Parent Handbook

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**WELCOME!**

Welcome to the NRS Early Childhood Development Center, a program of the New Rising Star Church. We are pleased that you have become a member of our STAR family and look forward to many years of growing and learning.

 This handbook is designed to help you become familiar with our program and to explain our policies and procedures.

**MANAGEMENT TEAM**

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**Our Philosophy**

Our program is built around the concept that children are born ready to learn. As caregivers, we strive to create a learning environment that is safe, stimulating and encouraging. We believe: (1) Children develop knowledge of their world through active interactions with caregivers, peers, materials, and events. (2) Learning is sequential, building on prior understandings and experiences. (3) Learning proceeds at different rates in each area and for each child; children will show a range of skills and understandings in any area of development. (4) Learning in each area is interconnected; young children learn best through experiences, which incorporates several areas of development. (5) Learning is embedded in their culture. (6) Children learn best when their learning activities are rooted in a familiar cultural context. (7) Learning begins in the family, continues in early care and education settings, and depends on parent involvement and caregiver guidance. (8) All children have the potential to achieve and NRS ECDC is the place where we shape the minds of our youngest leaders.

**Our Purpose**

The purpose of STAR Early Childhood Development Center is to be THE choice and not A choice in the East Lake Community. STAR Early Childhood Development Center will increase the family’s capacity in their child’s education by recognizing them as the primary educators of their children. Additionally, the purpose of STAR Early Childhood Development Center is to provide high quality services in the areas of Education, Mental Health, Family and Community Partnerships, Health and Nutrition.

**Our Mission**

The mission of STAR Early Childhood Development Center is to work collectively with partners to share community resources in order to ensure parents have opportunities to grow in support of their children and that all children receive the services needed on their road to success. STAR Early Childhood Development Center will strive to assist children in becoming independent, self- confident and inquisitive learners, and increase the family’s capacity to support and nurture their children by developing a compassionate partnership between staff and families

**Role of Families or Other Caregivers: Our Generational Expectations For You**

The relationship between families and school staff is vital to the success of a child’s experience. A partnership must be formed the first day with open communication and understanding that the development and growth of the child is our top priority.

\*STAR Child Development Center is a DHR licensed facility. \*

**Equal Opportunity**

STAR Child Development Center does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, citizenship, handicap and disability or any other legally protected status with regards to admissions or in the administration of its educational policies and administered programs. We make our programs and services accessible to individuals with disabilities, to the extent that such a request does not cause fundamental alterations to the school’s programs/ curriculum and to the extent that it does not create an undue hardship for the school.

The first step in requesting accommodation is to provide the Center Director with documentation of the condition from a qualified professional, such as a physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist. Upon receipt of such documentation and recommendation, we will communicate with the family in an interactive process to obtain additional information or discuss the circumstances related to the request.

**Who We Serve**

STAR Child Development Center is a benefit to members of all communities, as well as full and part-time associates of New Rising Star Church and its affiliates. We serve children ages 6 weeks – 4 years old.

**Curriculum**

STAR Early Childhood Development Center bases its curriculum (Creative Curriculum) on developmentally appropriate practice and incorporates thematic units. Developmentally appropriate practice means that the teachers will provide activities, materials, environment, interactions, and experiences which are appropriate for the age and development of the child.

A full list of thematic units and lessons plan samples are available in the Center Director’s office.

**ENROLLMENT AND TUITION**

**Enrollment Process**

Families are encouraged to have their children with them the first time they visit the school. It is important that the child and the parent feel comfortable with our staff and the facility. To reserve space in our program you must submit a completed application and tuition fees as well as the non-refundable registration fee. Amounts of all fees are found on the fee schedule.

**Admission and Re-Enrollment**

Admission and as applicable, re-enrollment, is dependent on the following:

All fees, application, and other required forms are submitted, completed and evaluated. Any false, misleading statements made verbally or on any submitted documents shall be grounds for denial of admission or immediate dismissal.

All financial obligations must be met in a timely manner.

**Registration Fees**

Registration fees are assessed for new and returning students, are payable upon registration and are non-refundable. These fees serve to insure your child’s placement in addition to covering the cost of procession the application for admission, supplies and educational materials. The amount of these fees may be found on the current rate schedule below.

**Tuition and Other Fees**

Tuition is paid weekly or monthly in advance with no deductions for absence, holidays, teacher workdays and days the school is closed for inclement weather. Tuition is due Friday, for the upcoming week. If the tuition and fees are not paid in full by the close of business the following Monday, a late fee of $25 will be assessed and the child will be subject to dismissal. Monthly tuition is calculated by determining the number of Mondays in the month and multiplying by the weekly rate.

When a payment is delinquent for one week, the space can no longer be reserved for your child. Your child will not be permitted to attend school as of Friday of any week that tuition is not paid in full.

All payments to STAR Early Childhood Development Center must be made by cashier’s check or money order. The fees are as follows:

APPLICATION FEE- $25.00 (non-refundable) It is to be paid at the time of enrollment or placement on the waiting list.

**Pay Schedule**

Infants & Toddlers $142 per week / $71 (part-time)

Preschool $134 per week / $67 (part-time)

School Age $110 per week/ $55 (part-time)

Part-Time students’ rates are half of the above for each care level (less than 25 hours per week constitutes part time enrollment, more than 25 hours will result in full time tuition.)

All fees should be made payable by cashier’s check or money order to New Rising Star Early Childhood Development Center and are due in full by Friday of each week. If payments are not mad your child will not be able to attend until delinquent balances are paid.

Tuition is due in full, whether or not children attend all five days. Absences due to illness are eligible for discount.

In the case of an extended illness, maternity leave, or other extenuating circumstances, the center may accept partial payment in order to hold a child’s space. Parents must apply for consideration with the Center Director.

**First Day**

On, or prior to your child’s first day of school, the following forms must be completed, signed and reviewed by the administrative staff:

* Enrollment Packet (including application and accompanying forms)
* Emergency Information Form
* Copy of Immunization Record
* Medical Authorization form (if applicable)

No child may continue enrollment in school for more than 10 days without a current immunization report. Please let the administrative staff know of any allergies or special dietary requirements prior to your child’s first day. If the information in any of these forms change during the child’s enrollment, families are responsible for notifying the school in writing of the changes.

**What to Bring**

**Infants (6 weeks - 12 months)**

* Please bring the following supplies, labeled with your child’s first and last name: Prepared bottles- Breast milk should be brought in pre-made bottles ready to warm and serve. These will be refrigerated immediately until feeding time. Formula bottles should be brought in filled pre-measured formula for each bottle. We will mix formula with room temperature filtered water upon scheduled feeding. We provide whole milk for infants no longer on formula.
* Two complete changes of seasonal clothing and bibs
* Diapers and wipes
* Any cereal or unopened jar food. State law prohibits the center from accepting any opened baby food of any kind

\*Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) special note:

 We are proactive against SIDS. Cribs will only contain a sheet per state regulation. Mobiles, stuffed animals, extra blankets, and propping will not be allowed. Infants in cribs are checked every fifteen minutes during napping times.

**Toddlers and Twos (12 months - 2 years)**

Please bring the following supplies, labeled with your child’s first and last name:

* Diapers/ Pull-ups and wipes
* A complete change of seasonal clothing including socks and underwear (if applicable)
* 2 light blankets for use on our nap cots/mats

**Preschoolers (3 years - 5 years)**

Please bring the following supplies, labeled with your child’s first and last name:

* A complete change of seasonal clothing including socks and underwear
* 2 light blankets for use on our nap cots/mats

**Withdrawal**

Families are responsible for initiating the child withdrawal process. Families will need to submit a two week notice of withdrawal, in writing, to the administrative staff. Full tuition is due during this time whether your child attends or not. No adjustments will be made to tuition during this time.

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Hours of Operation**

STAR Child Development Center is open from 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. All visitors to the center must enter through the front of the center and ring the doorbell to ensure safety, no exceptions. All children must be signed in by 8:45 a.m. unless accompanied by a physician’s notice of treatment or approved by the Center Director.

**Daily Check-in and Check-out**

Parents must bring children into their classrooms each morning and come into the classroom to pick up the child in the evening. The parents, or other designated adult must sign their child in and out each day. Children cannot leave the center with anyone except the persons designated on the enrollment form.

**Release of Children**

Please inform your child’s teacher if someone other than you will be picking up your child. You will be asked to provide names of those individuals who are approved to pick up your child in the application procedure. Learning Zone reserves the right to refuse to release a child to a person who appears physically, emotionally, or mentally unable to provide adequate care for the child as judged by the staff member responsible for the child. We will not be able to release a child to an adult who appears intoxicated. If this situation should arise, staff will release the child to an authorized individual on the child’s emergency contact list who appears able to provide appropriate care for the child.

*Please note that the individual picking up your child must be at least* ***18 years of age****.*

**Family-School Involvement**

We welcome family input and encourage you to visit your child’s classroom and speak with your child’s teacher. We have an open-door policy at our school and families are encouraged to get involved in their child’s classroom. If you would like to request a conference, please call during school hours to set up a convenient time. Conferences can be requested at any time and may include the teachers, administration or both.

**Complaints**

All complaints should be addressed to the Center Director or the Children Service Specialist. Please allow 24 hours for a response to any complaints.

**Notification of Changes**

Parents are expected to notify the Center Director or Children Services Specialist immediately of any change in name, address, phone number or place of spouse’s employment so that the can be contacted in case of any emergency. Without accurate information concerning your place of employment, we cannot inform you if your child becomes ill or has an accident. If the name and/or number of the child’s physician changes, this information must be provided to the center as soon as possible.

**Personal Items**

From time to children may want to bring a favorite toy or an interesting object to the Center; the Center cannot be responsible for these items.

**Clothing**

Part of creative learning means FUN! When choosing your child’s clothing, keep in mind that sometimes our fun can be messy, too! For this reason, please follow our clothing policies to ensure your child gets the best experience. Please dress your child in seasonally appropriate and comfortable play clothes. Each child should have two complete changes of seasonally appropriate clothing; including socks and underwear in his or her classroom at all times. Please be sure to replace any articles of clothing that are used from the spare set. Please label ALL items (including clothing, coats, hats, bottles, baby food, bags, and sippy cups) that you bring to our center with your child’s first and last name. Children MUST always wear shoes.

**Discipline**

The goal of the STAR Early Childhood Development Center is the development of self-disciplined child. Therefore, discipline here emphasizes appropriate limits, rules that are understandable to the children and consistency.

We also try to prevent problems by arranging the environment to meet the developmental needs of the children. Such arrangements include the number of children assigned to each caregiver; having a wide selection of toys and materials and duplicates of popular items; arranging the classroom so that children can be as independent as possible and will not have to wait for long periods.

When correction is necessary, teachers use a kind, firm voice to redirect or restate the rule. No physical or harsh verbal punishment of children is tolerated. The staff will use positive reinforcement and re-direction techniques. First, the child will be redirected verbally. If the behavior continues, the child may be placed in the safe space separate from the group, but still within the classroom. If behavior escalates, cannot be controlled, or becomes violent towards other, the Director or Assistant Director will be involved and may contact parents to get involved in the process. This may include the request for the child to be picked up for the day. Behavioral issues that cannot be resolved may result in dismissal from the center.

**Dismissals**

The staff will work with each child to meet the needs of that child and every effort will be made to provide a positive learning experience. However, this school reserves the right to ask families to make alternative arrangements for care if it is determined that a child’s needs cannot be met, or the child has not adjusted to the group care provided by the school. In the event behavior becomes disruptive to the program or poses an unsafe situation for the child or other children in the school, alternative arrangements may be required, including, but not limited to temporary suspension from the program. A dismissal will only be considered after careful consideration. If the school determines that our program is not a successful match, families will be given referral information to assist in the transition to a program better suited for the family’s needs.

If you, the parent , are uncooperative in completing and returning forms, fail to pay your tuition on time, fail to follow any state or county regulations, or fail to follow any New Rising Star’s Policy and Procedure, it may be necessary to dismiss your child from our school.

**Weather Days**

Weather days will be at the discretion of the Center Director. Closures will be announced through our messaging system.

**Holiday/ Vacation Days**

The Center will be closed for the following holidays:

* New Year’s Day
* Martin Luther King Day
* Good Friday
* Memorial Day
* Independence Day
* Labor Day
* Veteran’s Day
* Thanksgiving Day and the day before and after
* The week of Christmas

**DAILY ROUTINES**

**Classrooms and Daily Reports**

Be sure to check your child’s cubby box and classroom folder daily for messages, daily reports and artwork. Notices and messages sent by you should be written and submitted to the teacher or management team. The parent information board in each classroom has calendars, menus, curriculum, state ration information and parent resources. Parents of children 2 years of age and under will receive a daily report completed by the classroom teachers to relate the day’s events specific to your child. We welcome any questions and suggestions. If there are family situation that affect your child, please discuss them with your child’s teacher or the Director. Remember that any information regarding a personal issue is kept confidential and we are glad to help whenever possible.

**Daily Schedules**

For children less than one-year-old, staff will attempt to follow the eating, sleeping and activity rhythms of each individual child. After one-year, structured activity times are gradually introduced.

Each classroom has a daily schedule of activities posted.

**Rest Time**

Children are given an opportunity to nap or rest each day. Preschoolers who do not sleep will be encouraged to rest quietly for a while and then offered quiet activities.

**Food and Meals**

STAR Early Childhood Development Center are proud participants in the CACFP federal program, sponsored by Healthy Kids. We provide nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. Menus are posted for your reference. Any changes in items served will be communicated. Meal and snack times are scheduled according to a group’s age and developmental level. Please alert the staff concerning any special dietary needs or food allergies. If you are providing lunch from home, please see Gold Sneaker Initiative section for more information.

**Formula, Baby Food and Diapers**

STAR Early Childhood Development Center does not provide formula (unless in extreme cases), baby food, diapers or wipes. Parents are responsible for providing an adequate supply of disposable diapers. The center has storage space if parents wish to bring diaper bags. Diapers are checked every hour and are changed if soiled.

Formula, bottles and baby food containers must be clearly labeled with the child’s name. Milk, mixed formula and baby food cannot be kept overnight for future use.

**HEALTH & SAFETY**

**Daily Health Inspection**

For the safety and protection of children, each receiving teacher will follow the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control by providing each child with a day health check prior to his/her entering the group.

**Illness**

STAR Early Childhood Development Center will communicate with you about any health issues that are noted while your child is at our center. As a courtesy to all children and staff, please keep the staff informed about any health issues your child may have. Children who appear to be ill cannot be admitted into the Center. If a child becomes ill at the Center, he or she will be separated from the group, and the parents will be notified to pick up the child. If a child has a fever, they must be free of that fever (100.2), without fever reducing drugs for at least 24 hours before returning to the Center.

When a communicable disease occurs in the Center, parents will be notified. Parents are urged to notify the Center when their child is known to have been exposed to a communicable disease outside of the Center.

**Medication**

A parent must complete an Authorization to Administer Medication form for the Center personnel to administer medication. Licensing requires that any prescription must be in its original container and clearly labeled with the child’s name and directions for administering the medication. This includes sunscreen, bug spray and diaper rash cream. Over the counter medications will not be administered.

**Child Abuse**

STAR Early Childhood Development Center adheres to Alabama’s Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law. Copies of this law are available in the Center Director’s office. This law requires all professionals who work with children to report suspected abuse or neglect.

**Emergencies**

In the event that your child requires emergency medical treatment, center staff will call 911 immediately. If your child requires emergency ambulance transportation, the ambulance drivers will transport your child to the closest local hospital at their discretion and depending on the speed with which your child must be treated. Decisions as to the necessity of emergency medical treatment will be made by the Director or Assistant Director, or another staff member standing in their position. Parents or legal guardians of the child will be notified as soon as possible and will be responsible for any and all medical expenses related to the child’s injury including any medical transportation. It is the parent or legal guardian’s responsibility to provide insurance information to medical personnel. Our employees are not responsible in any form for medical or transportation expenses.

**Accidents and Incidents**

Safety is an important part of our jobs. We believe it to be our top priority to keep your children safe each day. Although we have many procedures in place to prevent accidents, sometimes accidents are unavoidable. In the event your child has a minor injury such as a bump, scrape, bite, etc. we reserve the right to treat your child with the proper First Aid Care and will contact you to inform you. We will also fill out an accident/incident report that will need to be signed by you or the person picking up your child that day.

**Emergency Weather**

During severe weather conditions the Center Director will decide based on the safety of the children. Please call the Center at (205) 833-9349 for closing information. STAR Early Childhood Development Center has an emergency weather procedure and a fire escape procedure with frequently unscheduled drills. Escape routes are posted in the hallway. We follow procedures as outlined by FEMA.

**Questions and Concerns**

Again, welcome to the STAR Family! Should you have any questions or concerns about anything stated in this handbook, please don’t hesitate to give us a call at (205)833-9349.