



Mount Ararat Community Activity Center
EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER
745 N. Negley Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412.441.1868 • 412.441.1806 fax

PARENT HANDBOOK

(Revised July 31, 2023)

The Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) offers a comprehensive educational program that focuses on the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of children from infancy to five years of age. The safe nurturing environment and the structure of the daily activities are designed to ensure that each child is healthy, happy, and stimulated.

The ECDC is open from 6:30 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday and is licensed by the Department of Human Services and participates in the Keystone STARS continuous quality improvement program. ECDC is a 4 STARS facility.

Programs offered:

- Infant Care (6 weeks -12 months)
- Young Toddler (13-25 months)
- Older Toddler (26-36 months)
- Pre-School (37 months -5 years)

Children are admitted without regard to race, culture, sex, religion, national origin, ancestry, or disability. ECDC will accept children with special needs as long as a safe supportive environment can be provided for the child. Children/families that are identified with an IEP or IFSP are asked to sign a permission form to share information with the Center Director and necessary staff persons.

Parents or guardians are asked to provide other items needed for their child's care as requested by the staff person assigned to their age group. A list of items needed for infants, toddlers, and preschool children are included in this packet.

(This parent handbook is not inclusive of all ECDC policies and procedures. The complete ECDC policies & procedures manual is located in the Director's office and is available for review upon request.)

PROGRAM GOALS AND COMMITMENT

ECDC AGREES TO:

- Promote positive relationships with all children and adults.
- Implement a curriculum that fosters all areas of child development.
- Give your child loving care, and constant supervision.
- Provide breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack.
- Cooperate with you in meeting your child's developmental needs.
- Provide a safe and healthy physical environment.
- Inform you in advance of any field trips or special activities away from the Center.
- Follow all policies and procedures set forth in this handbook and Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare childcare regulations.

PARENTS ARE REQUIRED TO:

- Check your child's bin/ cubby/ front table daily for schoolwork, homework, messages, notices, and soiled clothing.
- Provide needed items as requested for your child's care according to age group.
- Label all of child's personal items & belongings.
- Call to inform the Center if your child is ill or will be absent from care.
- Keep your child at home if he/she has a fever, diarrhea, or other signs of communicable illness. (See illness guidelines)
- Pay for childcare services in advance of services being rendered. Payments are due on the first day of the service week. Payments are accepted by cash, money order, debit card or check.
- Follow all policies and procedures set forth in this handbook and Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare childcare regulations.

CLOSINGS AND HOLIDAYS

The ECDC will typically be closed on the following days:

- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day & the Friday after Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Eve & Christmas Day

The Center will also be closed for a minimum of 2 in-service days. Parents will be notified in advance of these days.

If the ECDC needs to close or be delayed in opening due to inclement weather conditions, it will be listed on KDKA, WPXI, and WTAE. The listing will be shown as Mt. Ararat Early Childhood Development Center. Also check ProCare for updates.

DAILY SCHEDULES

The general daily schedule, as well as lesson plans for infants, toddlers, and preschool age children are always posted in the Center. Operating hours are 6:30 am - 6:00 p.m. Monday -Friday.

Parents will be notified of changes in the daily schedule. Parents should notify the center in advance if their child will be arriving after 10:00 a.m. Parents must have their children at the center by 10:00 a.m. daily. This helps ensure smooth transitions within the schedule of the day. 10:00 a.m. is the cut off time for children to arrive at childcare. If your child has a doctor or dentist appointment scheduled which would make the child arrive after 10:00 a.m. you must bring in a doctor or dentist excuse with you (**no exceptions**). Parents will be provided with a written Daily Activity Report.

ECDC helps children transition from infant, young toddler, older toddler, to pre-school by gradually introducing the child to the next chronological age level grouping through social activities, art, and gross motor. This permits the child to make a smooth adjustment to being with new staff and peers. The transition conversation begins to take place with the parent(s) and child as early as two months before the child's birthday. All learning materials for children are monitored and adjusted according to the learning skills of the child.

It is important to notify the staff in writing if you request that your child not participate in activities at the center. These activities may include but are not limited to holidays and birthday celebrations.

DISCIPLINE

The goal of discipline is to help children learn to manage their own behavior. Your child will be given a safe, developmental, and appropriate environment with materials suited to his or her age and abilities. He or she will be expected to follow simple rules for the safety and well-being of each child attending the Center.

As the childcare provider, ECDC will use positive language in talking with children, show children how to behave by example, and give emotional support to each child in care.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent, and understandable to the child. We maintain a zero tolerance to bullying. If you have any concerns about this at any time, please report it to the program administrators. A teacher will never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child when disciplining a child. When a child's ongoing challenging behavior must be addressed the following steps must be followed:

- Assess the function of the behavior.
- Work with families and professionals to develop an individualized plan to address the behavior.
- Include positive behavior support strategies as part of the plan.

Examples of challenging behaviors are physical aggression (hitting, biting, shoving, whacking with toys), relational aggression ("You can't play with us"), verbally bullying, tantrums, whining, testing limits, refusal to follow directions or observe classroom rules. Examples of positive behavior support strategies: Removing materials and modifying the classroom environment that triggers challenging behaviors, or create a predictable daily schedule so children know what to do and when to do it.

Teachers will never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child. Examples of physical punishment: Shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling arms, hair, or ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time.

Examples of psychological punishment: shaming, name calling, ridiculing, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection.

Examples of coercion: rough handling, (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up).

EXPULSION AND SUSPENSION POLICY:

Objectives for ECDC Classrooms

- Create positive climates and focus on prevention.
- Develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive behaviors.
- Ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement.
- MACAC complies with all federal and state civil rights laws.

These objectives were adopted from the Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline.

In order for our objectives to be successful and attainable, collaboration with families is a must. Establishing positive relationships with families allows for information to be shared about their children and their experiences. Through this collaboration, providers can gain a better understanding of children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds and learning preferences.

Administrators have created the following procedures to support our children and families:

- Upon child enrollment, families are required to meet with program administrators to share information about their child. Families are asked if the child has an IEP and if so,
- A copy of the IEP is requested. Families and programs administrators meet to review the IEP (if applicable) and set forth program goals to meet the individual child goals stated in the IEP. This meeting must occur within two weeks of enrollment.
- If a child is enrolled without an IEP and concerns are expressed after enrollment by program administrators or staff, a program referral form is completed, and a meeting is scheduled with the child's family. Referrals are made on an as needed basis. For example: referral to Behavior Health Services.
- Program staff are provided with training opportunities to gain knowledge of supporting children and families. These training opportunities also teach staff how to be culturally sustained and linguistically responsive to children and families.
- If a child is suspended or expelled at any point, program administrators record the details on an incident report form. Once the form is completed and signed off on by all parties, it is placed in the child's confidential file.
- Families and early childhood professionals may refer to EI and other services for your children by contacting CONNECT at 1-800-692-7288, or email help@connectpa.net, or submit a form online.

INCLUSION

ECDC welcomes all children. Children with disabilities will be placed in our classrooms with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities; facilitating individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social emotional), friendships with peers and a sense of belonging. This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities to those with the most significant disabilities. (HHS/ED Policy statement, 2015)

As always, if you have any questions or concerns regarding this policy, please contact the program, Directors.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

At MACAC, admission is open to all regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students. Any parent who believes they have been discriminated against, may file a complaint with Mount Ararat Community Activity Center or they can refer to the Non-Discrimination of Services notice on the parent board.

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If such behavior occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

No parent should be allowed to threaten a teacher or an ECDC employee on site or via Facebook or any other form of social media. Using social media to disrespect or defame the character of any MACAC employee will not be tolerated.

MULTICULTURALISM:

In our education programs, we want each child to feel that they belong. To make each child feel valued, their race, cultural heritage, and families are respected and reflected in each of our classrooms. By visiting our classrooms, you will notice that the books, materials, displays, games, music and even our prepared meals help children learn more about family traditions. If you have any ideas or suggestions on how to contribute your family's heritage into your child's classroom, please do not hesitate to share it with your child's teaching team so that we can enrich the learning experience for all. **Please fill out the "Family Activities Form" in your enrollment/intake packet, so that we can incorporate some of the fun and traditional things that you do with your families into the classrooms.**

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

What to Bring:

- Infants: enough premade bottles with lids for the infant's day plus one extra, infant food if applicable, at least six diapers per day, wipes and at least two changes of clothes per day per season.

- Toddlers: at least six diapers per day, wipes and at least two changes of clothes per season. (1-year olds please provide a sippy cup for water and one for milk)
- Preschoolers: at least two changes of clothes, socks, and shoes per season (weather appropriate change of clothes)
- School-Age- at least 1 set of clothes and socks (weather appropriate change of clothes)
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Note: If your child is in Early Head Start, you do not have to provide diapers or wet wipes.

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. If you fail to provide the items needed by your child daily, your child may not be admitted into the program.

A change of clothes must be replaced by the parents by the following business day.

This is to ensure that if the child soils their clothes during the day that there is an extra set of clean clothes for the child to change into or be changed into.

CUBBIES

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a cubby according to the program.

Cubbies are labeled with your child's name. Please check your child's cubby daily for items that need to be taken home and notes from teaching teams in regard to items needed for the next day. Toys are not permitted as they get lost. Do not have any items in your child's cubby. ECDC will not be held responsible for lost or stolen items. No medication or food will be permitted in cubbies or in diaper bags.

MEDICATIONS

All medications should be handed to a staff member with specific instructions for administration. Most medications are kept in a locked container and are readily available and stored in a safe manner, inaccessible to children, while allowing for quick access by staff. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed. All staff must take "Health and Safety Basics" which is mandated by DHS on medication administration.

- **Prescription and non-prescription medications** require a medication log slip completed by the family and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication meets this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container. Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication.

Communicable Diseases:

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (**suspected**) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilic Influenza (**invasive**)
- Measles (**including suspected**)
- Meningococcal Infection (**invasive**)
- Poliomyelitis (**including suspected**)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspected)
- Tetanus (including suspected)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness
- Hand, foot and mouth (cannot return to childcare for 24 hours or until fever free)
- COVID-19 (cannot return to childcare for 5 days or until symptom free)

DISMISSAL / SUSPENSION

- Incomplete file for over 60 days
- Delinquent tuition or late fees
- Loss of grant funding from any organization without alternate payment arrangements
- Behavior that is detrimental to the child's self, other children, or staff
- Uncontrollable behavioral patterns

PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

- The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.
- Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.
- Please do not enter the premises if you are under the influence of any alcohol or illegal drugs (including marijuana).

DANGEROUS WEAPONS

- A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff, or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.
- In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called, and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

CHILD CUSTODY

- Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody when there is no court documentation.

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

- We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may investigate. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- In the event of an emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions: in-place sheltering, immediate evacuation, or a modified operation schedule. In the case of any emergency, you will receive an automated call from our emergency system. Please ensure your phone number is always current. We also utilize the local news stations to post information so please tune in to Channel 2 (KDKA), 4 (WTAE) or 11 (WPXI) for announcements relating to any of the emergency actions listed.
- In the case of losing a major utility, (electric, water, etc.) our programs may be forced to close. If this happens, all families will be notified through ProCare. All children will be required to be picked up within a one-hour window. If the emergency is an immediate evacuation the students will make their way to their safe destination. ECDC and Youth site is Union Project-801 N. Negley Ave.

Pittsburgh, Pa 15206. If the students are on the way to their site, you will have to meet them at their destination. That is for safety and supervision purposes.

- Our emergency evacuation plans are available at each program, and with the Allegheny Health Department, local fire, and police departments. In the event of an extreme emergency ECDC will evacuate to Mount Ararat Baptist Church 271 Paulson Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15206 412-441-1800.

FIRE SAFETY

Our center is fully equipped with fire alarms, fire extinguishers, rolling cribs, and classroom go kits. Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff yearly and fire drills are held monthly and recorded.

EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION

- In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation.
- A staff member will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.
- If emergency transportation is required due to evacuation, MACAC will provide vans to transport the staff and students safely to their designated evacuation place.

EXTENDED DAY SERVICE

Extended day will be defined as more than 10 hours of childcare services. The fee schedule for extended day services is included in the Center's rate listing.

MEALS and PEANUT-FREE POLICY

Nutritional meals are important to a child's growth and well-being. Meals are provided by the ECDC and are included in the monthly tuition fee. Monthly menus are distributed to parents for your planning. ECDC is a "Peanut Free Environment." Please do not bring in any food or snack that may contain peanuts or that has been cooked in peanut oil. Make sure that you read labels at the store. Some cupcakes and cookies have peanut or peanut nut products in them.

Breakfast, lunch, and snacks will be provided by the Center for the children of parents who sign and return food program enrollment forms. Please notify the staff in writing from a physician if your child is not permitted to eat something or is allergic to any specific food. Free meals will be provided to children through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This is a federal program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children who are enrolled for care at participating childcare centers. The Center will only serve meals during the scheduled

times. If children arrive after the scheduled mealtime, it will be the responsibility of the parent to ensure the child has been fed prior to arrival.

Daily Meal Schedule:

- 8:30 - 9:00 - Breakfast
- 12:00 - 12:30 - Lunch
- 3:00-3:30 - Snack

Infant feeding schedules vary based on the child. Infants are to be fed prior to arrival in the morning. Parents of infants must fill out a "Baby Profile Form" so that the infant room teacher(s) know your infants feeding schedule.

PARENT CONFERENCES AND VISITS

ECDC staff will meet regularly with parents to talk about the child's progress and growth. Every child/family will have a "Getting to Know You Form" to complete in the application packet. The purpose of this form is for the family to share the child's likes or dislikes, as well as goals for their child through our program. A written development observation form will be completed within the child's first 45 days of enrollment using the Developmental and Social and Emotional Ages and Stages Questionnaires.

The Center welcomes parental support and involvement through bi-annual parent conferences, a parent advisory group, and various training and enhancement activities.

When scheduled conferences are offered by the center, a parent will have the option of accepting or rejecting the conference through signature designation.

You may drop in for visits, expected or unexpected, at any time. However, during unexpected visits, for safety reasons, staff will continue to give the children their undivided attention. Should a need arise please schedule a conference with your child's teacher.

PAYMENTS

Childcare fees will be charged for the weeks that the child is enrolled in the ECDC. Charges will not be prorated based on attendance.

At the initial enrollment, a one-week payment in advance is due. Parents may make subsequent payments weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly in advance for childcare services through auto deduction by completing an ACH form. All payments, including private pay and ELRC co-payments, are due on Friday before services are rendered. If payments are not received, services will be suspended until payment is received. ELRC will also be notified when applicable.

A monthly statement will be generated by MACAC. The statement will be dated for the last day of the month and will be distributed to parents by the 5th working day of the succeeding month. The statement will reflect all charges incurred and payments made since the previous statement.

All checks returned from the bank NSF will be assessed with a \$30.00 fee. After the second NSF check, only cash, money order, or debit card payments will be accepted.

ECDC reserves the right to use a collection agency to collect fees owed and to report payment history to the credit bureaus.

RATES

<u>SERVICE</u>	<u>WEEKLY</u>	<u>BI-WEEKLY</u>	<u>MONTHLY</u>
Infant (6 weeks-12 months)	\$225.00	\$450	\$900/\$1125*
Toddlers (13 - 36 months)	\$210.00	\$420	\$840/\$1050*
Preschool (37 months to 5 years)	\$195.00	\$390	\$780/ \$975*
Head Start Students Extended Day Fee	\$75.00		

Payment for 5th week of the month
Siblings receive a 15% tuition discount.

Late Fee Policy

<u>Occasions Tardy (Drop off or pick up)</u>	<u>Fee</u>
One to Five	\$1 per minute per child
Six to nine	\$3 per minute per child
Ten or more	\$5 per minute per child
Continued tardiness after 10 occasions may result in suspended services	

SAFETY PLANS

If the ECDC Staff must depart from the Center before a child is signed out of care the child will be watched by a qualified MACAC Staff person until picked up by parent/guardian. If the parent or guardian does not contact ECDC within a reasonable amount of time CYF or the local authorities will be notified.

Fire drills are conducted every sixty days, and emergency plans called the "child's safety plan" are posted as well.

(ECDC) has devised an Evacuation Plan and Safety Drill Policy in the event of an emergency. You will be notified if your child has been evacuated from the building. In the event of an evacuation, you can pick up your child at the Union Project located at 801 N Negley Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15206. In the event of an extreme emergency the

children and staff will be evacuated to Mount Ararat Baptist Church 271 Paulson Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15206 412-441-1800.

The safety of your child/children is our number one priority, and we will make every attempt to keep you informed of the status during an emergency evacuation.

TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Transportation and pick-up arrangements are the responsibility of the parent. A responsible person aged 14 or older with a photo id (and/ or authorized by the child's parent or guardian) must sign their name when bringing children. Persons other than a child's parent or guardian must show valid photo identification to a staff member before signing out a child. Parents must also call when authorized persons are going to pick up a child.

In an emergency, a child may be released to an individual upon the oral designation of the parent, if the identity of the individual can be verified by a staff person. The parent will be notified in the event that an unauthorized person attempts to pick up a child.

Parents must call Center if they will be delayed after the Center's closing time. The late fee for pick up after 6:00 pm is \$1.00 per minute per child. Late fees are expected to be paid within 24 hours.

*We appreciate you entrusting our program with your children.
Please, if you have any questions, always feel free to contact us.*