

# EARLY CHALLENGES CHILD CARE CENTER

## Parent Handbook



**"PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR LIFE'S CHALLENGES"**

Revised February 2016

Early Challenges Child Care Center  
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# WELCOME TO EARLY CHALLENGES CHILD CARE CENTER!!

Dear Parents,

We are delighted that you have chosen our center to provide for the needs of your child. You and your family are encouraged to visit our center prior to the first day of enrollment to give our teachers, you, and your child an opportunity to meet and become better acquainted. This initial process will make separating on the first day a bit easier.

The Parent Handbook has been written to describe our program, philosophy, policies, and all the practical details that go into making each day as happy and successful as possible. Please read this handbook carefully and keep it for future reference. The staff at Early Challenges would be glad to address any of your questions or concerns.

The philosophy of our program is to provide high quality child care in a nurturing, creative, and age appropriate environment with loving, attentive caregivers. We continually strive to make our classrooms a happy, secure place to be. We create a daily environment that focuses on the social, emotional, and cognitive development as well as the individual needs of each child in our care.

Early Challenges is proud of our facility and program, and we look forward to working with you and spending time with your child. We invite you to become actively involved in your child's experiences at our center and always encourage your suggestions and ideas.

After reviewing this handbook, please sign the Acknowledgment form included at the back, confirming that you have received and understand the contents, and return to center administration.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be a memorable part of your child's early learning experiences as we help prepare your child for life's challenges! Once again, welcome to our family!

Sincerely,

Jane and Chuck Jones, Owners  
Cathy VanLear, Director  
Casey Hamblin, Assistant to the Director  
Lisa Davis, Accounts Administrator  
Brittany Brewer, Administrative Assistant

## **ABOUT US**

### ***Mission***

Our mission is to prepare your child for life's challenges.

### ***Philosophy***

The philosophy of our program is to provide high quality child care in a nurturing, creative, and age appropriate environment with loving, attentive caregivers. We continually strive to make our classrooms a happy, secure place to be. We create a daily environment that focuses on the social, emotional, and cognitive development as well as the individual needs of each child in our care.

### ***Hours of Operation***

Child care services are provided from 6 AM to 6 PM Monday through Friday. We are a full-time child care facility only, which means no reduction will be given for days missed.

### ***Holidays***

We are closed for the following holidays:

- **New Year's Day** (should it fall on a weekend, we will close Friday or Monday)
- **Memorial Day**
- **Independence Day** (should it fall on a weekend, we will close Friday or Monday)
- **Labor Day**
- **Thanksgiving Day & day after** (specific days will be announced annually)
- **Christmas Eve & Christmas Day** (specific days will be announced annually)
- **Two floating annual teachers' workdays** (specific days will be announced annually)

## **Admission & Enrollment**

Before a child can attend Early Challenges program, all registration forms, completed correctly, along with the registration fee and first week's tuition must be received. Registration paperwork should be received 3 business days prior to start date in order for classrooms, kitchen, and administration to be properly prepared for your child's first day.

The following information is REQUIRED. Please use this as a checklist to ensure you have completed all necessary forms. If you have questions regarding this paperwork, please feel free to speak with an administrative personnel.

\_\_\_\_\_ **REGISTRATION FORM** (completed with names, addresses, phone numbers, medical information and signatures)

\_\_\_\_\_ **PROOF OF BIRTH** (We must see an original birth certificate, verification of birth letter or passport)

\_\_\_\_\_ **PHYSICAL & IMMUNIZATION RECORDS** (on the state required medical form)

\_\_\_\_\_ **USDA ELIGIBILITY FORM & CACFP ENROLLMENT FORM** (Required for all families, regardless of income)

\_\_\_\_\_ **SIGNED PARENT AGREEMENT FORM**

\_\_\_\_\_ **SIGNED TUITION AGREEMENT FORM** (Signed by both custodial parents)

**FOR FAMILIES OF INFANTS & TODDLERS**

\_\_\_\_\_ **INFANT/TODDLER FEEDING SCHEDULES**

\_\_\_\_\_ **INFANT FORMULA FORM**

We must keep updated information on file at all times. Please let us know when the information you have provided changes. Annual updates will be sent out each fall for USDA and registration forms per federal and state regulations.

Prior to admission into our program, we request an orientation with administration, teachers, parents, and child. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for parents to become familiar with our center, meet teachers, exchange necessary information and answer any questions that either the parents or administration may have. This orientation gives the child an opportunity to meet his/her teachers, new friends, classroom, and environment.

### ***Confidentiality***

The Virginia State Standards for Licensure requires centers to keep children's record confidential. Custodial parents and legal guardians may request information regarding your child at any time.

Early Challenges will not release the names of children involved in accidents or injuries to anyone other than the custodial parents or legal guardians. We understand accidents and injuries are frustrating at times and cause anxiety and stress for our parents; however, please remember the confidentiality of not correcting someone else's child, questioning other children, or addressing staff regarding a situation with another child.

### ***Staff Qualifications***

Our staff is hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications. Caregivers participate in ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

### ***Child to Staff Ratios***

Children are supervised at all times. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Child to Staff</b>	<b>Maximum Group Size</b>
0-8 months	4:1	20
8-12 months	4:1	8
12-18 months	4:1	16
18-24 months	5:1	15
24-30 months	8:1	16
30-36 months	8:1	16
36-42 months	10:1	20
42-48 months	10:1	20
48-56 months	10:1	20
K-12 years	18:1	32

### ***Open Door Policy***

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants.

Our staff will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.

## **Family and Staff Communication**

Early Challenges values families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

**Daily Communications.** Daily reports for Babyland through Comets will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at the center. Reports will be placed into your child's cubby at the end of the day or handed to you by classroom staff.

**Bulletin Boards and Chalkboard.** Located throughout the center, bulletin boards and the chalkboard provide center news, upcoming events, faculty changes, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

**Newsletters.** Monthly newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters will be sent home with your child. Extras are available at the sign-in/sign-out desk for your taking.

**Email.** We encourage you to provide an email address for communication with administration. Our parent email for sending messages to administration or teaching staff at Early Challenges is [parents@earlychallenges.com](mailto:parents@earlychallenges.com). Please feel free to communicate through this means.

**Family Visits.** Family participation is encouraged. Visit our classrooms, volunteer, come along on a field trip, or eat a meal with your child. Signing in and out is required for the safety and protection of our children.

**Conferences.** Family & teacher conferences occur twice a year in April and October. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

**Share It Program.** We encourage parents and family members to become involved in our center through the Share It Program. Everyone has a special talent that can be shared with others whether it be storytelling, constructing a birdhouse, baking a cake, playing an instrument, or performing a dance. Anyone interested in sharing your time and talent, please see administration to schedule a classroom visit and sharing experience with our children.

**Community Projects.** Each month our center sponsors a community project to instill the importance of community, the value of giving, and the sense of belonging in our children. Our front desk information board and monthly newsletters provide information about current projects. While our children are involved in every way possible, these projects are great opportunities for parents and families to become involved.

## **CURRICULUM & LEARNING**

### ***Learning Environment***

We provide a rich learning environment with curriculum that is developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible daily routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. Our daily program provides opportunities for sensory and free art experiences, large and small motor development, communication and cognitive skills, as well as social and emotional development.

### ***Curriculum & Assessment***

Early Challenges uses a combination of curricula materials, including but not limited to, CLASS, Virginia Quality, and Al's Pals. As part of this curriculum, we gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress through the ASQ3 questionnaire so we can modify and adjust what we are doing in our classroom so as to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child.

For information about your child's day, please see copies of daily schedules and lessons plans posted in each classroom.

### ***Outings & Field Trips***

Occasionally, especially for the summer program, the opportunity arises for your child to take a field trip with his/her class. The BT Transportation System is used to transport the children to field trip locations. During the field trips, children will be accompanied by trained, qualified teachers and parent volunteers. A staff member is equipped with a cellphone in case of an emergency. A CPR and First Aid trained staff member accompanies the children on all trips away from the center. Employees are trained in proper procedures for supervision, accounting for children, and other safety measures to ensure the children have a safe, fun experience outside the center. Parents must sign a permission form for field trips. Parents are given the opportunity to withdraw or withhold permission for their child's attendance to any field trip.



## ***Transitions***

Your child's transitions in child care should be positive and exciting learning adventures. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transitions as new routines and new people are introduced.

- ***Transition from home to center...***Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns.
- ***Transition between classrooms...***Children will transition from one classroom to another based on these factors: age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. Parents will be consulted prior to transitions, informed in writing when transitions will occur, and encouraged to tour the new classroom. Current and future teachers meet to make your child's transition as positive and smooth as possible. Children visit for several days until comfortable before becoming permanent.
- ***Transition for before/after school care...***Children who are of school age may continue with before/after school care at our center. Montgomery County buses provide transportation to and from Christiansburg Primary, Elementary, and Middle School.

## ***Television/Movie Time***

Our normal daily routine does not include television watching. However from time-to-time, we may watch a movie/program as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator. Television consumption will be no longer than 30 minutes, and the program will be screened prior to showing. Programs will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material with a G rating. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world.

## ***Rest Time***

Infants sleep according to their own schedules and are put to sleep on their backs.

All children participate in a quiet rest time. School age children, although not required, shall be provided an opportunity for a regular rest period if the child desires. For children who do not want to rest, a space and time for quiet play will be made available.

Children will rest on individually assigned cribs or cots with a sheet provided by Early Challenges. Parents need to bring a blanket for their child to snuggle with during rest time. Blankets need to be taken home each Friday, washed, and returned.

Rest time will be a two hour block of time ranging from 11:00-2:00, depending on the classroom. **WE DO NOT ALLOW CHILDREN TO BE DROPPED OFF OR PICKED UP DURING THE NAP BLOCK IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE THE DISRUPTION TO RESTING CHILDREN!** Administration requests that all children be dropped off prior to 10 A.M. unless previous arrangements have been made.

## ***Celebrations***

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community.

## ***Toilet Training***

The most important factor in making the toilet training experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns. Our Starlights and Comets classrooms have a full-time potty trainer on staff to assist your child with this transition from diapering to toileting.

## ***Outside Playtime***

The children will enjoy outdoor playtime at least twice a day for 30 minutes, except during inclement weather. We will not go outside if the local authorities advise against outdoor exposure such as wind chill advisories, heat index advisories, etc. Please dress children appropriately for the weather. If your child has an allergy, asthma, or condition which limits outdoor exposure, please see administration.

## **GUIDANCE**

### ***General Procedure***

Early Challenges is committed to each child's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all children have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the center community.

Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions. We will make every effort to set limits and guidelines that are understandable and appropriate for each child's developmental level.

### ***Challenging Behavior***

Children are taught to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness. 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.

### ***Behavioral Management***

Early Challenges has a well-rounded understanding of age and stage appropriate behavior. We understand that children may occasionally express themselves in a fashion that is disruptive to the classroom environment, dangerous to other children, and challenging to the teachers. Our policy is to evaluate each child and situation, assess the environment, analyze the actions of both teachers and children involved, and to make the best decision possible for the well-being of the child, the classroom, and the center. In the event that staff become uncomfortable with a child's behavior, the following steps will be taken in this order: redirection, quiet choice to reflect on behavior, removal from classroom, and parent contact for removal from center.

### ***Physical Restraint***

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others, and we may restrain a child by gently holding him/her only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation. **At no time will physical punishment as a disciplinary action be administered to a child.**

### ***Notification of Behavioral Issues***

If a child's behavior is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. The following steps will be taken in this order:

- Parents will be informed daily of the aggressive actions in writing and the steps being taken to redirect negative actions to appropriate actions.
- The director will request a meeting with parents to discuss behavior and create a mutual plan of action or a "probationary period" for anticipated improvement

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Undue burden on our resources and staffing for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

If this occurs, the director will issue a two week notice for termination of care. If aggressive or disruptive behavior continues during this period, administration reserves the right to terminate without notice to insure the safety of our children and staff.

## **TUITION AND FEES**

### ***Payment***

Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond our control. No discounts will be given for vacations/missed time. Tuition is due on either the first of the month or on Monday for the current week. Payment may be made by cash, check, or money order. A payment box for checks only is located at the front desk. Please remit all cash to an administrator.

### ***Late Pick-up Fees***

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered for an exceptional occurrence. Late fees of \$1 per minute will be assessed beginning at 6 PM and will be accrued to accounts.

### ***Annual Registration Fees***

A non-refundable registration fee of \$100 is due at the time of enrollment. Non-refundable annual registration fees of \$100 will be applied in August of each year to cover monthly classroom supplies.

### ***Late Fees***

Late payments can pose serious problems for our program. Therefore, we have procedures in place to reduce their impact.

If payment is not received on the day that it is due, a late fee will be added to the account. Late fees will be accrued weekly until the account is back on the agreed upon payment cycle.

If payment becomes excessively past due, we may attempt to recover payment in civil court and/or your account may be sent to a collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

### ***Returned Checks***

All returned checks will be charged a fee. Three returned checks will result in your account being placed on "cash only" status.

## ***Attendance & Withdrawal***

### ***Absence/Late Arrival***

If your child is going to be absent or arrive after 9 AM, please call us at 540-381-2208 or email us at [parents@earlychallenges.com](mailto:parents@earlychallenges.com). We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

### ***Withdrawals***

A two week notice prior to withdrawal is required with payment due for this time period whether child is in attendance or not. Families who withdraw for fewer than 6 weeks and later re-enroll will be charged a re-enrollment fee.

### ***Closing Due to Extreme Weather***

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, blizzards, loss of power) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on **WDBJ Channel 7 and WSLC Channel 10**. You may also call the center to see if we are open.

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible, and announcements will be made on the above mentioned channels. Your child's early pick up is your responsibility to arrange.

### ***Drop off and Pick up***

#### ***General Procedure***

We open at 6 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. Parents are expected to sign their children in and to accompany them to their classrooms. Never drop children off in the parking lot or at the office.

We close at 6 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time. Parents are expected to make contact with their child's teacher and to supervise their child out of the facility at pick up.

Clocking children in and out of our center Procure system is the parents' responsibility and is mandatory. Fees will be charged for repeatedly failing to clock your child in or out.

#### ***Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up***

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Pickup Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Pickup Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you and the contacts listed as Emergency and Pickup Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if no contact is established by 7 PM Early Challenges will contact the local social service agency for assistance.

Parents who are in the midst of a divorce or custody case must understand that Early Challenges cannot legally keep a parent from picking up their child. In order for us to do so, we must have legal documentation (a certified court order) on file at the center.

## ***PERSONAL BELONGINGS***

### ***What to Bring***

- **Infants:** enough clean bottles for a day's use, at least 6 diapers per day, and at least 2 changes of clothes per day.
- **Toddlers:** enough clean bottles for a day's use (if applicable), six diapers and at least two changes of clothes per day.
- **Older Toddlers:** at least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program.
- **Preschoolers:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
- **Kindergarteners:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
- **After School Care Children:** books for homework, appropriate play clothes, and at least one change of clothes.

Please send winter or cold weather clothing as required. We will go outside each day, weather permitting. (Hats, gloves, coats)

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items.

If your child is in the process of potty training, several changes of clothes may be required. We also ask for a labeled adult-size t-shirt for children to use for art projects.

### ***Cubbies***

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with your child's name. Upon drop off each morning, please place your child's belongings in his/her cubby or give them to the classroom staff. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

### ***Lost & Found***

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-found Box located at the front desk. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

### ***Toys from Home***

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a Show and Share Day. We do not allow children to bring in aggressive props, action figures, knives, guns, or related items.

## ***Food and Nutrition***

### ***Food Brought from Home***

Foods and beverages may be brought in for celebrations such as birthday parties or holiday celebrations. Please be aware of and respectful of other children in the classroom who may have food allergies. Ask your child's teacher for specific allergy information. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher. Below are guidelines to follow for foods prepared outside the facility:

- All foods not pre-packaged must be stored in containers with lids or properly covered with foil or wrap.
- Containers must be clearly labeled with child's name and date.
- If perishable, the food must be stored in the center refrigerator upon arrival.
- All leftovers must be taken home at the end of the day or discarded.
- No foods with tree nuts or peanuts; no foods processed in facilities with tree nuts or peanuts.

### ***Food Prepared at the Center***

Early Challenges believes that nutritious food is essential for a child's healthy development. Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the USDA food program. Participating in this program allows us to offer a variety of nutritious foods.

### ***Food Allergies***

If your child has a food allergy, a Statement for Special Diet Prescription must be completed by a physician. Please see the office for this form. Food allergies can be life threatening, and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

### ***Parental Preference***

If religious beliefs or a child's preference requires a special diet, children will be allowed to bring in their own food. Due to USDA guidelines, however, parents must provide administration with a completed parental preference form.

### ***Meal Time***

Meal times at our center provide opportunities for learning experiences in forming correct eating habits in a pleasant atmosphere. Meal times are a relaxing social time in which good table manners are modeled and encouraged.

- Monthly menus are posted in the classrooms and are available for pick up at the menu box at the right as you enter the upstairs corridor.
- Breakfast starts at 7:45 AM, lunch starts at 10:30 AM, and an afternoon snack starts at 1:30 PM. Please check your child's classroom schedule for specific meal times.

If you have fed your child breakfast prior to arriving, we request that your child finishes before entering the building in order to be fair to his/her classmates.

## ***Infant Feedings***

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Bottle-fed infants are fed while being held or sitting up.
- Infants are fed "on demand" to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly).
- Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. Fresh breast milk must be used within 48 hours. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to 3 months.
- Formula must be brought to the premises in a factory-sealed container in a ready-to-feed strength or powder or concentrate. Formula will be diluted at the child care site according to the instructions provided by the manufacturer or from the child's health provider, using water from a source approved by the local health department. Formula brought from home must be labeled with the child's name.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child's family.
- Our center carries Parent's Choice with Iron infant formula, infant cereal, and fruits and vegetables.
- Infant menus are posted in the room each month.
- Parents of children 11 months and younger may provide food for their child to eat in addition to what we serve daily.
- Baby food that has been opened **MUST** be taken home the same day or discarded.

## ***Toddler Feedings***

- USDA requires children 12 months and older to participate in the food program provided by the center.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.

## ***USDA Notice***

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disability who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's target center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 325-W, Whitten Building, 14<sup>th</sup> and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



## **HEALTH**

### ***Immunizations***

Section 22.1-271.2 of the code of Virginia requires documentation of all immunizations received be obtained **prior** to each child's admission to the center. Updated information on immunizations received shall be obtained once every 6 months for children under 2 years of age. Updated information on immunizations received shall be obtained between each child's 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> birthday.

When remitting paperwork to administration for updates to your child's immunizations, **please** check to make sure forms are complete with latest immunizations written in, physician's signature filled out, and correct dates documented.

### ***Physicals***

A copy of your child's physical should be received before admittance, but must be received no later than 30 days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

The schedule for examination prior to admission for different age groups are listed below:

- Within 2 months prior to admission for children 6 months of age or younger
- Within 3 months prior to admission for children ages 7 to 18 months
- Within 6 months prior to admission for children 9 to 24 months
- Within 12 months prior to admission for children 2 to 5 years old
- Within 2 years prior to admission for children 6 years and above

### ***Infection Control Policy***

Early Challenges makes every effort to ensure a healthy and sanitary environment. In a child care setting, children come into contact with other children and adults outside their own families allowing the illness of one child to spread rapidly to other children and staff, even when appropriate measures are taken. For this reason, our employees take constant measures to limit the transmission of communicable diseases.

Our employees are trained in performing morning health checks and are given instruction on how to properly clean and sanitize classrooms in order to help prevent the spread of germs.

### ***Illness Health Assessment***

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children; you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. We will do our best to assess each child's condition and use care when calling a parent to pick up his/her child. Early Challenges follows State Licensing and Health Department guidelines for the prevention of the spread of disease. **It is imperative that we all work together to keep our children as healthy and happy as possible. We request that parents do not bring in a child who is unable to meet the demands of their daily schedule (including outdoor play) or who exhibits signs of a contagious illness at home.**

The following is our health assessment list:

SCALP	itching, sores, lice
FACE	general appearance, expression, unusual color
EYES	redness of eyelid or lining, irritation, puffiness, yellowish discharge
EARS	drainage, earache
MOUTH	inside of mouth for redness, spots, sores
THROAT	enlarged, red or irritated tonsils with/without white spots
CHEST	frequent or severe coughing, wheezing, rattles or raspy breathing
SKIN	yellowish skin, unusual spots, rash, bumps, bruises, unusual Injuries, crusty, bright yellow, dry or gummy areas/sores, itching
FEVER	feverish appearance and changes in behavior, fever of 101 or higher

### ***Illness Exclusion***

You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- **Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.**
- **Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.**
- **Fever (above 100°F under the arm, of or above 101°F in the mouth)**
- **Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.**
- **Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or 2 or more times during the previous 24 hours.**
- **Undiagnosed rashes, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.**
- **Any communicable disease listed on the most recent DH communicable disease chart until designated inclusion**
- **Headaches or other symptoms requiring parental attention**

### ***Return from Illness***

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours, without medication.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They have a written statement from their doctor stating that they are not contagious
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions unless:
  - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
  - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.
- With impetigo, they may not return until all lesions have dried and a note from the physician advises them to return (usually 3-5 days)
- With chicken pox, they may not return until all scabs have dried and crusted.
- With head lice, they may not return until they have had one medicated shampoo treatment and are NIT FREE
- With conjunctivitis (pink eye), they may not return until on medication for 24 hours.
- With scabies, they may not return until six to twelve hours after first medical treatment.

**Early Challenges requires a doctor's note stating that your child does not have a communicable disease in order for him/her to return to the center when sent home with symptoms of a communicable disease, or he/she cannot return unless child is symptom free for 24 hours.**

### ***Exposure Notification***

We are required to inform parents of exposure to communicable disease listed on the Department of Health's communicable disease chart. **In order to conform to this policy, parents MUST inform administration within 24 hours when your child or a member of your household is diagnosed or exposed to a communicable disease.** Your name and your child's name will be kept confidential; however, Early Challenges will post the classroom that has been exposed on the exposure notice located on the Parent Board in the entry way to the left of the code box. If parents fail to inform us, we are unable to do our part to help prevent the spread of diseases.

### ***Allergy Prevention***

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the classroom, office, and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

## **Medications**

All medications and medication forms should be handed to administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or be taken to your child's classroom. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

**Prescription medications will be given only when medically necessary.** When possible, please have your child's physician adjust the medication schedule in order for medication to be given at home. If this is not possible, we will dispense medications providing the following criteria is met:

- Medication must be in the original container, clearly labeled with a prescription label with the child's name, specific times, and specific amounts to be given and the expiration date (prescription medications CANNOT be shared between siblings)
- Refrigerated medications must be cold when we receive it or we cannot administer it.
- Children on long term medications such as Ritalin or Albuterol will need a doctor's note on file along with parental permission. Please get this form from our facility for your child's physician. This form can be completed for 6 months at a time.
- Children on short term medication will need a parental permission form completed. This form can be used for medication for 10 days.

## **Over-the-counter Medication**

Early Challenges allows over-the-counter pain relievers for the following occasions:

- Teething or immunization reactions: In these cases, parents must provide a doctor's note stating the child requires a pain reliever to alleviate symptoms of teething or immunizations.
- Non-contagious children who are recovering from an illness and a pediatrician advises and OTC drug to alleviate symptoms. In this case, a note from your child's physician is required.

## **Topical Ointments and Sprays**

Diaper rash creams, sun block, and insect repellent are not considered medication and can be administered. Parents must sign an administration form informing us of any known adverse reactions prior to use. Please see your child's teacher for this form.

## ***SAFETY***

### ***Clothing***

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, sand, weather, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

### ***Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play***

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 99°F or less than 40°F degrees.

### ***Injuries***

Safety is a major concern in child care, therefore, daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each level is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

### ***Biting***

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

### ***Respectful Behavior***

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

### ***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 where there is no court documentation.

### ***Suspected Child Abuse***

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 conduct an investigation. 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.

## ***EMERGENCIES***

### ***Fire Safety***

Our center is fully equipped with fire alarms, sprinklers, and rolling cribs. Monthly evacuation drills are performed to ensure our staff and children are familiar with our emergency evacuation procedures. These procedures are posted by exit doors.

### ***Emergency Transportation***

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact. All parents must sign a form authorizing Early Challenges to transport your child to the Montgomery Regional Hospital and to allow emergency medical treatment should it be deemed necessary. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

### ***General Emergencies/Natural Disasters***

Every classroom, all exits, and the front office has an Emergency Preparedness Plan posted. Please feel free to review this at any time. In the event of an emergency or a natural disaster, parents will be notified by telephone to pick up their child immediately. If parents cannot be reached, the children will be transported to the nearest emergency shelter. Our staff at Early Challenges will follow instructions given by local authorities to ensure the ultimate safety of our children. We will conduct biannual Shelter-in-Place drills to make the center aware of safe practices during an emergency.

## ***Center Policies***

The need may arise for policies to be amended. Notice of changes will be in writing, and will be the responsibility of the parent to add to this handbook.

## ***State Licensing Information***

The Commonwealth of Virginia helps assure parents that child day programs assuming responsibility for the supervision, protection, and well-being of a child for any part of a twenty-four hour day are safe. Title 63.1, Chapter 10 of the Code of Virginia gives the Department of Social Services authority to license these programs. The state may also voluntarily register family day homes not required to be licensed.

Standards for licensed child day centers address certain health precautions, adequate play space, ratio of children per staff member, equipment, program and record keeping. Criminal record checks and specific qualifications for staff and most volunteers working directly with children are also required. Standards require the facility to meet applicable fire, health, and building codes.

Compliance with standards is determined by announced and unannounced visits to the program by licensing staff within the Department of Social Services. In addition, parents or other individuals may register a complaint about a program which will be investigated if it violates a standard.

Three types of licenses may be issued to programs. Conditional licenses may be issued to a new program to allow up to six months for the program to demonstrate compliance with the standards. A regular license is issued when the program substantially meets the standards for licensure. A provisional license, which cannot exceed six months, is issued when the program is temporarily unable to comply with the standards. Operating without a license when required constitutes a misdemeanor which, upon conviction, can be punishable by a fine up to \$100 or imprisonment up to 12 months or both for each day's violation.

If you would like additional information about the licensing of child day programs or would like to register a complaint, please contact the Regional Office of the Social Service closest to you.

Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Social Services, Western Regional Office, 190 Patton Street, Abingdon, VA 24210, 1-276-676-5490.

