



Grace Early Learning Center
Where children explore, create, learn and have fun!

Family Handbook

410-796-4561

6725 Montgomery Rd, Elkridge, MD 21075



Our Mission Statement

Grace Early Childhood Center seeks to provide a safe, secure, and challenging learning environment where you child can feel comfortable and free to be themselves while promoting their individual social, emotional, moral, physical, and intellectual development.

Our Philosophy

- *We are committed to providing a warm, loving and accepting environment where children can feel good about themselves and develop positive self-concepts.*
- *We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment where families can be confident in the care and treatment of their children.*
- *We are concerned with your child's present and future success and happiness.*
- *We teach children through the use of developmentally appropriate activities while maintaining a classroom environment that encourages a child's individual growth and well-being.*
- *We focus on the child as a whole. Staff and parents work together forming a cohesive partnership to achieve the best possible learning environment for each child.*
- *We provide a program that welcomes children of all abilities, providing an environment that meets each child's individual, cultural, and language needs.*

History:

Over 40 years ago, Grace Church took the lead in providing affordable and quality daycare for our community. Today Grace Early Learning Center continues to support families of our ethnically and religiously diverse community by providing a quality program that encourages children to explore, ask questions, engage in hands on learning while supporting self esteem and confidence.

Program Overview:

Admission: Students are admitted without regard to race, religious preference, national or ethnic origin or disability. GECC reserves the right to refuse admission to any applicant if it deems this course of action to be in the best interest of the applicant or the child care center. Activities are individualized to address the developmental needs of each child. If your child has an IEP, we will ask you to provide a copy to the teacher.

Registration Packet

At registration, a packet of information is provided to you. This packet should contain all medical and center forms that must be completed and submitted to the Director before your child's first day. The following forms are included:

1. Immunization *must be updated
2. Health Inventory (physical) *must be complete annually
3. Health Inventory Addendum *must be completed annually
4. All About Me *must be completed annually
5. Emergency Card (2 copies) *must be completed annually
6. A Parent's Guide to Regulated Child Care Booklet
7. Tuition Agreement Form *must be completed annually
8. Registration Application

9. Emergency medical treatment consent *must be completed annually

10. Family Custom Survey *completed annually

11. Household Demographics *completed annually

Registration Fees

Upon registering your child with Grace Early Childhood Center, a non-refundable registration fee per child is required. The registration fee is an annual fee paid at the beginning of August for the new school year.

Security Deposit

The security deposit is due at the time of enrollment. The deposit is one week of tuition. This will pay for your last week your child attends Grace Early Childhood Center. The security deposit is non-refundable.

Other Fees

Educational fee: The educational fee is charged to your account at the beginning of every school year. This fee is non-refundable. This covers the cost of field trips and events that will be planned for your child during the months of September-May.

Summer Activity Fee: The summer activity fee is charged to your account at the end of April for the summer camp. The summer activity fee is based on the trips(in house or out), center events and materials that your child will be participating in during the months of June-August. This fee is non-refundable.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

Hours of Operation

Grace Early Childhood Center is open at 6:30am-6:00pm Monday-Friday. (For late pick up please read the Late Pick Up Fees) Children and parents are not allowed in the building until the center is open.

Arrivals and Departures

It is requested that parents whose child or children will be absent, or arriving after 9:00 am, to please call and notify the Center. A child may not be dropped off after 11am unless the parent has called the center to inform the Director of the lateness. A parent, guardian, or authorized adult is required to escort the child/children in and out of the classroom. No child will be allowed to enter or leave without adult supervision, regardless of the child's age. Please remind your child(ren) to use walking feet when entering and exiting the building and their classrooms. *Children should not be opening the Center doors and the access code should not be shared with children for safety reasons.*

Siblings that are with parents during drop off or/and pick up must stay with that parent. The parent must be watchful of their children and make sure that they do not exit the classroom or building without an adult present.

Security Door

The safety of our families and staff is essential to our Program. One of the safety procedures we have in place is a security code door for entry. At the time of enrollment, the family is given the door code in order to enter the building. This code may not be shared with any other person to help ensure the safety of all. If someone other than the parents are picking up that person needs to ring the door bell for the Office to let them in and they must present Proof of ID.

Children should not be opening the Center doors and the access code should not be shared with children for safety reasons.

Sign-In/Sign-Out Procedures

Parents are **required** to sign-in and sign-out their children in the sign-in/sign-out book located in each classroom. Infant parents will sign in and out in two places - on the child's personal "Infant and Toddler Daily Report" and on the classroom sign-in/sign-out sheet. Once you sign your child in/out please assist your child in removing any jackets, boots, gloves and hats. When you enter the classroom, ALL children must wash their hands before they may go play in the room. Please connect visually and verbally with a teacher in the classroom before you leave your child. **Children may not be left in an area unsupervised at any time.**

Tuition, Late fees and Late Pick Up fees

Tuition

When paying by check, please print the dates that the check is covering and the child's name on the check. Make all checks payable to Grace Early Childhood Center or GECC. All check payments can be made by depositing it in the Center's Tuition Box located near the entrance. For those parents paying by check, your cancelled check will be your receipt. If a receipt for a check payment is needed, please notify a staff member and one will be given at your request. There will be a \$45.00 charge for all returned checks and a late fee will be charged to your account.

For cash payments, please see an Administrator so they may provide you with a receipt. Please have exact amount when paying with cash; staff members are not able to provide change. Grace Early Childhood Center is not responsible for any cash payments without proof of a receipt.

Parents who wish to pay tuition by credit card will be charged a 3% convenience fee. The parent may also set up where the credit card is charged monthly, weekly or bi weekly by the office.

For families wishing to pay bi-weekly or monthly, please contact the business office.

Billing statements will be distributed on Friday evening of each week. Tuition payments are billed the week prior to attending the Center. This payment will cover child care for the following week.

Families have until 10:00 am Monday of the current week to pay for that week with cash, credit or check.

After 6:00pm on Monday, all payments are subject to a \$25.00 late fee per child. A family's tuition account is considered in arrears if payment is not received by the close of business on Monday.

If your child/children, for any reason, miss a day(s), you are still liable for the full tuition for that week. When the Center is closed due to holidays or inclement weather full tuition is owed.

Keep in mind, if the center is closed on a Monday, tuition payments are due on the next business day the center is open. Each family will be allowed four late fees per year (January through December).

Any family who accrues four late fees may be subject to dismissal from the Center. If a family's tuition is in arrears, that family will receive a Pay-to-Stay Notice and your child/children will not be allowed to return to the Center until your account is paid in full and current.

Late Fee

Tuition is due on Monday by 10:00am if not received by the close of business on Monday then your account is considered in arrears and is charged a \$25.00 late fee per child. You will have until Wednesday to have your account

current otherwise your child will be placed on a Pay to Stay Notice and your child will not be allowed to return to the Center until your account is paid in full and current.

Return Check Fees

If a check is returned to GECC by the bank the parent will be notified immediately. The parent will be charged a late fee for that week's tuition and a return check fee of \$35.00. A second return check the parent will be obligated to pay using a certified or cashier's check or money order for the remainder of the school year.

Late Pick Up Fees:

Your child's caregivers would like to leave when the center closes or if your child is in the half day PreK program the scheduled time of pick up. In the event you arrive to pick-up your child after the center's closing time, a late pick up fee will be assessed for each minute increment you are late. We understand things happen and situations arise, however, staff members are officially off the time clock when the center closes. For safety reasons, company policy requires Two staff members to remain with any child/children, after the Center closes. Any family picking their child/children up past closing hours will be charged a \$1.00 per minute/per child fee that their child/children are in the Center. Please keep in mind that any family still in the building after 6:00 p.m. will be charged.

Any family with five late pick-ups may be subject to dismissal. Records will be kept for a 1-year period (January - December) at which time new records will be kept.

All late pick up fees must be paid in full of (or before) your next tuition payment date or your child will not be allowed to return to the Center.

Late Pick Up Policy

Our childcare program ends promptly at 6:00pm and the PreK program end promptly at 3:00pm. It is expected that all children will be picked up by these times. If you will be late picking up your child, call and let us know.

- 1. If we are not notified of impending lateness and we cannot reach a parent or guardian, we will call the individuals listed on the emergency procedure form beginning 5 minutes after the end of the program day.**
- 2. Late fees are charged at the rate of \$1.00 per minute per child. We adhere to the clock in the foyer for the official time. At the time of the late pick up you will be asked to sign a form. You will have to the next tuition week to remit payment in full. Failure to remit payment your child will not be allowed to return to the Center and you will be charged an additional late fee for your account having a balance.**
- 3. Any family with five late pick ups may be subject to dismissal. Records are kept for 1 year (January-December).**

Communication:

Parent-Staff communication is essential to effective partnership in advocacy for the child. Parents are asked to read communication provided by teachers and the office which may include bulletin boards, newsletters, calendars, daily notes and journals.

Daily verbal exchange is welcomed, but parents are asked to be sensitive to the teacher's primary responsibility of supervising and supporting the children in the classroom. Long conversations may require a phone conversation during children's rest time.

Parents are strongly encouraged to attend the Parent-Teacher Conferences offered twice a year but may be requested at any time.

Special Needs

The early years are often the time when children's special needs are identified. GECC recognizes that appropriate support can address a child's development and learning needs. GECC will work diligently to meet the individual needs of every child within the established framework of licensed childcare ratio and the program design. In the event the child's needs determine an alternative learning environment would better support the family, GECC will compassionately partner with the parents during the transition.

Babysitting

GECC discourages teachers from babysitting and assumes no responsibility or liability for any teacher after their scheduled work hours.

Child Abuse

Maltreatment of a child is prohibited by GECC and the State. Staff are held to high standard to assure children are safe under their care and are required to report maltreatment of any child to the proper authorities. Training is provided to all staff to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect.

Inclement Weather Policy

GECC reserves the right to close its Centers when it is deemed necessary. A decision to close will be based on the best interests of the children, parents, and staff. Parents are still liable for full tuition. However, the PreK Program, which runs during the months of September through June, follows the local County School system closings. Should inclement weather and/or unforeseen natural/manmade disasters become known prior to a Center's opening, parents and staff you may check the GECC website and Facebook page, you will receive an email and text from Tadpoles and/or call the Business Office.

In the event that inclement weather and/or natural/manmade disaster becomes known after the Center is already open and a decision is made to

close early, parents will be notified no less than two hours before the early closing time. Parents picking their child/children up after the announced early closing time will be charged a Late Pick Up Fee.

Center Holiday Closings

GECC is closed on the following holidays to celebrate and spend time with our families:

Thanksgiving and the day after

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day

Martin Luther King Birthday

President's Day-Professional Training Day

Good Friday and Easter Monday

Memorial Day

Fourth of July

Labor Day

If any of these holidays fall on a Saturday it will be observed on that Friday and if it is a Sunday it will be observed on that Monday.

Professional Development Days

GECC is closed four additional days a year for Professional training these days are: President's Day and the three days prior to the new school year starting.

Our Staff

The Program Director-is responsible for all Center operations regarding the Program. The person will adhere to all policies of GECC and comply to the regulations required by the Office of Child Care. The person will observe, evaluate and improve the Program in the interest of the children developmental stages. The Director will evaluate, train and mentor the staff and maintain ongoing communication and support of the parents as well as staff. The Director's requirements would be the following:

- **Have an AA or Bachelors' Degree in Early Childhood Education or related field.**
- **At least 4 years center experience with at least one year of management experience**
- **Maintain a credential level of 5 or above yearly**
- **Maintain training hours of minimum of 24 credits annually**
- **Obtained all certificates required by the State**

The Assistant Director- is responsible for all administrative duties which include children's files, enrollment and tours, helping in classrooms as needed and any additional duties assigned by the Program Director. The requirements for the Assistant Director is the following:

- **Have or will be receiving an AA or bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education or related field.**
- **Have obtained all certificates required by the State**
- **One-year experience in a center**
- **Maintain a credential level 4 or above**
- **Maintain training hours of 24 credits annually**

The Financial Manager- is responsible for maintaining all financial responsibilities for the Center which includes the following:

- **Tuition**
- **Paying vendors**
- **Payroll and tracking benefits**
- **Develop the Program budget for the school year**
- **Ordering and inventory of supplies**

The Lead Teacher-provides care and education to the children, designs and implements classroom activities that reflect the values and goals of GECC, documents children’s learning and provides ongoing communication with parents to support a successful partnership. The requirements for the Lead Teacher is the following:

- **Attending a degreed program or received a degree in the field of Early Childhood Education or related field**
- **Obtained all certificates required by State**
- **Maintain a credential level 5 or above**
- **Maintain training hours of 24 credits annually**
- **Two-years’ experience in classroom management**

The Assistant Teacher-provides nurturing and care to the children of the classroom and helps to implement the classroom curriculum with the Lead Teacher. The requirements for the Assistant Teacher is the following:

- **Obtain all certificates required by the State**
- **Maintain a credential level 4 or above**
- **Maintain training hours of 12 credits annually**

Floaters-provide care and nurture to the children in this flexible role designed to support the teachers and substitutes in classrooms as needed. They are required to have the same requirements as an Assistant Teacher.

Cook-provides a nutritious menu with variety for the children and staff to enjoy. The Cook complies with all Health Department and State regulations regarding the procedures of preparing meals and cleaning of the kitchen.

Background Checks and other requirements

All GECC staff complete a Federal and State fingerprinting, Social Service background check and medical before starting at the Center. All staff are required to obtain and maintain CPR/FA certification and go through the mandatory number of continuing education training annual.

Discipline Policy

GECC embraces the definition of discipline meaning “to teach”. All human beings want to feel respect, self-worth and a sense of belonging. GECC does not punish children we educate them. By honoring their interest and needs the adults will enable the children to become capable, responsible, successful adults. GECC staff may never use physical punishment when disciplining a child. GECC will not use language that humiliate or demean a child.

The primary focus for teachers is to support young children’s self-image as capable of self-control, verbal problem solving, and responding to others with kindness and empathy. GECC follows the following four steps:

- 1. Model-Adults models pro-social behavior and appropriate language as well as demonstrating problem solving and appropriate risk taking.**
- 2. Prevent-Adults prevent misbehavior and provide attentive, compassionate supervision, through the design of the curriculum and learning environment.**
- 3. Coach-Adults help children identify their feelings and redirect children to different activities if they are having trouble exhibiting self-control to be safe with their peers. Adults will coach by asking the children once they calm down what would have been a better choice.**

- 4. Repair-Adults support the children’s reflection of events and behaviors and facilitates child to child conversation to name and acknowledge feelings and the actions that impacted a peer’s experience. Adults will encourage repairs by inviting children to consider a positive action that demonstrates taking responsibility for the feelings and experiences of others.**
 - a. This may look like cleaning up a mess before moving on to play.**
 - b. This may be repairing a torn book.**
 - c. Helping a friend with an injury getting the ice pack**
 - d. Teachers will not encourage insincere apologies from children.**

Suspension/Expulsion

Discipline is an ongoing process embedded in a child’s experience and relationships. GECC understands that children, especially pre-verbal children use physical expression to share their feelings and needs. GECC assures parents that an undesirable behavior indicates an opportunity for the child to develop an important skill; it is not a “morals” issue. It is possible that some children will exhibit consistent behaviors that are detrimental to the ongoing safety to the other children in the classroom. This may include aggression towards peers such as biting, hitting, and kicking. GECC will handle these issues discreetly and compassionately in partnership with the family. In the event, that a child’s ongoing behavior poses a risk to themselves or to other children in the program the following steps will be taken:

- 1. The Program Director will meet with the Parents and Teacher to discuss the concerns.**
- 2. A written behavior plan signed by the Parents, the Teachers and the Director will be put in place that day. This must include the following:**
 - a. Identify the specific behavior**
 - b. Identify supports in place (bite toy, redirection, shadowing etc.)**
 - c. Identify needed support (behavioral specialist etc.)**

- d. Identify a timeline for the behavior plan
 - e. Identify precise metrics of improvements
 - f. Identify peer respites (if the child bites two children parent will have to pick up)
3. The parents will then meet with the teacher weekly to see how the behavior plan is progressing and to change things if need to.

In the unlikely event that the behaviors not responding to the efforts of the teachers and the parents then GECC will give the family 14 day notice to determine a more appropriate childcare setting.

Withdrawal from Program

In the event your child withdraws from Grace Early Childhood Center, we ask that parents please give the Director a 30-day written notice. Any family wishing to return will be required to re-register (if spaces are available) and will be responsible for all enrollment fees. A child is considered withdrawn if the child is absent for four (4) or more consecutive days, and the center has not been contacted. To re-enroll, all registration fees will need to be paid again.

Parking Area

The fire marshal prohibits parking in the fire lane (circular driveway) for any reason except in a medical emergency or the unloading/loading of supplies. We ask that you please observe, respect, and follow this regulation. If you pull into the circle and remain parked there, you will be asked by a staff member to move your vehicle.

Child Custody and Release Policy

Authorized Release of Child

The Center will only release a child to a parent, legal guardian, or an individual authorized by the parent and/or legal guardian listed on the

emergency information card. Staff members reserve the right to ask for identification from any person trying to pick up a child from the Center. If an individual is listed on the emergency card, and produces proper identification, the child may be released from the center without a confirmation call to the parent.

The Center does not make it a practice to accept authorized pick up changes over the phone, except in emergencies. Under these circumstances, a return confirmation call from a staff person to the parent may be necessary.

As a parent, you must submit in writing the new authorized persons information (name, address, telephone number) to be added to the list. In cases in which an authorized pick up person is to be deleted, please contact the Center Director.

Custodial and Non-Custodial Parents

Unless a specified custody agreement, signed by a judge and on file in the center, the non-custodial parents will have the right to information about their child/children. This means that non-custodial parents will be informed of all school activities, classroom concerns, and information about their child. This practice is beneficial to children to help them feel that both parents are taking an active role in their childcare experience.

Confidentiality of Student Records

Your child/children records are open only to your child's teacher, the Director, the Owner, and authorized employees of Maryland's State Licensing Agency.

Smoking Policy

Grace Early Childhood Center is a SMOKE – FREE property. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the premises. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Nutrition

GECC provides children approximately 12 months and older a morning breakfast, a hot lunch and nutritional afternoon snacks.

- **Children are responsible for washing their hands, sitting with feet on the floor and trying new foods.**
- **Teachers sit with the children to demonstrate courtesy and proper use of tools.**
- **Teachers will encourage all children to come to the tables for snack and lunch, but we cannot force children to eat.**

GECC provides formula Similaic formula for our infants. Once the infant has tried a baby food at home the parent can inform the teachers of what their child has tried with no reactions and the Center will continue with serving the child that baby food.

- **All bottles must come in to the Center with the child's first and last name.**
- **All babies are held while feeding until they can sit at the table.**
- **Teachers wash the babies' hands before feedings.**
- **Bottles are sent home for cleaning.**
- **Breast milk must come in the bottles labeled breast milk with the date as well as the child's first and last name**
- **The Center may not store breast milk overnight.**
- **Any milk or food that the child does not eat will not be saved.**

Meals and Menus

Meals/snacks are a part of the daily schedule at each center. Eating times are posted on the Parent Information Board in each classroom. Please keep in mind that classrooms need to adhere to these times, under normal circumstances. If your child is not present when the meal/snack is scheduled,

it is the parent's responsibility to see that the child/children are fed.

Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy or develops one after attending GECC please follow these steps:

- Inform the Director in writing immediately
- Inform the teacher both verbally and in writing.
- Have your doctor complete an Food Allergy Form and if your child needs an EPIPEN your doctor must also complete a Medication form each of these forms must be updated yearly.

Food related Conditions

Parents must provide supporting medical verification (a signed and dated form given to your doctor or a form your doctor provides), identifying the condition and listing specific foods that your child may not eat. GECC will make every effort to accommodate the new restrictions and provide alternatives.

Families may provide their alternative food from home if GECC can not meet the new dietary restrictions, but you **MAY NOT SEND ANY NUT PRODUCT, NO CHOCOLATE**, and it must be low in sugar.

Wellness of Child

GECC partnerships with the Well Child Program with the Department of Health of Maryland. Children must be able to engage with the daily rhythm of the program to attend. Parent partnership with GECC is necessary to comply with the policies of the Well Child Program. The goal of GECC is to keep well children at the center and parents at work. However, the health of all the children is the priority over the inconvenience of one family asked to remove one ill child.

Handwashing

Handwashing is the number #1 prevention practice in place at GECC. By teaching children healthy hygiene practices, adults minimize the spread of illness.

- Parents are asked to facilitate children's handwashing when entering the classroom.
- Teachers will make sure that children will wash hands before all meals and after all toileting, outside play, and sensory activities.

Parent Partnership

We ask that parents assess their child's health and wellness based on their child's behavior as a first indicator of ill health before your child arrives at the Center. If upon arrival, teachers identify that your child is not well enough to attend GECC the child will be sent home with the parent.

If the child becomes ill at GECC, the child will be isolated from the other children. Parents will be notified to come pick their child up from the Center within the hour. Children may return to GECC after they have been symptom free for 24 hours. (regarding fevers it must be symptom free without medicine for 24 hours)

GECC defines these policies in the effort to protect the health and safety of all children enrolled in GECC program. Parents may not bring their child if they demonstrate any symptoms related to illness.

Health Procedures

Health regulations prohibit the admittance of any child into the Center who exhibits one or more illness. The following are the most common, but not limited to:

~ Communicable diseases (chicken pox, roseola, mumps, etc.)

- ~ Lice
- ~ Conjunctivitis (discharge from eyes or ears)
- ~ Rash
- ~ Runny nose with colored discharge (dark yellow/green)
- ~ Vomiting/stomach ache/Diarrhea
- ~ Fever of 100.5°F, or higher

Please keep in mind that GECC staff are not medical doctors, nurses, or physician's assistants.

GECC staff are encouraged to err on the side of caution and communicate with parents when deciding about an illness or injury.

GECC cannot leave a child unattended inside. We cannot honor requests that children stay inside during outside time. If your child cannot go outside, then it is best that he/she stays at home.

Communicable Diseases

It is Grace Early Childhood Center's intention that all communicable disease cases be handled on an individual basis, with an emphasis placed on the total care and safety of the entire center. The parent/ guardian of the ill child will be notified immediately. THE CHILD MAY NOT RETURN TO THE CENTER UNTIL SUCH TIME AS A DOCTOR'S RELEASE FORM ALLOWS THE CHILD TO RETURN TO THE CENTER. If it is found to be necessary, other families and the County Health Department will be notified of the communicable disease.

Lice

We maintain a policy of No Lice, No Nits. No Lice, No Nits means that, if one "louse" or one "nit" (egg) is found on a child's body or hair areas, they must

be picked up from the Center immediately. Upon returning to the Center, a staff member must check the child for the absence of nits and/or lice. Please allow yourself enough time for the staff to examine your child. This policy is recommended by the Health Department and is the best way to reduce the spread of Lice.

Rashes

If a rash or type of irritation is noticed and seems suspicious in nature, the parent will be contacted immediately. The child will be picked up and must see a doctor and bring with them upon return a note stating the child is not contagious.

Runny Nose (with colored discharge)

A parent will be contacted if the symptoms persist and/or other symptoms accompany the runny nose (i.e. coughing, fever, nausea, vomiting, and stomach ache). The Center will notify you that your child needs to be picked up and upon return the child must have a Doctor note.

Conjunctivitis

No child will be admitted to the Center if they have or are suspected of having conjunctivitis. If a child shows symptoms of the illness while at the Center the parent(s) will be contacted and asked to pick up their child from the center. Although symptoms of allergies or colds can be mistaken for conjunctivitis, it is the Center's responsibility to treat all illnesses with caution. Conjunctivitis must be treated by a physician and a doctor's note must be given to the Center upon the child's return.

Fever

In the event of a fever, a parent/guardian will be notified if the child's temperature is 100°F or higher. If the fever reaches 100.5°F or higher, the parent will be asked to arrange for their child to be picked up from the Center

within one hour. Our Center policy is that a child must be fever free without medication for at least 24 hours before returning to the Center. Sometimes an illness is still contagious after the symptoms disappear because the medication is masking them. Persistent fever will require a written notice from the child's doctor stating that your child is no longer contagious and should be presented upon your child's return to the Center.

Diarrhea/Vomiting

After a second occurrence the parent will be contacted and asked to pick up their child from the Center. The parent may be contacted earlier than the second time if other symptoms accompany the diarrhea/vomiting or the child no longer has appropriate clothing to wear. The child may not return to the center for a full 24 hours symptom free. If the child returns to the center and has another incident the parent will be notified to pick up and the child cannot return without a Doctor note.

Medications

GECC Staff may only administer medication to a child with the completion of the Medication Form from the doctor, addressed to GECC. All medication must come into the Center in its original container and if prescription must have the label. This includes aspirin, over-the-counter cough syrups, prescription medications, etc. **THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS.** Also, a Child Care Medication Form must be filled out and signed by the parent. The child must have had the medication for a full 24 hours before they may return. **All MEDICATION MUST BE GIVEN TO THE OFFICE ALONG WITH THE MEDICATION FORMS COMPLETED BY BOTH DOCTOR AND PARENT.** (this includes diaper cream, teething gel etc.)

A parent may not send in their child's backpack or bag vitamins, nasal sprays, cough drops, and/or chap stick. Your child may not store these in their

cubbies. And a medication form still must be completed along with these items being given to the teacher of the classroom.

Accidents and Incident Reports

If a child is injured during school hours, you will receive a report at pick up time for your child's accident. If the injury has anything to do with the areas on the neck and above, you will be notified. If the injury is serious we will contact the parents, if we cannot get reach the parents and we feel the injury is serious enough to warrant immediate attention we will contact 911. All life-threatening emergencies will result in immediate phone call to 911 and then a call to the parent(s), for these reasons it is extremely important that you notify the center immediately if you have changes related to parent contact information.

If a child is having consistent behavior problems that can be a safety issue for other children, themselves or staff and after the teacher has redirected, talked with and the Director has talked with the parent they will receive an Incident report detailing the events. The parent will be called to inform them of the incident and that there will be a form for them to sign at pick up time. If the child's behavior seems to be continuous the Director will request a Conference with the Parent and the Teacher. (read Discipline Policy/Suspension Policy)

Field Trips

Except for the Infant/Toddler classrooms, all children will have the opportunity to attend field trips. Due to company Policy on child/adult ratios, trips are subject to parent participation. The child/adult ratios are: two year old: 2 to 1; three and four year old: 3 to 1. Should any classroom not be able to meet child/adult ratios, that class may cancel the trip. All children under the age of 4 years old must be driven by their parent to attend the field trip.

Celebrations

GECC honors families by focusing on the love that creates our familial ties. Teachers facilitates classroom discussions to support children’s positive self-identity. In recognition of the varied configuration of our families, GECC does not focus on “Mother’s Day or Father’s Day” as celebrations for parents, but we do hold extraordinary events as a way for all kinds of parents to know and be know by others.

Instead GECC wants to ensure that children and their parents see themselves reflected in our language and broad array of literature that we display, read and discuss.

GECC seeks to honor the Whole Child by endeavoring to understand their beliefs and to create dynamic spaces for sharing and learning culture. GECC balances this with the understanding that quality early care and education environments should offer respite to children and their families.

GECC will facilitate education about all holiday celebrations that children express an interest. Adults will follow the children’s lead to ensure that traditions valued by children and their families are explored in a developmental appropriate manner. This may look like families contributing books, music, and other activities to highlight their cultural traditions. Being child and family led ensures authenticity of the activities.

Successful examples would be:

- **Exploring the similarity and differences between the symbol of lights in the different holiday traditions (Kwanza, Chanukah, and Diwali)**
- **Making a paper mache dragon head and dancing for the Moon Festival**
- **Painting sugar skulls for Dia de Los Muertos.**

Parents that are interested in sharing about cultural traditions may email the Director to discuss how you would like to share.

Anti-Bias Philosophy

We strive to achieve an anti-bias environment through our hiring practices, policies, classroom strategies and teacher/parent training.

We expect staff at Grace to respect and acknowledge the diversity of family composition, race, gender, religion, culture, intellectual and physical ability, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, beliefs, values, age and temperament of children and families as well as other staff members. Specifically, this policy states that staff treat children of all races, religions, family backgrounds and cultures equally.

We meet these standards by following these guidelines:

- **Initiate activities and discussions that build a positive self-identity and teach the value of differences: we provide books, dolls, toys, dress up props, photos, pictures and music that reflects diverse images.**
- **Make it a consistent practice that a person's identity is valued, acknowledged and represented in images and activities.**
- **Talk positively about each child (physical characteristics and cultural heritage)**
- **React to teasing and rejection among children by intervening to discuss similarities and differences**
- **Respect cultural diversity: for example, provide materials, images and experiences that reflect diverse cultures that children may not likely see, as well as those that represent their family life and cultural group.**
- **Initiate discussions and hands-on activities to build appreciation for differences and counter biases.**
- **Cook and serve foods from various cultures**
- **Read books, display pictures of various cultures**

- Invite families and other visitors to share arts, crafts, music, dress and stories of various cultures
- Take a trip to museums and cultural resources of the community
- Infuse all curriculum topics with diverse cultural perspective, avoiding a tourist approach.

Birthdays

There are many ways to celebrate your child's birthday! Celebrations include a special activity in honor of your child, or providing goodie bags to take home like bubbles, tattoos, or face painting. Many of the children have nutritional needs and to promote healthy habits the Center request you do not bring in Cake or sugary products. You may bring in fruit trays or healthy snacks for a food treat. Please discuss the event with your child's teachers at least a week prior to the event.

Outside Food

The Center does not permit outside food to be brought in unless it is for a dietary restriction or allergy. This is to protect the health and safety of all the children.

Discounts

Vacations

When the Center is notified at least two weeks in advance, the Center will reduce each full week (5-day enrollment) for vacation by 10% when the tuition is paid in advance. The vacation discount will be applied when payment is received in advance for the discounted week. Vacation forms, available from the staff, should be filled out by the parent and returned to a staff member. *Your tuition account must be in good standing to receive the vacation rate and you must have been registered in the center for 1 full year. If you withdraw and return the anniversary date will be the new enrolled date.*

Parent Referral Program

Referring a new family to the Center will give the referring family a discount off one-weeks tuition. The new family must register for full time and stay with the Center for 3 months. The new family must complete a referral form and submit it to the office for the referral family to receive the \$100.00 credit.

Fire Drills

Fire Drills are held at least once a month. The Center practices Tornado, Earthquake and Stay in Place drills every other month.

Clothing

It is recommended that children wear play clothes and tennis shoes to GECC. Daily activities include both active and messy play. Open toed sandals or shoes are prohibited, and a parent will be called to bring in appropriate footwear. Children need to feel comfortable enough to enjoy themselves without worrying about the condition of their clothes. Please remember to dress them appropriately for the season and outside play (i.e. hats and mittens in the winter, free flowing light garments in the summer).

Note: All items should be labeled with the child's name.

Outside Time

Outdoor play and exploration are an important foundational learning experience for young children. Licensing requires the children to have exploration outside everyday if the temperatures range from 32 to 95. Please send your children dressed appropriately for all seasons. During light rainy

days children may take a walk so please send a raincoat and when it snows, they will need snow boots, gloves, hats and snowsuit.

Sunscreen

Parents are to apply sunscreen in the mornings and the teachers will reapply in the afternoons with medication form completed by doctor and parent.

Personal Belongings

The Center is not responsible for any personal belongings that are lost, stolen or broken. Please label all children's items with their first and last name. Any personal items brought to the Center should support the learning environment, so please talk with your child's teacher to see what would be appropriate for them to bring to the Center.

Show and Tell

Some classes offer Show and Tell please look for the sign that indicates what day the classroom observes for Show and Tell. Show and Tell is a way for your child to connect his learning experience at the Center to home and share what they have learned back to their classmates.

Children's Items Needed

1. A complete change of clothes (clothes should be suited for the appropriate season) and one pair of shoes.
2. A sheet, blanket, and bag for storage (paper/plastic bags are not acceptable). The Center is not responsible for cleaning items. Parents are to take these items home on their last day of the week and return these items on their first day back.
3. Diapers and wipes (if applicable)

The Center is not responsible for items your child/children bring to the Center. Toy guns, swords, or play weapons of any type are prohibited

Screen Time Policy

Children under the age of 2 are not permitted to have TV time while in school. Our preschool and Perk classrooms are allowed 30 minutes of educational screen time a week. Educational screen time are games that promote learning and on rare occasions a video that helps to enhance the children's learning environment.

Potty Training

Toilet training is a developmental process in which a child learns to use the toilet appropriately. Children are ready to learn when they are healthy, well nourished and not pressured to achieve at level above their capabilities. Parents are requested to partner with teachers, communicating frequently so that the home to child care approach is coordinated and consistent. As in many areas of child development, children must reach a certain age to begin (often between the ages of 20 months-30 months) before they are ready to learn.

Once toilet training begins we ask that parents bring in several clothing items for the child in case of accidents which is often the case in the beginning of toilet training. We ask that parents no longer send in pull ups except to be worn during naptime when toilet training is started.

Classrooms

Pets

The only pets that can be kept in the classroom are hermit crabs, tadpoles, frogs and fish.

Spending time with the Rector

Twice a month the Rector of the Church comes to visit Grace Early Childhood Center to talk with the children about character education values. We help to support each child in developing strong values regarding: sharing,



compassion, generosity, honesty, cooperation, responsibility, respect, dependability, determination, courage, attentiveness, diligence, forgiveness, gratefulness, tolerance, orderliness and self-control.

Two years/Preschool/PreK

For children attending the center fulltime and part-time, the Preschool and PreK programs support a curriculum rich in fostering language and literacy development. Each week, children explore themes, incorporating the Seven Domains of Learning (Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Art, Music, and Physical Development) through variety and hands-on exploration. GECC strives daily to prepare each child for success in Kindergarten.

Our learning environment promotes peer engagement, encourages movement and provides developmental appropriate activities reflecting a multi-disciplinary approach to learning through play. Our Curriculum is child lead and teacher framed.

A child must be toilet trained to move to our Three-year-old program.

Kindergarten Readiness Full time program

The program operates Monday-Friday 9:30 am-3:00pm from September-June. We provide a morning snack and lunch. For children that stay in our Before and After care program an afternoon snack will be provided at 3:30pm.

Our Kindergarten Readiness program follows the Howard County Public School System Inclement weather policies and holiday closures. We are not required to build in extra days to the school year due to inclement weather closings.

Before and After Care

Our Before and After Care program runs from 7am-9:30am and from 3:00pm-6:00pm during the regularly scheduled school days. On days that schools are closed due to weather and holidays we will offer full time hours from 7:00am-6:00pm. Our school district has Rockburn Elementary as our main school during the regular school day hours; however, any child may enroll in drop in care for closings and holidays.

Transportation for the school is only provided by Public Transportation or parent dropping off.

Infant and Toddlers

Infants—babies from birth to 18 months—learn so much in a short time. While each child develops at a different rate, we believe that the best practice of learning is through relationship building, hands on play and exploring.

It's important for your child to have nurturing relationships with the adults who care for her. A primary (main) caregiver works with the same few babies. She gets to know them well and forms close relationships with them, so the babies feel confident and secure.

Through active, hands-on play. Grabbing plastic rings, rolling on a soft blanket, making a toy squeak—what fun! Babies look, smell, hear, taste, and touch their way to understanding the world around them. Moving around freely in a safe space, babies can reach and explore objects—a key to learning. Caregivers offer infants safe, interesting materials that spark their curiosity and invite babies to discover what they can do with their own bodies and with the things around them.

By connecting new ideas to what babies already know and can do. All of us learn best when we can link new information to what we already know. Caregivers help babies do this so that they build knowledge. Caregivers also

connect learning to whatever your child is interested in, whether that's wheels or music or faces!

By exploring and making sense of their world. High-quality programs give infants plenty of time to play and explore. Babies need lots of experiences with objects and people to begin figuring them out. Caregivers help by telling babies the names of objects and describing what your child is doing. Over time, your infant begins to understand what things are and how they work.

With support from caregivers. Working with infants involves so much more than caring for their physical needs. Caregivers interact with children and offer them enjoyable experiences that lay the foundation for learning. Some of the ways we support babies are by:

Noticing your child's signals to learn what he's saying through his sounds and actions

Building trust by responding quickly to babies' needs

Setting up schedules and following familiar routines (for example, lunch or bottle time is usually followed by naptime). Babies learn better when they feel secure and know what to expect.

Talking to your child during caregiving times, like feeding and diaper changing. This makes your child feel valued and helps her build a strong bond with her caregiver.

Describing to your infant what's happening throughout the day. Regular communication helps him build lifelong language skills.

Creating safe spaces for your baby to move comfortably and freely, with interesting materials for her to explore

Asking about routines you do at home with your child so the caregivers can do some of the same things at the program

Keeping you up to date on what your child knows and is learning so you don't miss a thing

Offering lots of active playtime. Caregivers give babies plenty of space to play and build their muscles and coordination.

Giving infants the chance to explore outdoors every day if possible. Spending time outside helps children's health and brain development. Caregivers take babies on walks and let them move freely in a secure outdoor space.

Please remember when entering the Infant and Toddler classrooms, parents need to take a moment to remove shoes (please, no bare feet). Shoes worn outside or outdoors are not permitted in the baby rooms. Only parents or guardians are permitted to enter the Infant and Toddler classrooms. We ask that friends and extended family wait outside the baby room, and view through the windows.

Your child will be assigned a crib/cot and a cubby once enrolled. The crib/cot is to be used by your child and will not be shared with another child. Feel free to bring in pictures for staff to decorate the outside of your child's crib. The Parent must provide four crib sheets for the week.

If your child requires any type of medication, ointment, or drops, child care regulations require a medication form to be filled out and signed by the parent and the child's pediatrician. Please keep this in mind as staff members are not permitted to use any over the counter or prescribed medication without proper consent.

Upon entering or exiting the classroom, all parents are required to sign children in and out each day. Additional info you wish to share with your child's primary caregiver may be written on your child's personal information sheet.

Each day you will receive a snapshot of your child's day. Caregivers will take the time to record information about eating habits, urination/bowel

movements, general disposition, and ways your child was stimulated. Please look for these notes daily. If you notice anything new with your child, please share with your caregiver. If supplies (diapers, wipes, clothes, etc.) are running low, you will also receive notification here.

Conferences

Conferences will be held twice a year for infants through and including our PreK programs. You will receive a letter from the Center informing you of the date and times of the conferences. You will be asked to sign up for a time that works best with your schedule. If you can not attend the Conference you may call the Center to schedule an alternate day and time.

Transitions

Childcare transitions refer to the child engaging with a new classroom and new teachers. Children are assigned to their classroom by the School systems requirement of age. For instance, a child turning 4 in November may not be moved to the PreK classroom just based on their age. This is to help the child not to repeat the same classroom; however, the parent may talk with the Director to determine in repeating a classroom may be beneficial to their child's development.

Transitions happen twice a year: June and January; however, there may be some exceptions made when moving children from infants-Two-year-old classrooms another move may take place in November if spaces are available.

Teacher Managing Transitions

Current teachers will collaborate with new teachers to support understanding. Care plan and critical health information will be shared with the new teacher.

The new teacher will have the child's cubby, cot and birthday board tag ready. The new teacher will give a copy of the Daily Schedule, the newsletter and lesson plan to the parent.



The current teacher will support the child by talking about the new classroom and teacher positively, discussing what is the same and different about the classrooms. The current teacher will transition the child's belongings to the new classroom once the child has completed their visitation week to their new classroom.

Parent Managing Transition

Visit your child's new classroom a week prior to their transition to talk with the new teacher. Share any information that you feel will be helpful to the teacher and ask your questions about the daily routine for the classroom.

Be patient...Children's responses to transitions is different depending on their age, temperament, and experience. Allow six weeks before actually assessing your child's experience in the new classroom.

Be positive...Your attitude matters. Make sure you communicate to your child that everything is okay. Children have incredible intuition and sense their parents own anxieties.

Develop a drop off routine to say good-bye and reassure that you will be returning. This helps to reassure your child that everything will be okay. In our experience a quick and consistent ritual provides a positive message. Coming back inside for that "last kiss or hug" or sneaking out of the classroom without saying good-bye sends a sign of mistrust and anxiety to the child.

Please know that children usually calm down by the time the parent gets to their cars. GECC believes that children are capable of developing good self-management of their emotions given support, encouragement, and the opportunity. If a teacher feels the child is unable to self soothe in a timely fashion the Director will notify you.



Open Door Policy

GECC believes strongly in developing a partnership with our families. We encourage parents to volunteer, to come by an observe their child's classroom and to engage in open dialogue with the Director and the teachers.

Fundraisers

GECC sponsors 2-4 fundraisers each year. These fundraisers allow us to purchase extra equipment, replace worn out and expensive items and supplement our programming. While we encourage participation, no family is required to participate in fundraisers. We appreciate any support you and your family can give to us!

Future Changes to Handbook

The Parent Handbook does not constitute a contract and there are times that changes may be made. If this does occur, updates will be provided to the parents and changes will be communicated as appropriate. We look forward to having your child with us this year. We have many exciting activities planned to provide your child with a joyful and educational childcare experience. Please call the front office at 410-796-4561 with any questions or concerns. We want you and your child to have the best possible experience.

RECEIPT OF HANDBOOK

Grace Early Learning Center I/we have received a copy of the family handbook and have carefully read and understand the policies, procedures, and regulations of Grace Early Learning Center. This includes tuition charges, parent responsibilities, dress, and disciplinary regulations. I/we hereby accept these policies, procedures, and regulations and accept them as conditions for the enrollment of our child/children in GELC. Grace Early Learning Center reserves the right to amend the Parent Handbook, and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be notified of any changes made. The Parent Handbook is an informative booklet for parents setting forth the rules and policies of the center and is not intended as an expressed or implied contract.

Date: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Name(s):

Name(s) of Child/Children:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Please sign and return to main office.