If you have a specific nutrition concern regarding your child, please consult with the teacher or Director.

c) **Birthdays**

We recognize that birthdays are very special occasions, especially for children, and we will work with you help recognize your child's birthday in a simple, meaningful way. For birthday celebrations, due to **serious** food allergies, Fun Square Early Learning Center invites you to share a **non food item** with your child's class (child's favorite book, flowers to be planted, favorite music).

We ask that "goody bags" are saved for celebrations held outside of the school.

d) **Outdoor Play**

Regular outdoor play is an important part of your child's growth and development. We follow the guidelines and accreditation criteria established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). All age groups play outdoors except when the severity of weather or air quality poses a safety hazard.

In cold weather children will remain inside when the wind chill temperature is 25 degrees or below. The length of time spent outside will be gauged by the comfort level of the children. All children should come with appropriate outerwear to protect them in seasonal conditions. Snow pants and boots should be supplied on days when there is snow on the ground or in the forecast. Rain boots should be supplied to allow children the freedom to explore the puddles after a rain.



In extremely hot weather we will continue to go outside unless advised otherwise by the national weather service. Teachers will provide plenty of drinking water. Children should bring hats as well as swimwear and towels for water play. Throughout the summer months and beyond, we will apply sunscreen prior to each time going outside on children of SPF 30 or higher with UVB and UVA protection in case parents requested and provided.

If families prefer for their child over the age of 2 months to have insect repellents, staff will apply repellent supplied by the family one time a day. Due to health concerns with DEET supplied by valid research, all insect repellents need to be DEET free. Insect repellents should be lotions, not sprays.

When weather or air quality conditions keep us from going outside, the Center utilizes the Multipurpose Room for gross motor activity. The Multipurpose Room has low, soft climbing materials that meet indoor equipment safety standards, space for ease of movement, and materials conducive to gross motor play (balls, whoops, music, etc) and staffing ratios remain the same as indoors and outdoors. Each classroom has 30 minutes scheduled of gross motor time at least 2x a day in the Multipurpose Room.

e) **Rest Time Philosophy**

At Fun Square Childcare Centre, we believe that after a busy morning of high energy interactions in a classroom full of other children, rest is an important and necessary part of the day for every child, whether he/she is 1 year old or 5. Each classroom has a Rest Time that lasts approximately 2 hours. For the first half hour to 45 minutes of this time, children are lying on cots and encouraged to rest. During this time some children fall asleep, others do not. Teachers and rest-time aides are available to rub backs if requested by the child. Gentle music or stories are often played to help encourage a restful environment. After 30 minutes, those children who have not fallen asleep are offered opportunities for books, puzzles, journals and other quiet activities. After 45 minutes, those children who are still awake are offered activities around the room including, but not limited to, table choices, manipulatives, reading, and games. Please talk with the classroom teacher regarding your child's sleeping needs, habits, and the classroom's procedures.



f) **Bedding**

A small blanket should be brought from home on Mondays. These will be sent home on Fridays for laundering. Due to restrictions of our storage for cots, please make every effort to keep the blankets you provide child sized. We cannot accept sleeping bags.

g) **Diapers & Toilet Learning**

Families supply diapers and diaper cream for children not yet toilet trained. The Center does recognize some family's desires to use cloth diapers. Due to Accreditation Standards, we do need a doctor's note if you are using cloth diapers. If using cloth diapers, families will provide an inner absorbent lining that is completely contained by an outer covering made of waterproof material. The diaper and outer covering are changed as a unit. Families will also provide an individual diaper pail with a hands-free lid. Soiled diapers and clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home for laundering.

When considering Toilet Learning it is our philosophy that the cues of the child are followed as signs that he/she may be ready to begin the process. It is vital that families and teachers communicate with each other during this time and work to be consistent between home and school. Please Note: It is typical for a child who is toilet learning to do well at school and not so well at home. This is the result of fatigue in a young child who has worked hard all day to succeed at learning something new. It is also typical for a child who is going through changes (room transitions, a parent being gone, siblings being born etc.) to regress in their toileting abilities. It may take time, but through consistent, gentle guidance and reminders children will succeed in Toilet Learning. It is the professional opinion of our teachers that diapers and underwear are more effective in toilet training than pull-ups. Please speak with your child's teachers regarding your child's toilet learning and toileting needs and your family's preferences.

h) **Field Triops**

We take regular field trips and nature walks in the Potomac community to stimulate new interests and extend the children's knowledge. Upon enrollment, families sign a blanket extra-curricular permission form for walks around the center. While taking walks, teachers carry first



aid kits, emergency contact numbers for each child, cell phones and hand held “Stop” signs to assist if crossing a road. We will notify parents prior to field trips that take us away from the general FSELC vicinity and will ask you to sign a permission form specific to that trip.

During field trips we welcome and encourage families to join us. Your participation lowers the adult to child ratio and significantly enhances what the children gain from these enrichment opportunities. Transportation to and from field trips is arranged through the use of local school bus services.

Field trips occur throughout the year. Some field trips are scheduled for a particular classroom based upon the current interest and curriculum. Other trips are scheduled as a result of events occurring in the community. Field trips may include but are not limited to Farm, public schools, Post Office, Fire Stations, Library, Retirement Communities, etc.

7) GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

a) Discipline Policy

The health, safety, and emotional well-being of children at Fun Square Early Learning Center are our highest priorities. We view discipline as any other skill that must be developed, and we strive to help children learn and play, settle disputes, and interact with others peacefully and non-aggressively.

Discipline at FSELC is developed with support and encouragement of positive behavior through a planned environment that provides a variety of activities from which children may choose, and includes smiles, and pleasant attention for appropriate behavior and positively stated alternatives when a conflict situation occurs. We regularly review the classroom rules with the children, encourage appropriate behaviors, model conflict resolution skills, and stay alert to situations in the room.



When inappropriate behavior occurs, it is dealt with immediately. Teachers individualize responses to the children's behavior, in relation to the particular child and the situation. They work to identify the cause/function of the inappropriate behavior and recognize that repeated challenging behavior may be the child's way of signaling that he/she needs help in dealing with a certain task or situation. Teachers can then modify the learning environment and/or activities to help resolve the situation.

When the teacher sees a conflict situation arising, he/she works to identify causes, and then responds by stating an alternative for the child. For example, "You can put the block here," instead of "Don't throw the block on the floor." If the inappropriate behavior continues, the teacher tells the child the rule, and the consequences of the behavior if it continues. For example, "Throwing blocks may hurt someone. If you throw blocks, you will need to make another choice." The teacher is careful to emphasize that it is the behavior that is unacceptable, not the child.

Physical punishment such as shaking, hitting, biting, spanking, excessive force or otherwise hurting a child is prohibited at Fun Square Early Learning Center as well as psychological abuse, coercion, intimidation or humiliation. Center staff do not use threats or derogatory remarks and do not withhold nor threaten to withhold food or outdoor time as a form of discipline. These acts are grounds for immediate termination of staff members. All incidents of suspected child abuse will be reported to Child Protective Services as required by law.

When a child is being destructive to materials or harmful to another person, that child is redirected to a choice made by the teacher. In extreme situations, a child may need to be separated from the group to an individual activity to help her/him gain control. This should not be viewed as a "time out."

Teachers observe and record challenging behaviors to identify events, activities, interactions, and other contextual factors that predict challenging behaviors and may result in challenging behaviors in individual children or groups.



If a child displays persistent, serious, challenging behavior, teachers, family members and other professionals work as a team to develop and implement strategies to support the child's inclusion and success as well as those of the others in the classroom. Challenging behavior that warrants contacting the parents/legal guardians will be documented in writing, with a copy given to the family and one kept in the child's file.

When at the Center, we ask that you follow the Center's discipline policy with your child. At FSELCE parents, relatives, and family friends participate within the program in formal and non-formal situations (visiting for lunch, assisting on field trips, during drop-off/pick-up times, etc.). Occasionally, an adult may observe children involved in a conflict or questionable behavior. In these instances, we ask that parents, relatives, and/or family friends utilize positive redirection methods modeled by the FSELCE teachers ("when you swing a shovel, it may hit someone. Show me how you can use it to dig."). If this is ineffective, the individual should talk with a teacher or staff person in the office so the behavior can be addressed in a manner that follows the FSELCE discipline policy. If while observing a conflict or questionable behavior you feel your child is at risk, we recommend that you remove your child from the situation and immediately inform a teacher.

If a child exhibits a challenging behavior on a continual basis that is not resolved through appropriate behavior management strategies as part of the FSELCE philosophy, the classroom teachers and Center director will begin *Steps for Addressing Challenging Behaviors* including meeting with the family, increasing communication with the family and written documentation of incidents. Further assistance and /or evaluation, through an outside party may be requested with parental consent.

b) Biting Policy

Program Philosophy

Biting is a natural, developmental behavior in which many young children engage, especially during their second and third years of life. We recognize that biting is a distressing activity for parents, staff, and the child who has been bitten. Because biting is so distressing, everyone involved would like to eliminate it quickly. Unfortunately, a "quick fix" is not usually available.



However, biting does require immediate action by staff to comfort the child who has been bitten, express disapproval to the biter, and to find the cause of the biting.

Children bite for a variety of reasons so it's important for adults to get to the cause of the behavior. Most of the reasons for biting are not related to behavior problems nor does biting make the biter a "bad child". Since biting is developmentally related, it is more common for toddlers to bite than for older preschool age children.

How Staff Respond

Staff members respond to biting as they would other aggressive behavior – by:

- calmly, yet firmly telling the biter that biting hurts and is not allowed
- by comforting the victim immediately and providing first aid if needed
 - wash the bite with soap and water
 - apply ice to reduce swelling
 - if the skin is broken, universal precautions are followed and an injury report is written
- by documenting the biting in an incident report

When a particular child bites on a regular basis, the center staff attempt to find the cause of the biting and take action to prevent future incidents. The staff look at:

- the precipitating factors such as time of day, area of the classroom, the activity, other children involved, etc.
- changes in the child's life such as health problems, teething, the absence of a family member, the birth of a sibling, transitions, etc.

The staff then develop strategies to help prevent further biting. These might include:

- Ensuring that there are enough materials, including duplicates, for the children to use
- Ensuring that there is enough space in the classroom and that there are quiet times in the schedule
- Shadowing a biter in situations and times when the child has bitten before
- Providing teething toys for children who are getting new teeth
- Showing disapproval of biting
- Working collaboratively with parents to reduce or eliminate biting



How Parents Are Informed

The parents of a bitten child are notified of the incident the day the incident occurred. Confidentiality prohibits the staff from divulging the name of the biter. The parents of the biter are informed personally and privately the same day.

How Biting is Documented

All biting incidents are documented by the teacher(s) in an incident report which is reviewed and approved by the center director. A copy of the incident report is given to the parents. The other copy is kept in the center's incident report file.

c) Policy for Challenging Behaviors

Steps for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

1. The behaviors of children shall be addressed by classroom staff as outlined by the discipline policy of the center. This could include positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, redirection, reminders of classroom rules, modifying the classroom environment and/or daily schedule, and providing a supervised quiet time for the child to gain control. Classroom staff shall observe all children and document these observations to help ascertain any patterns or precipitating factors of the challenging behavior. At no time shall staff use shaming, the withholding of food, or physical punishment of any kind.
2. When a child exhibits a challenging behavior on a continual basis that is not resolved through appropriate behavior management strategies, the classroom staff will meet with the center director to document the problem behavior and ask for further guidance.
3. If the challenging behavior is still not resolved, the center staff shall request a meeting with the child's parent(s), to discuss the behavior. The center staff and parent(s) will collaborate on the development of strategies to resolve the behavior. During this process, the classroom staff will keep the center director and child's parent(s) informed of progress in resolving the challenging behavior. Classroom staff will provide information to the parent(s) in written form



with copies kept in the child's file. If a child's behavior results in an injury to another child or staff member, the child's parents will be notified as soon as possible and written documentation of the incident will be provided to the parent(s) and placed in the child's file.

4. If the center staff feels that they need further assistance in resolving the challenging behavior, the program may, with the parental permission, request the assistance of professionals. If the center staff feels that the problem may be a result of a special need, the program may, with parental permission, refer the child for evaluation. If the parental permission is refused and the behavior continues, the continued enrollment of the child will be reconsidered in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 6 below.

5. If the results of an outside evaluation suggest the need for accommodations for special needs, the program will provide these or other appropriate, accommodations as long as they are not an undue hardship on the program as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

6. If all of the above steps fail to resolve the challenging behavior, the program may ask the parent(s) to obtain care for their child at another center. The program will provide the parent(s) with 4 weeks' notice, except where such notice is not reasonable because of safety concerns, and will try to assist the parent(s) in obtaining alternative care.

7. Written documentation of all of the above steps will be provided to the parent(s) and placed in the child's file.

8) FAMILY COMMUNICATION

At Fun Square Early Learning Center, we pride ourselves in the level and quality of communication we have with our families. We recognize that this is a joint effort, and offer many opportunities to share with you about your child's experience at the FSEL. We also understand that we have many families whose first language is not English. FSEL will provide an opportunity for written and verbal translation when necessary.



a. **Morning and Afternoon Communication**

As you drop-off your child each day, please check in with one of your child's teachers to share information that may be relevant to the day. At the very least, please make sure that the teacher has recognized that your child has arrived.

When you pick-up your child, again, please check in with one of your child's teachers. They may have information to share with you about what your child experienced during the day. At the very least, please make sure that your child's teacher has seen you with your child.

b. **Written Communication**

Each classroom has a family bulletin board where notices are posted. Each family has a "mailbox" outside each classroom where notes or reports are left by the Center staff. Please check each daily. We also frequently use e-mail to communicate with families. FSEL News (a bi-monthly newsletter from the office) is distributed via e-mail.

c. **Conferences and Meetings**

Three formal family/teacher conferences are offered each year. These take place in the fall, midwinter, and spring. During the winter and spring conferences, your child's teachers will share with you a written developmental profile and your child's portfolio. If you wish to talk to your child's teachers at other times, please feel free to contact them to set up a date and time.

Family meetings are offered in the evenings according to interest. You are encouraged to attend and hear speakers talking on a variety of subjects related to the Center's program. We will make every effort to provide child care at the Center during these meetings.

d. **Family Involvement**

Family involvement is an integral part of a quality program for young children. We encourage family involvement in our program in a number of ways. Families are also very welcome to participate in the classroom. Classroom participation can take many forms and can include, but is not limited to the following examples: Storytelling and book reading,



sharing musical instruments, cooking with children, sharing special interests and/or hobbies, and sharing information about your family's cultural heritage. Please talk with your child's teacher about opportunities for you to become involved in your child's classroom.

Fun Square Early Learning Center has an open door policy. You are welcome and encouraged to stop in at any time to visit your child, or to observe his/her room.



e. Developing Relationships with Families

As a child care center we are a community of children, families, and staff all interacting and sharing our lives together. In a community, people work closely together and hopefully interactions are positive, helpful, kind, and understanding. Yet, it is to be expected that from time to time people will experience some conflict, some concerns, and some difficulties.

We recognize that parenting is one of the most difficult, intense, and rewarding experiences in your life. We want you to share your thoughts, hopes, and dreams for your child. You want what is best for your child and we know it is your job to advocate and protect your child.

We as a staff, will at times make mistakes, create misunderstandings, and occasionally miscommunicate. When these mistakes occur, we want you to tell us. As a staff it is our goal to offer your family the best in early care and education and to support you in your child rearing efforts. In order to meet our goal, we need your input, your suggestions, your questions, and concerns.

When you have a concern please remember:

- Teachers want the families to feel very satisfied with the care their child is receiving.
- Communicate directly to the teachers whenever possible.
- Realize that if you have a concern with a teacher, and you feel the need to go to the director, the director will need to investigate and talk with the teacher directly about your concerns and deal with the issue in a straightforward manner so that the teacher can improve her/his performance and/or correct any mistakes or misunderstandings.
- Be assured that teachers do not hold a grudge against your child or “take it out” on your child after you have expressed a concern. We would not hire anyone at our center that would react in such an inappropriate manner. Actually, after expressing a concern, your child’s teacher will be more conscientious about the issue and try to improve.
- Recognize that allowing concerns to build up can be counter productive. As concerns occur share them with the teachers.
- Feel free to utilize the method of communication that you are most comfortable with to ensure that your concern is expressed (i.e. face-to-face, e-mail, written message,



- phone call).
- Sometimes we cannot make the changes you may request due to other restrictions, but we ALWAYS want to hear your suggestions. We promise to consider them seriously and respond to you in a timely manner.
 - If your concern is regarding another child in the classroom/program, please understand that the teachers are legally bound to confidentiality and cannot discuss individual children with other families. The teachers will listen to your concerns, will focus on your child and how they are facilitating your child's growth and development with specific situation as well as generally.

f. Formal Complaint Procedure

High quality early childhood care and education is based on building positive relationships with families. In order to provide and maintain positive relationships with children and families, open communication between the center staff and parents is essential. Parents should always feel free to talk with their children's teachers if they have any questions or concerns about their child or the Center. Sometimes the classroom will be very busy and teachers may ask parents to set up a time to meet or to talk on the phone. Arrangements should be made to talk within the Center's hours of operation unless the teacher welcomes calls during non-school hours. Questions about the Center policies and procedures should be directed to the Director.

We are interested in your questions, opinions, and concerns. In order to efficiently address questions and concerns, the following is the recommended procedure for submitting questions and concerns.

Chain of Command for Addressing Concerns

STEP 1: Classroom co-teacher(s) – parents with concerns about their child and their child's classroom should first contact their child's classroom co-teachers. Co-teachers will document the concern and will notify the center director about the parent concern(s). If desired, the parents can request a conference with the classroom teachers.

STEP 2: Center Director - if parents and co-teachers cannot reach a resolution, the parents should then contact the center director. Director will document the concern and will notify the



Coordinator for Child Care Services about the parent concern(s).

OPTIONAL: Parents may also contact their classroom representative about bringing the concern to the center advisory committee. Due to confidentiality, personnel issues cannot be brought before the advisory committee.

STEP 3: Coordinator for Early Childhood Education Services – if parents and the center director cannot reach a resolution, the Coordinator for Child Care Services can be contacted by the parents. Coordinator will notify his supervisor about the parent concern(s).

Documentation and Follow-up

All concerns brought to center staff by parents will be documented by the individual to whom the concern was addressed. All documentation will be forwarded to the individual's immediate supervisor. All concerns brought to the attention of the program will be recorded and kept in a file at each center.

Each center will keep a file regarding concerns that will be reviewed on a regular basis as part of the continuous improvement loop.

Once a decision has been made by the program regarding a concern, the parent will be notified in writing.

g) Family Responsibilities

The following are the responsibility of the parent or guardian upon enrolling their child at Fun Square Childcare Centre:

- Completing all forms for enrollment, health, registration and emergency.
- Arranging timely payment of fees with the Center Director in accordance with Payment Policies.
- Signing your child in and out each day
- Informing the Center of illnesses, vacations and late arrivals.
- Informing the teachers of any changes at home that may affect your child.



- Notifying the Center if someone other than yourself will be picking up your child (Notification of pick-up form must be filled out).
- Arriving to pick up children during Center hours.
- Providing the Center with a change of clothing and with disposable or cloth diapers if needed.
- Picking up your child's cot linens on Friday for laundering and returning them on Monday.
- Cleaning out your child's cubby every Friday so that it can be disinfected by staff.
- Keeping sick children home in accordance with Health Policies
- Keeping emergency telephone numbers and other information up to date.
- Picking children up immediately if contacted by the Center due to illness or injury.
- Keeping your child's fingernails clean and trimmed to reduce the possibility of your child scratching her/himself and other children and dirt under nails can spread germs.
- Attending conferences and meetings.
- Keep the Family handbook for future reference.

h) Program Evaluations

FSELc utilizes the NAEYC family survey every spring for an annual evaluation tool. This survey evaluates the center on Relationships, Curriculum, Teachers, Assessment of Child Progress, Health, Families, Community Relationships, Physical Environment, and Leadership & Management; essentially looking at policies and procedures, program quality, children's progress and learning, family involvement and satisfaction, and community awareness and satisfaction. The center takes the results of this evaluation to develop goals and objectives for the following year. Families receive results of the evaluation and the Center plan of action after the survey has been completed.

Exit Surveys are also provided to families whose children are leaving the program so that the Center can gather information about possible improvement.

9) Termination Policy

The Center may terminate your child's enrollment under the following circumstances:



1. Non-payment for child care services and/or lack of adherence to tuition payment policies.
2. Parents falsify information on enrollment forms or otherwise knowingly falsify information.
3. Parents do not agree or do not follow and comply with the policies set forth in this Handbook.
4. Lack of parental cooperation with the Center's efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child's needs through parent/staff meetings or conferences.
5. Inappropriate or abusive behavior and/or verbal abuse or threats by parents, relatives, guardians or other parties toward the Center staff, other parents or children.
6. Inability of parents to deal in a professional manner with Center personnel or other parents and children at the center.
7. The continued enrollment of the child poses a risk to the health and/or safety of other children, parents or center staff members or continued enrollment of the child constitutes an undue burden on the Center's resources.

PROCEDURES FOR TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT

Step 1: If appropriate given the circumstances, the Center Director will provide the Parents a verbal warning notifying them of the circumstance above that warrants termination and providing them an opportunity to correct the situation.

Step 2: If the parent fails to correct the situation in a timely manner or the circumstances warrant immediate termination, the Center Director will notify the Parents in writing, as well as provide the opportunity for a face-to-face meeting, that the child's enrollment will be terminated.

Under most circumstances the Center will provide four weeks written notice of enrollment termination. However, where the particular circumstances warrant, the Center reserves the right to terminate enrollment immediately or less than four weeks' notice.

10) CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY



In accordance with State of Maryland law, the Center will report to Child Protective Services of Montgomery County any suspicion of child abuse or neglect that involves enrolled children, their families, or FSELIC teachers and staff.

Play is
an active form
of learning
that unites the
mind, body and spirit.