

Welcome to St. Paul Children's Center! We are honored that you have chosen our child care program as a place for your child to learn and grow during the times that you are not able to be with him/her.

St. Paul Children's Center is dedicated to providing your child with the best care through meaningful experiences in a safe and nurturing environment. We believe that parents are a child's first teacher and consider parents to be our partners in supporting each child's development. Your input and involvement is valuable and we encourage you to keep open communication with your child(ren)'s teachers. At the end of this handbook, you will find a list of possible ways that you can be part of St. Paul Children's Center, depending on your availability, of course. Teachers and families working together, even if it's just through brief conversation, is what will guarantee the best experience for your child.

This handbook contains information about all the Center's policies and practices. Should you have questions about the content at any time, please feel free to speak with the director.

Thank you for choosing St. Paul Children's Center. We look forward to working with you and your child!

Philosophy/Mission Statement

As a Christian child care center we have set the following as our foundation:

God – is the creator of all seen and unseen and will receive credit as such

Family – is the central point of our nation and the foundation for building our future

Love – is the unifying factor for all of the above

Our philosophy is that children are as important to us as they are to Jesus Himself. Matthew 19:14 states, “Let the little children come unto me and do not hinder them for such is the kingdom of God.” If children are this important to God, then how can we possibly minimize their worth?

Our goal is to enhance the total growth and development of your child. We will do this by concentrating on:

1. Promoting physical adeptness through running, climbing, balancing, and other large motor skills
2. Enhancing emotional development through expressiveness, self-sufficiency, self-worth, acceptance, and positive discipline
3. Enhancing social competence through consideration for others, cooperation, and relating to adults and peers
4. Providing opportunities for cognitive learning, utilizing ideas, words, colors, numbers, and decision-making

Our objectives are:

1. To provide LOVE and ACCEPTANCE of your child
2. To convey to your child that they are important enough to talk with, play with and learn with
3. To give them guidance, a balanced day, and to provide the necessary materials for a creative atmosphere

Keystone Stars

St. Paul Children’s Center participates in the state-wide Keystone STARS program. STARS stands for **S**tandards, **T**raining/Professional Development, **A**ssistance, **R**esources, and **S**upport. The program is an initiative of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) to improve, support, and recognize the continuous quality improvement efforts of early learning programs. The program has four STAR levels, and each STAR level has its own research-based performance standards. These standards measure three areas of child care that make a difference in the quality of care your child receives:

- from the staff employed by the center,
- in the environment your child attends every day
- in the way the facility is operated
- For more information visit www.pakeys.org

Curriculum

Curriculum

SPCC classrooms use *The Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers* and *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* (published by Teaching Strategies, Inc.) as a framework for setting up and maintaining developmentally appropriate environments and activities. Throughout each day, children engage in a balanced variety of experiences including:

- Indoor and outdoor play
- Free choice and teacher directed activities
- Quiet and active play
- Large group, small group, and individual projects

All teachers create lesson plans that are posted in the classroom. Lesson plans address all areas of development (physical, social/emotional, cognitive, language) and may include new books being introduced, different themes and activities for the week, and changes to the environment. Each teacher intentionally plans experiences based on information gathered through observations, current best practices using child development and early learning theory, and Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood Programs (available at www.pakeys.org) For more information about curriculum, schedules, and routines, see your child's teacher or the director.

Observations and Assessments

In order to plan appropriate experiences that meet each child's needs, we use early childhood assessments that are recommended by the Keystone Stars Program. *Teaching Strategies GOLD* is the assessment tool that we use for all children who are enrolled at the center. These assessments are not "tests" and do not "grade" your child. They are simply used to guide our teachers in their observations of your child. Information gathered through observation is used in a variety of ways that benefit you and your child:

- To share current and accurate information about your child's progress in all areas of development during informal conversations or at parent-teacher conferences
- To help inform teachers' planning
- To identify if children might benefit from special services and supports (see "Referrals")
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the teachers

This non-intrusive observation-based assessment takes place in the context of the regular classroom routines and activities and provides teachers and families with extremely valuable information to support your child's growth.

Referrals

If throughout the observation and assessment process it appears as though a child shows signs of a developmental delay or a parent has concerns about the child's development, St. Paul Children's Center will support the child and family in finding special services to meet the child's needs. Support to the family may include:

- Providing staff training
- Providing families with child development information
- Providing families with documentation of child's development and explanations of why a delay is suspected
- Sharing community resources
- Assisting in data collection as part of an evaluation
- Participating as invited in the development of an intervention plan
- Assisting in monitoring progress
- Working with community service providers to support the child and family

IEPs and IFSPs

IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and IFSPs (Individualized Family Service Plans) are created by service providers working with children with special needs and include information about the child's needs. If your child has an IEP/IFSP, it would be beneficial to share a copy of this plan so that we can work together to ensure the guidelines are put into practice. Upon invitation, we would gladly participate in any meetings to share information or to learn more about how we (teachers and/or director) can support the child and family. All information in IEPs/IFSPs and discussed in meetings will be kept confidential by SPCC staff.

Governing Board – Weekday Ministries Board

The Weekday Ministries Board of St. Paul United Methodist Church governs St. Paul Children's Center. There are 13 members on the board, including at least one parent representative and one staff representative. Members of the board are selected from other boards and committees so that there is a variety of knowledge and representation from the different realms of the church (Trustees, Finance, Staff-Parish Relations Committee.)

Please call the Children's Center or see the bulletin board outside the director's office to get the name and telephone number of the Parent Representatives of the Weekday Ministries Board.

Guidelines

Hours/Days Open

Monday through Friday

6:30 AM to 5:30 PM

Closed for the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day
- Good Friday

If Christmas Eve falls on a weekday, we will close at 2:00 PM to allow staff to be with their families.

Closed for the week between Christmas and New Year's Day

Full tuition is charged on any day the center is open and for those holidays that do not fall into the center's weekly closing.

Families may request in writing one vacation week annually in which they will not be obligated to pay tuition. Parents must submit this request for approval at least two weeks prior to the requested vacation week.

We appreciate your flexibility in allowing our staff to spend time with their families when the center is closed. Parents are encouraged to make arrangements for back up child care as soon as possible to adapt to this schedule (see also Inclement Weather Policy and Illness Policy). To hear ideas for back-up options that other parents use, please see the director.

Discounts

Families who have two or more children enrolled full time at St. Paul Children's Center will receive a 10% discount for the oldest child.

Payment Information

Payment Fees

- Infant (Birdies, Duckies & Lambs Rooms): \$190.00 per week
- Toddler (Bears, Foxes & Turtles Rooms): \$170.00 per week
- Preschool (Bees, Fishies & Frogs Rooms): \$150.00 per week.
- Summer School Age: \$140.00 per week.

Payment Schedule

Your tuition payment is due the Friday prior to the week of care, unless arrangements have been made with the Executive Director. If tuition is not paid on time, a late fee of \$10.00 will be assessed. If the tuition is not paid within ten (10) working days, your child will be dismissed from care. Any tuition account that accumulates more than four late fees within a quarter will have an increase in their late fee for the remainder of that quarter. The late fee will go from \$10.00 per week to \$20.00 per week. Quarters will run as follows: January 1- March 31; April 1- June 30; July 1- September 30; October 1-December 31.

Please keep in mind that you are responsible for your regular payment each week even in the case of an illness or vacation. This is because you are paying for the availability of the child care spot, not just for the days when your child is in care. If paying with cash, the top portion of the tuition receipt must be completed and submitted with your payment. Payments are to be placed in the payment box located on the wall by the front doors of the Children's Center.

Registration Fee

A registration fee of \$30.00 per child is assessed at the time of enrollment.

Late Pick Up Fee

Late pick up of your child is discouraged except in the case of an emergency. If you pick your child up after 5:30 PM, a late fee of \$15.00 will be assessed. An additional \$15.00 will be charged for every 15 minute increment past that time. It is very important that you call the Children's Center if you will arrive after 5:30 PM.

Enrollment/Termination Policies

Enrollment

At the time of enrollment, the following forms will need to be completed: Health Assessment, Emergency Contact Form, and Parent Fee Agreement with schedule

of arrival and departure times. Please adhere to your schedule so that we may plan for staff accordingly. If you find your schedule will change, please notify the Director.

Termination of Care Policy

We require a two-week written notice if you remove your child from the Children's Center permanently for any reason. If no notice is given, any fees paid in advance will be forfeited to the Children's Center. When your child transitions to another educational setting, his/her records including health assessments and evaluations will be transferred if a written request is submitted within one month of the end of care.

Extended Leave Policy

St. Paul Children's Center will "hold" a spot for a child of a currently enrolled family for a period of two (2) to nine (9) paid weeks. During this period of extended leave, the family is responsible to pay a weekly rate that is equal to the 3-day tuition fee (daily rate + \$5 per day), regardless of days attended.

If the family wishes, the child may attend up to 3 days per week to keep the child familiar with the routine of the Center. A schedule for the child's attendance must be worked out with the director at least one week in advance, and can be any day excluding Friday.

Any leave requested beyond the nine (9) week period will need to be paid in full in order to secure the child's spot.

Further consideration of this policy will be made on a "case by case" basis and will be reviewed by the Weekday Ministries Board for a final decision.

Security System

A security system is in operation at St. Paul United Methodist Church at all times. Unauthorized individuals are not able to enter the building. At the time of a child's enrollment, parents are to pay a \$30 deposit and will be issued two (2) key cards. The key cards deactivate the security system for a brief period to allow parents to enter. If parents or other authorized "pick up" individuals do not have their key card, they are then required to press the white intercom button outside the Children's Center door. An employee of the Children's Center will let the individual into the building after verification of proper identification. **Parents are asked not to allow anyone to enter the building without first getting approval from an employee of the Center.**

If a key card is lost, it is the parent's responsibility to contact the office immediately so that the specific card can be deactivated. **The replacement fee for a key card is \$20.00.** Upon termination of care, the parents will return their keycards and will receive their deposit.

Inclement Weather Policy

Our first priority in making the decision to close the center for the day, delay opening, or close the center early, is the safety of your child and then of our staff. During inclement weather, the Executive Director will make the decision whether to delay opening, close the center for the entire day or close early.

On days that we are closed or delayed, there will be a message on the Center's answering machine and it will be announced on the TV station WGAL 8. Parents can also access closing information through WGAL's website (www.wgal.com). When it is necessary to close the Center early, we will put the closing on the WGAL TV station and parents will be notified by phone. If the parents cannot come by the time the center closes, it is their responsibility to make other arrangements for the pick up of their child.

When the center operates during inclement weather, it is recommended that all parents enter the parking lot via St. Paul Drive as the church's parking lot may not be plowed.

If the Center is closed the full day, a one-day credit will be issued for the following week's tuition. No credit will be given on days that the Center must close early after noon.

Health and Medication Policies

Health Policy

A Physical Exam and updated immunization record are necessary for each child who attends the Center. Please request a new form each time your child is scheduled for a well child check up. It is to be completed by your child's physician and returned to the Director. It is the parent's responsibility to make the appropriate appointments. If the Director does not receive the health forms within 60 days of their necessary exam schedule, your child will immediately be dismissed from care. The exam schedule is set by the American Academy of Pediatrics which requires check ups at 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, and 24 months as well as at 3, 4, 5, and 6 years of age. **This is a State mandated regulation.**

Medication Policy

Employees of St. Paul Children's Center are **not** permitted to administer prescription or nonprescription medication at the Center at any time. Medication **cannot** be stored in the Center. Parents who are giving a child prescribed medication at home, must complete a Parent Administered Medication Form found in the child's classroom. **Parents are not permitted to put**

medication in bottles or cups that their child will use while at the center.

Head Lice/Nit Policy

Any child discovered to have head lice or nits will be sent home immediately. The child must be treated and nit free before returning to the center. Upon returning to the center, the child will be checked for nits or lice by a staff member. If the child is found to be nit free, he or she may return to the center. If there are still nits or lice present, the child will need to leave the center to be retreated.

Illness Policy

Child Illness Policy

If a child vomits once, or has diarrhea 3 times while at the Center, the parents will be notified immediately, a Health Observation will be written up, and the child will be sent home. Parents need to pick up their child from the Center within one hour. If the parents cannot come, it is their responsibility to make other arrangements for the pick up of their child. The child must wait 24 hours after the last incident to re-enter the Center.

If a child is taking an antibiotic and has diarrhea three times while at the center, the child may not return to the center until **a doctor's note stating that the diarrhea is medication related and not infectious is on file in the office.**

Infectious Disease Policy

If it is suspected that a child may have an infectious disease such as chicken pox, measles, strep, etc., the parents of that child will be contacted and that child will be sent home within the hour.

A doctor's excuse must be submitted to the Director indicating that the child either does not have the disease or is no longer contagious before that child can return to the Children's Center. A form will be sent out to all parents to watch for symptoms. **This is a State mandated regulation.**

Temperature

If at any time a child's temperature rises above 101 degrees, parents will be notified immediately, a Health Observation will be written up, and that child will be sent home. No doctor's excuse is necessary for the child's return. However, the temperature must be normal **without fever-reducing medication** for a full 24 hours before the child can re-enter.

Suspected Illness

If you suspect that your child may be ill, it is your responsibility to notify the staff so that they can closely monitor your child. However, if your child has vomited or has diarrhea, attendance that day is **not** permitted. **A child must be kept home when ill or otherwise unable to participate in all day care activities including outdoor play.**

Medical Emergency

If it becomes necessary for your child to be treated for a medical emergency, the medical release form you sign at the time of enrollment will be used by the staff to have your child treated. The parents will be notified immediately upon knowledge of the need for care.

Center Policies

Child Abuse Policy

By law we are required to report suspected child abuse. Our plan to prevent child abuse is to provide information to staff through training and education. The best defense against child abuse is education. It will be stressed to the children that their bodies are their own and they have the power to say no. Any marks that seem suspicious will be noted on a Health Observation Form. If injuries are unexplainable and not consistent with the medical history of the child, we are **mandated by the Child Services Law to report all suspected child abuse.**

Pick Up Policy

Upon enrollment a list of designated persons to whom a child may be released must be given to the Director for your child. They will be authorized to pick up your child on a daily basis. Identification will be checked by the staff in order to protect the children. After the staff become familiar with the designated persons, identification may not be required.

If at any time the authorized pick up persons change, it will be the parent's responsibility to notify the Director so the list can be updated.

If the child is to be picked up by someone not on the list, a verbal release is required from the parent. This release should be given to the Director or Assistant Director in the Director's absence. A verbal release form is filled out and placed in the child's file. Identification is required from the person. This policy is for emergencies only and should not be used on a daily basis.

Sign In / Sign Out Policy

Upon arrival at the Children's Center the parent must sign their child in. When leaving the center the parent must also sign the child out. A clipboard is provided for this purpose. Please note on the Sign In / Sign Out sheet any daily changes in pick up or parent contact phone numbers for emergencies. At no time are parents permitted to pick up their child outside at the playground by lifting the child over the fence. Parents are asked to use the Center's inside entrance to the playground at all times.

Communication is very important between parents and teachers. Unfortunately, the end of the day is not the best time for any lengthy discussions with the teachers. Teachers' first responsibility is to the children and any conversations with the parents could inhibit teachers from doing their job. Parents are encouraged to set up appointments as needed with their child's teacher.

Discipline Policy

Just as children take time and make many mistakes when learning how to walk, talk, and say their ABCs, we understand that children will make "mistakes" in learning how to behave. And just as we support children's learning in other areas, we support their learning of behavior skills through our primary forms of discipline: redirection, positive reinforcement, and teaching appropriate behaviors.

In the instance of persistent or extreme challenging behavior, the director will facilitate a more intensive intervention process involving regular meetings and creating a behavior support plan with parents, teachers, and any other person with significant involvement in the child's life.

If a child is consistently hurting other children, teachers will make every effort to protect the other children while still giving that child opportunities to learn and practice more appropriate interactions with peers. The director and teachers at St. Paul CC are advocates for ALL children.

The director does reserve the right to dismiss a child from care if the child and/or family is unable to adapt to the center and its policies. However, all possible solutions will be explored as termination of care is a very last resort.

Meals and Snacks

The children will be provided breakfast and an afternoon snack, which meet the requirements for nutritional value. Meal time will be an opportunity to thank God for their food and learn good manners and nutrition. A monthly breakfast and snack calendar will be displayed in the classroom. Lunch is to be provided by

the parents. The Children's Center encourages parents to provide a nutritionally balanced lunch for their child, avoiding sugary treats. Please do not pack personal utensils. The center will supply cups, plates, spoons and forks as well as all beverages. **If your child has a documented medical dietary restriction, you will be given a 10% tuition discount, and in return, will be expected to provide the child's food for breakfast, lunch and snack. This issue will be addressed on a case by case basis.**

Infant Bottles

The center does not provide formula so parents must provide the appropriate amount for their child. Regulations state that all bottles must be covered regardless of the child's age. There must be separate bottles for each feeding, and center employees are not responsible for mixing formula. Parents are expected to mix the bottles before coming to the center. All unused portions will be discarded between feedings. All bottles must be labeled with the child's first name or initials. Bottles will be rinsed and sent home every day to be washed and returned the following day.

Clothing Policy

Children are expected to come to the center rested, clean, and dressed in casual clothing, suitable for the weather and activity; both indoor and outdoor. Any child that is walking is required to have shoes and socks for outdoor activities. **Due to safety regulations, no open-toed sandals, flip-flops, or plastic shoes are allowed.** If your child is not able to comfortably walk or run in his/her shoes, you will be asked to provide an alternate pair.

Each child must have a complete change of clothing at the center in case of accidents, wet weather, or spilled beverages. Keep in mind that although precautions are taken, your child's clothing may get torn or stained at day care. If this should happen we will not replace ruined clothing.

If your child is very young, you will need to send more than one change of clothing, and an ample supply of diapers, wipes, diaper rash cream and plastic bags if you are not using disposable diapers.

Items belonging to your child including diapers, wipes, bags, clothing, lunch containers, and cups should be labeled with your child's first name and last initial.

Lost Items

St. Paul Children's Center cannot be responsible for personal toys and belongings lost at the center. We discourage toys from being brought from home.

Rest Time

Nap or rest time for toddlers and preschoolers will be from approximately 12:30 PM – 3:00 PM. Blankets and rest toys such as teddy bears or other favorite sleep time items are allowed at naptime only. These items will be stored in your child's personal space for the remainder of the day. Children are not forced to sleep; however, they will be required to rest quietly for thirty minutes before being able to begin an alternate quiet activity.

Parents of the Toddler and Preschool Rooms are requested to take the nap bedding home each Friday to be washed. Sheets and blankets are supplied for the Infant Rooms.

Evacuation Drills

Monthly evacuation drills will be held at the Children's Center. These will be unannounced drills in order for staff and children to know how to exit the building in the event of a fire or emergency.

Grievance Policy and Procedure

If you should at any time feel the need to discuss any concerns involving eligibility, program policy, staff management, or quality of care, please follow the steps below:

1. First, speak to the person involved.
2. If still not satisfied, please bring your concern in writing to the Director
3. If the concern involves the Director, please bring the concern in writing to the Chair of the Weekday Ministries Board.
4. If a situation still cannot be resolved, a hearing in the presence of the Weekday Ministries Board will be conducted within 10 working days.

Weekday Ministries Board Review Procedure:

1. Hearing of the complaint by the Board.
2. A Review Committee, consisting of the entire Board or selected Board members, will investigate the matter as expeditiously as possible. The committee will report to the Board in writing the results of the investigation. The Chair of the Weekday Ministries Board will keep the grievant(s) informed of the ongoing investigation.
3. A final resolution will be made by the Weekday Ministries Board at a regular or at a special meeting.
4. Final results of the decision will be presented to the grievant verbally and in writing.

Notice of Nondiscrimination Policy as to Children

St. Paul Children's Center admits children regardless of race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin to all the rights and privileges, programs, and activities, generally accorded to all the children at the Children's Center.

The Center does not discriminate on the basis of color, race, nationality, or ethnic origin in administration policies, educational policies, and other childcare programs.

Confidentiality

St. Paul Children's Center protects the confidentiality of the children in its care. Employees are to respect the individual dignity of the children, families and co-workers at all times.

Staff members are not to post a child's full name in classroom areas, artwork, attendance sheets, cubbies, etc. Rather, children's belongings are to be marked with the first name and last initial only.

Employees are not to post a child's address or telephone number, social security number or other information that would make it possible to identify the child.

Information related to a child's family, medical history, and educational history shall be maintained in a locked, secured cabinet. Employees and volunteers are not to discuss confidential information gained in the course of their employment with staff, families, friends, or community members.

The parent of the child attending the Center shall have access to the child's complete childcare record, except in the cases in which that parent does not have shared or primary custody of the child or is otherwise precluded from such access by a court order.

Reporting Accidents/Incidents

All employees and volunteers of the Center are mandated to immediately report all accidents, incidents, or illnesses involving a child at the facility to the Director, Assistant Director or designated staff-member. A teacher will complete an Incident Report for accidents or incidents or a Health Observation for illnesses and unusual health conditions. The report will be signed by the teacher and the Director or Assistant Director. The parent is required to sign the Reports verifying that they are aware of the accident or illness. The original report shall be given to the parent on the day of the incident. The second copy of the report shall be retained in the facility in the accident file. The third copy of the report shall be retained at the facility in the child's file.

Family Partnerships

Research shows that a positive relationship between parents and teachers is very important to the child's development. Children feel safe and well taken care of (and therefore able to learn best) when they see the meaningful adults in their life working together. In addition, teacher and family partnerships help teachers to learn about the child and help parents feel good about leaving their children in someone else's care.

One of our goals is to create that sense of partnership by inviting you to be part of your child's early learning experiences. We understand the stress that parents face in balancing their children's needs, work, and daily life. Below you will find a list of possible ways for you to be involved in St. Paul Children's Center. Involvement looks different for every family, depending on your resources and availability, so the list includes options, not expectations.

Family Involvement:

- Complete annual parent surveys
- Join your child's class during special class celebrations
- Attend open houses to get to know teachers and other parents
- Participate in bi-annual parent-teacher conferences
- Share your culture or family traditions by planning with the teacher a special activity (cooking, story sharing, songs, etc.)
- Share a talent or job (play an instrument, share job experiences, etc.)
- Volunteer to help in your child's classroom or take items home to help teachers (cut out laminating, etc.)

Thank You

The staff of St. Paul Children's Center thank you for taking the time to read this handbook. We all look forward to growing and learning with your child, and making it wonderful experience for everyone.