



PARENT HANDBOOK

Revised January 2024

St. John Lutheran Early Childhood Center

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A word from our Senior Pastor...

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Luke 18:16).

Thank you for giving us the privilege and awesome honor to provide for the spiritual, emotional and intellectual growth of your child through the ministry of St. John Early Childhood Center! We realize that your child is precious and that you want the very best for him or her. We do not take this trust lightly. We have long been committed to excellence in our early education programs. This is seen in not only the beautiful and state of the art building that the people of St. John built, but also in the commitment to excellence of staff and staff training and support.

That long-standing commitment is a dim reflection, however, of the commitment that our God has for children. When mothers were bringing their children to Jesus for his blessing some wanted to scurry them away. Jesus showed that when he took the children up in his arms and blessed them.

Sometimes life is hard, and family life can bring challenges. I want you to know that we are here for you. If you need support, encouragement, or just someone to talk to, our ECC staff, administrators and even our pastors are here for you. I am never too busy to listen. If you need spiritual support, advice, encouragements, or direction, please call on us.

It is our great delight to lead people to a deeper experience of life—abundant and eternal—through faith in Jesus Christ. You are certainly welcome to join us for worship each Sunday at 8:15 and 11:00. We also have various Bible Studies each Sunday to help you grow in your faith—as your children also grow in the faith through our Sunday School program.

It is our great joy to connect our neighbors with Jesus' true riches. Please give us the privilege of sharing it with you.

In Jesus...

Abundant Blessings!

PASTOR MARK

Rev. Mark T. Wuggazer, Senior Pastor

A word from the Director...

I am very pleased to welcome you to St. John Lutheran Early Childhood Center. Thank you for entrusting your children to our care. We feel honored and blessed to be chosen.

Our philosophy is rooted in the belief that young children need the opportunity to explore, play, create, learn, grow and develop in a Christ centered, nurturing environment. We strive to instill a love of learning that will last a lifetime.

Parents and visitors are welcome to visit our campus. We ask that you check in at the office first. Communication between the parent, school and teacher is important for your child's success. We welcome your questions and feedback.

The St. John handbook is prepared for each school family to provide you with our policies and procedures. Please take time to read through it as it is updated yearly. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to let me know. Again, thank you for choosing St. John.

In Christ,

Tiffany Bunker,

Early Childhood Director

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MISSION STATEMENT

St. John Lutheran Church & School
Connecting our Neighbors to the True Riches in
Jesus

OUR PURPOSE

St. John Lutheran Early Childhood Center
Educating for Eternity

ORGANIZATION

St. John Lutheran Early Childhood Center is a non-profit Lutheran preschool which is a ministry of St. John Lutheran Church. The school has been in existence since 1982 as a ministry of St. John Lutheran Church, governed by the Church's Mission and Ministry Council and is licensed by The Texas Department of Health and Human Services. The Early Childhood Center is accredited with the National Lutheran Schools Accreditation.

St. John Lutheran Early Childhood Center admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin or religion to all rights, privileges, programs and activities made available to students at the center. It does not discriminate on the basis of natural gender, race, color, national, or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies or programs.

The program is operated by St. John Lutheran Church as part of a program of service to God and to the children and parents of our Cypress and surrounding communities.

Natural Gender:

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen.1:26-27)

Marriage Statement:

We believe that marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive, lifelong union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4).

Although St. John Lutheran ECC does not require parents of families to personally agree with St. John Lutheran Church foundational statements of belief regarding marriage, gender, and sexuality, because St. John comes together as a community to communicate, affirm, practice, and live out the Christian faith according to Scripture, St. John Lutheran ECC does require parents and families to agree that their children may be taught according to St. John Lutheran's foundational statements and avoid being vocally or openly in opposition to St. John Lutheran foundational statements.

Gang Free Zone:

St. John Lutheran ECC is a GANG FREE ZONE. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalties under Texas Law. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of our child care center as defined by the Texas Penal Code. The purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather while enforcing tougher state penalties.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that each child is precious to God; therefore, we consider the children entrusted to our care an important responsibility. Children need to feel safe, secure, nurtured, and loved. We also believe that God's desire is to give us abundant eternal life. We seek to share that gift with children and their families through all we do.

[Jesus] took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them. "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but the one who sent me." Mark 9:36-37

[Jesus says,] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:10

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Young children are filled with nearly unlimited energy, exuberance, and curiosity. This is a time of great intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual growth. This foundation, which is formed in the early years of a child's life, proves important in the development of their values and attitudes. Since the Bible also describes us as body, soul and spirit, we believe in nurturing the "whole child".

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

Based on this knowledge, our program provides a well-balanced day of learning and play. Our curriculum is designed to teach children through challenging instructional methods (mind and spirit), stimulating physical activities (body), Bible memory and singing, and interesting and engaging learning experiences. The curriculum includes, but is not limited to, experiences in Bible teaching, Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Music and Motor Skills, Spanish, and Art. These guided activities are structured to meet the developmental stage of each child, as well as to encourage individual responsibility while providing a sense of success and accomplishment. We believe learning should be enjoyable using "hands-on" experiences, which help develop a positive self-concept.

Jesus' Great Commission is to "make disciples" of all nations. We also seek to help children learn to follow Jesus, nurturing a strong relationship with the heavenly Father (**celebrate**), encouraging children to love and respect each other (**live**), and providing opportunities for the children to support mission projects and provide for the needs of the community (**share/serve**). By teaching this, we are building on St. John's mission to connect our neighbors to true riches in Jesus.

Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

Christian principles are integrated through weekly chapel, stories, songs, the example of loving adults, and happy school experiences. Through these activities, the children discover spirituality and values, which they share with their families, and which will serve them throughout their lives. We believe that spiritual growth also plays an important role in the child's total development.

Hear, Oh Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord our God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about it with them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation. Joel 1:3

GOAL

Our goal is to provide a quality program in a Christian environment. Each child is provided with learning experiences based on the knowledge of their own physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs. This is so they can learn and grow at their own rate under the guidance of a Christian teacher.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR YOUR CHILD

It is important that the parents communicate to the teacher any significant changes in the child's life or the life of the family that might affect the child's behavior at school. It will help the teacher to understand the reasons behind a change in behavior and help the child cope with the changes. These might include illness or death of a family member or pet, separation or divorce of the parents, other changes in the family structure, an impending move, etc. Please be assured that whatever information you relay will be confidential.

If you have a concern with your child and you need to speak with the teacher, please feel free to call the school during the day and leave a message for your child's teacher to contact you after the students are dismissed.

Another method to communicate a need is to reach out to the teacher through the Playground App and simply type "Handle with Care" in the chat feature. No other details are needed. Your child's teacher will know that you or your child has had a rough morning and will extend extra kindness and grace throughout the day.

If you need to speak with the Director, you may call the school during operating hours or contact her by email at tbunker@stjohn.tv. For emergencies after hours, the director can be reached by cell phone at 281-728-0259.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

All of our registration is done from a waiting list. In order to be added to our waiting list, parents must first request a virtual school tour by phone or email and provide contact information. Once reviewed, we ask that parents respond by contacting the school at 281-304-5546 or emailing our Registrar, Dawn Calhoun at dcalhoun@stjohn.tv directly.

Registration begins mid-January for our current students and their siblings for the Summer and Fall School Year. Registration is done online through the Playground App. After applications are reviewed, parents are notified of their application status. After acceptance, parents are billed for all registration fees through Playground. At a later time, parents will be required to complete student information documents and review and sign our Parent Handbook.

After our current students and their siblings have registered, parents will be contacted by phone or email to offer the remaining spots. Contact will be made from the waiting list in the following order: church members, previous fall (school year) families, and the remaining names on the list. Parents are given two days to respond. If there is no response, your child's name will be removed from the waiting list. Registration is an ongoing process that can take from a few weeks to months. As spaces open up during the year, they will be filled with children from the waiting list. Children must be **re-enrolled each fall term. You will not automatically be re-enrolled for the previous year's program days. All tuition accounts must be current in order to re-enroll.**

The waiting list rolls over from year to year. Every December we will email out a questionnaire to update information. By emailing this back to us, families are letting us know they want to remain on the waiting list. If we do not get a response, your child's name will be dropped from the list. If the questionnaire is not received by email, parents may update information by phone or fax.

Necessary paperwork required by the State of Texas must be completed before the first day of care.

TUITION AND FEES

Registration and Application fees are non-refundable and are non-transferrable. (No exceptions).

Tuition Fees/Payments:

All tuition fees are billed through the Playground App five days before the first of the month. You will receive a notification (via email) that there is a new billing statement on your account. Tuition is due on the first of each month beginning in September for the Fall School Year. Summer School tuition is due in June and July. We do allow a 10-day grace period before tuition is considered late and a **\$30** late fee is assessed to your account. For your convenience, tuition fees may be paid online through the Playground App in one of three ways:

Direct payment from checking account (ACH)

Debit Card

Credit Card

Please Note: All applicable transaction fees will be added when making online payments. These fees are *not* collected by St. John Early Childhood Center but are fees retained by credit card and banking institutions as well as through “Stripe” (Playground’s payment processor).

Tuition may also be paid using cash (please obtain a written receipt in the school office), writing a personal check, or setting up bill pay through your bank’s online bill payment service. There are **no fees** for making payments via cash or checks. When writing a personal check, **all checks must be written as follows:**

Pay to the Order of:

St. John Lutheran Church

Memo:

Early Childhood Center – Tuition Fees

Questions concerning billing or making payments may be addressed to Donna Peartree, Financial and Human Resources Manager at dpeartree@stjohn.tv.

Discounts:

- Families with more than one child registered for classes will receive a ten percent (10%) discount on each additional child’s tuition. This is not transferable. The oldest child registered at St. John ECC is considered child one.
- Active members of St. John Lutheran Church and Cypress Chapel will receive a flat ten percent (10%) discount of total tuition.
- Only one discount per family will be applied to tuition.
- Discounts cannot be applied to Morning Care and Afternoon Care rates or registration fees.

Tuition Assistance:

Tuition assistance is available to qualifying families who complete an application process through a third party agency. Contact Donna Peartree, dpeartree@stjohn.tv, to request application instructions. There is a \$40.00 processing fee. Assistance covers tuition only (9am - 2pm school day). Assistance does NOT cover any registration fee, application fees, or Morning and Afternoon Care fees. Please note that our tuition assistance budget is limited. Parents must reapply for assistance each school year.

OPERATING SCHEDULE

Classes will be held Monday through Friday of each normal week that school is in session. A parent may choose one of the following for the preschool program:

2 day – Tuesdays and Thursdays

3 day – Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

5 day – Monday through Friday

Class placements for current school year are per the following criteria:

18 month old class	18 months old by September 1
2 year old class	2 years old by September 1
3 year old class	3 years old by September 1
4 year old class	4 years old by September 1
Bridge class	5 years old by October 31 (Director Approval)
Summer School	18 months old by May 1 - entering 4 th Grade

School Hours:

Morning Care	7:00 am – 9:00 am
School Day	9:00 am – 2:00 pm
Afternoon Care	2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Sample Classroom Schedule:

Below is an example of what a classroom schedule will look like:

Opening Activity

Chapel/Opening

Calendar Time

Snack Time/Restroom

Instructional Learning

Music & Motor Skill

Classroom Center Time

Recess

Lunch/Restroom

Story Time

Rest Time

Dismissal/Afterschool Care

*Children will also receive Art/Spanish/Library instruction weekly.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

St. John ECC has a yearly calendar, indicating school holidays and special events. This will be posted on our website (www.stjohn.tv) and on our Playground App. Monthly calendars with specific events will be posted on the Playground App and posted in our weekly newsletter. Classroom teachers will provide weekly information.

If it becomes necessary to close school, have early dismissal, or late arrival due to inclement weather, the closing policies of Cy-Fair ISD will be used as a guide. Cy-Fair ISD school closings will be announced on local television (Channel 2, 11, 13, 26) and radio stations (FM Radio Stations: 93.0, 95.7, 97.9, 99.1, 100.3, 102.9, 107.9 or AM Radio Stations: 101, 740, 940) usually between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. St. John will not make up days for any days missed based on inclement weather closings.

9 AM AND 2 PM ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Arrival:

- Car rider line will begin at 8:55 am.
- Drop-off procedures will be done through a car rider line. Please enter the St. John Campus from the Spring-Cypress entrance, Entrance #1, and drive slowly through the parking lot to the front entrance of the school.
- Staff members will greet you at your vehicle in our car rider line. At that time, you will check your child(ren) in using the Playground App. All parents/guardians must have the Playground App.
- Staff members will assist your children out of your vehicle and then escort your child to their classroom.
- If your child has any medications or special needs for the day, please notify your child's teacher through the Chat feature of your Playground App.
- Children should be closely supervised during the check-in process.

- For your child's safety, we ask that they not be hanging out windows or sunroofs. Please keep your child secured in their carseats until our staff is ready to escort them into the building.
- We strongly encourage children to arrive at school at 9am.

Departure:

- Our 2:00 pm pick-up time will be done in person, with parents coming inside the building and picking children up at their classrooms.
- Lobby doors will not open until 2:00 pm.
- A staff member will be at the doors with a QR code for you to complete your check-out process.
- Children should be closely supervised during the check-out process.
- Parents may take a moment to discuss their child's day with the teacher. Please keep this conversation brief due to the teacher's obligation to the other children still in the classroom as well as the teacher's after-school duties. If you find that the necessary brevity of this exchange leaves unanswered questions and/or unaddressed concerns, a conference may be scheduled.
- Once you have checked your child out of school, the child becomes your responsibility.
- Children at St. John ECC are dropped off at 9:00 a.m. and expected to be picked up by 2:00 p.m. If children have not been picked up by 2:15 pm your child's teacher will be calling you. If you are unable to be reached, they will contact someone on your emergency list. Any fraction of an hour over 15 minutes will be charged an additional flat rate of \$15.00 per hour, per child. These fees will be documented on your child's account

An intercom system/doorbell is located at the front door for admittance. This door will be locked at all times for the safety of the children. In addition, students arriving at other hours will be escorted to and from classrooms by St. John staff. Lobby doors are locked at all times for security measures.

Note: In the event that the person responsible for picking up your child is not able to fulfill that duty, please call us and let us know who will be picking up your child. Please note: this person **MUST** be listed on the emergency form you turned in at registration, or be listed as a guardian on the Playground App, and be at least 16 years or older, with a valid ID. If we are not familiar with that person, we will check their identification when they arrive at the school. It is the parent's responsibility to provide appropriate safety devices for transporting children.

MORNING & AFTERNOON CARE PROGRAM

Morning & Afternoon Care :

The hours for Morning & Afternoon Care are **7:00 am - 9:00 am** and **2:00 pm - 6:00 pm**. Parents may bring a prepared breakfast for their child if needed. Breakfast brought from home will be served from 7:00 am to 8:00 am **ONLY**. If you arrive after 8:00 am, your child should have already eaten breakfast.

Drop-off & Pick-up:

Parents participating in the Morning & Afternoon Care Programs may pull up to the front of the school and a staff member will come to your vehicle with the Playground App QR code. Please remain in your vehicle at all times.

During Morning Care arrival, a staff member will escort your child(ren) to their classroom.

During Afternoon Care, a staff member will escort your child to your vehicle. You may buckle them in at this time if there are no cars waiting in line, otherwise, we ask that you pull into one of the parking spots to secure your child in their car seat.

Morning & Afternoon Care Guidelines:

Our Morning & Afternoon Care program is available on a contract basis only for students attending St. John ECC. Changes to contracted days require advance notice to the Financial and Human Resources Manager, Ms. Donna Peartree, dpeartree@stjohn.tv, who will adjust the billing amount. Recurring changes to contracted days will be subject to a \$25.00 fee. The program provides opportunities for children to learn and play before and after school in a safe, nurturing environment. Snacks are provided for all children in Afternoon Care. The snack menu is attached in our weekly St. John ECC parent newsletter, posted throughout the building, and available on our Playground App. If your child has food allergies, a description of ingredients can be given to you upon request. Contact Letty Wilson, lwilson@stjohn.tv, for an ingredient list.

Parents who have their child in the Morning & Afternoon Care program must adhere to the same days agreed upon at registration. There are NO MAKE-UP days for days missed, school closures due to unforeseen circumstances, or holidays.

There will be no Afternoon Care on the last day before Christmas Break, the last day of school in May, and the last day of Summer School.

Children participating in afternoon extracurricular activities should be picked up within five minutes from the end of the class, or they will be placed in Afternoon Care and will be billed accordingly.

If a child is picked up after 6:00 pm, a late fee of \$2.00 per minute per child will be applied for the first offense, \$4.00 per minute for the second offense, \$6.00 per minute for the third offense, and removal from Afternoon Care program after the fourth offense. Late fees will be assessed and prompt payment required. Failure of late fee payments will result in dismissal from the Afternoon Care program. The Playground App will be used to determine time of departure. If the parents have not picked up by 6:00 pm, the emergency contact listed on the enrollment form will be called to pick up the child. Please show consideration to our staff as the facility closes promptly at 6:00 pm. If you are not able to pick up your child by 6:00 pm, please make arrangements with someone on your emergency contact list.

*Note: To be considered for Morning & Afternoon Care a written commitment must be made. Cancellations require a two-week written notice and any changes to contract are subject to a \$25 change fee. You must send an email to Dawn Calhoun, dcalhoun@stjohn.tv, to formally request the cancellation of your contract.

WITHDRAWAL

To withdraw from St. John Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we require advanced two week written notice be given. Tuition is still expected to be covered/paid during this notification period. Any unused paid tuition after the two week notification period will be refunded. **Registration and Application fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.**

DRESS CODE

Children should wear regular play clothes. Please keep in mind that the children will be playing both indoors and outdoors, weather permitting. Play clothes should be loose and comfortable. Clothing should be free of complicated fasteners (i.e. snaps, overalls, jumpsuits, etc.) so children are able to manage them themselves. We also explore many kinds of materials in our programs, some of which are messy. We believe that children and clothing are “wash and wear”.

The following shoes are not permitted: **cowboy boots, rubber boots, crocs, sandals, thongs (flip flops) or jellies**, because they are a safety hazard. Through long experience with children, we have found closed toe shoes to be the safest shoes for children in our care at the center. Shorts should be worn under dresses. All outer clothing such as sweaters, jackets, hats, gloves, and personal items **must be labeled** with the child’s name. All personal belongings will be placed in backpacks during nap time. Should an item arrive unlabeled the teacher will label it.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Children will attend chapel once or twice each week, depending on your program days. Chapel begins at 9:15 am, and all parents are invited to attend.

“Meet the Teacher” will be held prior to the first day of school. Parents and children are invited to come to the classroom and meet their teacher, classmates, and other parents.

A Video Parent Orientation will be sent to you during the first few weeks of the fall and summer sessions in order to provide parents an overview of the activities and opportunities to volunteer.

During the school year, several opportunities for parent and family involvement will be held - Parent Connections, School Events, School Programs, Birthday Blessings. Parents and family members are invited to join us.

Each school year parent/teacher conferences will be held for all age groups. We provide each child a developmentally age-appropriate evaluation of their progress in all areas of development. Information

gained through the evaluation process is shared with parents during the parent/teacher conferences and various times throughout the school year.

CLASSROOM VISITATION POLICY

We welcome visitors and are happy to arrange visits at your request. We encourage you to visit your child's classroom as you deem necessary. We request that you get a name tag from the receptionist to identify you in our school for safety reasons.

PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

Each week your child will take home his or her folder. Please look through your child's folder every week. Your child has worked hard during the week and is proud of his or her work. Your child's teacher will send a weekly, classroom newsletter. An ECC Newsletter will be published weekly to keep parents informed of Center activities and will be sent out via email and on our Playground App. In addition, e-mail and Playground App reminders will be sent from the school and from your child's teacher as needed. Please read all the information so you will know what is occurring each week. Parents are also encouraged to look at the announcement monitor located in the front lobby where events will be posted. Parents may also access information on our website at www.stjohn.tv, and on our Facebook pages – St. John Early Childhood Center and Parents of St. John ECC (private group page). If you're not receiving our weekly emails please contact our Children and Family Ministry Coordinator, Celeste May, at cmay@stjohn.tv.

A GUIDE TO PARENTS' RIGHTS

Texas Senate Bill No. 1098

Section 42.04271

This section applies only to a day-care center, group day-care home, before-school program, after-school program, school-age program, or registered family home.

A Parent or Guardian of a child at a child-care facility has the right to:

1. Enter and examine the child-care facility during the facility's school hours of operation without advance notice;
2. File a complaint against the child-care facility;
3. Review the child-care facility's publicly accessible records;
4. Review the child-care facility's written records concerning the parent's or guardian's child;
5. Receive from the child-care facility the commission's inspection reports for the child-care facility and information about how to access the child-care facility's compliance history online;

6. Have the child-care facility comply with a court order preventing another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the parent's or guardian's child;
7. Be provided the contact information for the division responsible for regulating the child-care facility, including the division's name, address, and phone number;
8. Inspect any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving the parent's or guardian's child, provided that:
 - a. Video recordings of the alleged incident are available;
 - b. The parent or guardian of the child is not allowed to retain any part of the video recording depicting a child who is not the parent's or guardian's child; and
 - c. The parent or guardian of any other child captured in the video recording receives notice from the facility under Subsection (C);
9. Obtain a copy of the child-care facility's policies and procedures;
10. Review, on the request of the parent or guardian, the facility's:
 - a. Staff training records; and
 - b. Any In-House staff training curriculum used by the facility
11. Be free from any retaliatory action by the child-care facility for exercising any of the parent's or guardian's rights.
 - a. Before allowing a parent or guardian to inspect a video recording under Subsection (b), a child-care facility must provide written notice to the parent or guardian of any other child captured in the video recording.
 - b. This section does not affect the ability of a law enforcement agency or the department to access a video recording as part of investigation of an incident depicted in the video recording.
 - c. A child-care facility shall provide the parent or guardian of the child with a written copy of the rights listed in Subsection (b) not later than the child's first day at the facility.

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

Student Immunizations:

Each child enrolled in St. John ECC must meet applicable immunization requirements or meet the requirements for immunization exemptions specified by the Texas Department of Health & Human Services. St. John ECC must have a copy of the child's completed age-appropriate immunization record by the date of admission. The completed Registration paperwork, Health form, and Immunization Record (or Immunization Exemption) must be turned in prior to the student's first day of school or they will not be admitted to the classroom.

Staff Immunizations:

St. John Lutheran Early Childhood Center does not require employees to receive specified vaccinations before supervising children at the center.

VISION AND HEARING SCREENING

Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers in Texas require that children who are four years old by September 1 of the current school year and are enrolled in private or parochial school be provided with a vision and hearing screening.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event medical care is required due to illness or injury, St. John ECC will call 911 for emergency medical treatment with transportation to the nearest hospital and parents will be notified.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Fire:

In case of fire, the buildings must be evacuated immediately using posted evacuation routes. The teacher in each classroom leads the children from the building. All children are moved to a designated safe area where they are supervised at all times.

In the ECC, designated staff close the classroom doors before leaving the building. The Director remains in the building until everyone is evacuated.

The teacher must immediately check the class to determine that all children are safely out of the building. Teachers must notify the Director immediately if all children cannot be accounted for. Once children have been evacuated and taken to the indicated safe area, they should be kept calm and quiet, waiting for further instructions. After the Director meets with fire officials, the children will be transferred to another place as directed by authorities.

A fire extinguisher is accessible from each room. Fire drills will be conducted once each month. The building needs to be evacuated in less than three minutes. If necessary, problems encountered during the drill will be noted and revisions made to procedures.

*In case of an Emergency Evacuation the following locations will be used:

- Location 1: St. John ECC Playground
- Location 2: St. John Lutheran Gym
- Location 3: St. John Lutheran Church/Spring Cypress
- Location 4: Covenant Academy
11711 Telge Rd.
Cypress, Texas 77429

Severe Weather (Tornado, Flood, Hurricane):

If possible, the Director will be responsible for listening to weather advisories so that preparations can be made in advance. Flashlights are available in all classrooms in case of power outage. The Director keeps a cell phone close at hand in case the phone lines are down.

If necessary, all children are to be moved to their classroom bathroom away from all windows. Children should be kept as calm as possible.

Extreme Weather: In the event that the temperatures reach over 100 degrees or are below 35 degrees, the children will have indoor play time.

Chemical Fumes:

In the event of an emergency with toxic fumes, the air conditioner will be turned off, a blanket will be placed under the door, children will be given wet paper towels to breathe into. Communication with staff will be done via walkie-talkie and/or cell phone.

Civil Defense Evacuation:

In the event that a Civil Defense Evacuation has been ordered, all staff and children are to collect their belongings and prepare to evacuate on school buses and/or cars and/or emergency vehicles to location #4 or a location designated by the Civil Defense Authority. The director or adult in charge must post a note on the front door of the center telling parents where the children have been taken.

Intruders/Security:

All Center entrances are kept locked at all times. Entrance to St. John Early Childhood Center during school hours will be limited to authorized persons, including teachers, children, parents and church personnel. A doorbell is located at the main door to provide access and doors should be opened for authorized persons only. Additional security measures have been implemented to provide a secure campus for our students and staff.

Note: You will be notified by email or Playground App of any emergency drills that were conducted by the Associate Director, Letty Wilson lwilson@stjohn.tv

Doors will remain locked and children will not be dismissed while under a severe weather or stranger danger lockdown to ensure the safety of students and staff.

ILLNESSES

If your child is ill, please keep him/her home from school. We want our classes to have the healthiest environment possible. The best way to prevent illness is to prevent exposure. A child who appears ill upon arrival will not be admitted to school. Parents will be notified immediately when a child becomes ill or injured throughout the school day. Parents or designated persons will be asked to pick up a sick child **within one hour of being called** by the school. If your child exhibits **any sign** of fever, discharge from eyes, ears or nose, sore throat, earache, a cold, upset stomach, diarrhea, or rash, **please do not bring** him/her to school. **You must keep your child home if he/she has had any of the following symptoms 24 hours prior to class: diarrhea, vomiting, or fever.** The following requires that the child be picked up from school immediately: temperatures of 100.0°F or higher, vomiting, or uncontrolled diarrhea.

Children may not attend class if the illness or unusual behavior prevents the child from participating comfortably in school activities including outdoor play. Please do not ask a teacher to keep a child inside as we are not adequately staffed to meet individual requests. If a doctor recommends staying in, please bring written instructions from the doctor to the office and the Director will make decisions on a case-by-case basis. Playground and outside time are required by Minimum Standards.

Notify the school when your child is ill, regardless of how minor the illness may be. State law requires information pertaining to the incidence and incubation of contagious diseases be passed on to other parents. Confidentiality is assured.

Children must be fever free (without use of fever reducing medicines) for a full 24 hours before returning to school. **THE CHILD IS NOT TO RETURN TO THE CENTER UNTIL THEY ARE FREE OF SUCH SYMPTOMS FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS.** At the very least, this means the child cannot return the following day.

If a child appears ill during the day, or there are changes in their behavior, staff will assess the child, including a temperature check, and take appropriate actions, which could include parent notification. If the child is removed from the classroom due to illness, they will be taken to the office to wait until they are picked up.

MEDICATION

If a child must receive medication while at the center, the Medical Authorization Form must be completed in the office or downloaded through the Playground App. The form is signed by a staff member each time the medication is administered. Please give medication to an **office** staff member. **Do not leave medication in your child's backpack as this creates a health hazard for all the children in the classroom.**

All medications prescribed for a specific child must be in the original container bearing the pharmacy label showing prescription number, date filled, physician's name, directions for use and the **child's name**. **Action Plans** are required to be on file for EpiPens and other emergencies and must be signed by your physician.

Any over-the-counter medication (this includes cough drops, chapstick, fever reducing medicine, etc.) must be:

- age appropriate
- in the original container
- non-expired
- labeled with the child's full name
- must be provided by the parent
- no vitamins or herbal supplements will be given
- no medicines are kept in the office for general use
- bug spray and sunscreen must be applied to children by parents prior to the school day and our staff will re-apply before children attend Afternoon Care

TOILET TRAINING

18 months and 2-year-olds:

Please furnish an adequate supply of diapers (Two-year-old and 18 months only) for each day that your child is at school. The class will make several bathroom trips during the day and we will positively promote children's toilet training successes. Children often model other children, and we find this is an incentive for them. During toilet training, we request your child be sent to school in "tear away pull-ups" rather than training pants due to sanitary conditions that can occur with the training pants. (Teachers wear disposable gloves when assisting children). We are not allowed to use food as a reward system for toilet training.

Children over the age of 3-years-old:

Children **must** be fully toilet trained **before** they enter the 3-year-old classes. Expectations for children who are fully potty trained include: ability to communicate their needs, be independent in the bathroom, pulling up and down their own clothing and ability to clean them self and wash their hands. We do understand that accidents may occur but if we find that your child is having frequent accidents, a plan will be implemented between the parents and teacher. We reserve the right to remove the child and place him/her at the top of the "waiting list" until your child is completely trained. **Registration Fees, Application Fees and Tuition Fees will not be refunded.**

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY

Discipline and Guidance Practices:

All discipline is based on Biblical guidance, so children are not demeaned or made to feel embarrassed; the action is addressed without crushing the spirit of the child.

Redirection guidance is used to help the child make good choices. In the event a child displays uncontrolled and continuous inappropriate behavior that threatens the wellbeing of classmates/staff, disrupts the classroom excessively or puts his/her own safety at risk, a meeting will be held with the parents, Director, and teacher.

Discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements
- Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth

- Restraining Devices
- Intimidation
- Humiliating, biting, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

In order to keep you informed of any behavioral or emotional concerns, St. John ECC will send home a report that will document any information that needs to be available to the parents.

Disciplinary Process:

- Teachers make observations
- Teachers inform parents and director of disciplinary issues
- Director, teachers and parents meet and discuss children's behavior issues and come up with an action plan. During this time, the Director, teachers and parents stay in communication concerning the issue.
- If behavior continues with no improvement to the child, the center reserves the right to expel the child or family from the program.

EXPULSION POLICY

Should the program director determine that a child or family cannot adjust to the program, or the center is not meeting the child's needs, the center reserves the right to expel the child or family from the program.

PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY

Our policy includes required yearly staff educational training to provide awareness of issues regarding child abuse and neglect, including warning signs that a child might be a victim of neglect or abuse.

In the event of suspected child abuse or neglect you may contact the ECC Director who has community resources available. The staff fully understands their professional responsibilities to report suspected abuse and neglect.

The Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-800-252-5400 or www.TxAbuseHotline.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE

FIELD TRIPS

Off-site and in-house field trips enrich our school program by extending the learning and discovery process of the classroom. Field trip destinations and the number of trips are determined by the appropriateness for each age group. Children **must wear** a school T-shirt to participate, unless otherwise directed by our staff. Each child will be given one T-shirt at the beginning of the school year. Field trips and school t-shirt costs are included in your registration fee. Additional t-shirts may be purchased from the school at the cost of \$15.00. Permission for field trips will be included in your registration paperwork.

All teachers who participate in off site field trips will undergo yearly field trip training. Transportation is provided through a reputable bus service for off-site field trips.

Water Activities are planned for all age groups with extra supervision included during the duration of each class.

LUNCH / SNACKS

Parents must provide a lunch, a water bottle/spill proof cup (labeled with the child's name) **with water only**, and a morning snack. St. John Lutheran Early Childhood Center is not responsible for your child's nutritional value or for meeting your child's daily food needs. Parents are encouraged to provide nutritional meals and snacks with beverages for your child while attending the ECC. Children are encouraged, but never forced to eat their food. Children are required to feed themselves. Staff abides by safe food handling practices and guidelines when handling food, including wearing gloves.

Lunch:

When sending your child's lunch from home, please remember to make it nutritional. Try to choose from the five basic food groups when selecting food for your child's lunch. No candy or carbonated drinks allowed. Try to avoid foods high in sugar content. If candy is sent in lunches, it will be sent home with a note reiterating our policy. Lunches from home should be able to be eaten as is. We do not have a microwave available for heating up food or refrigerator to keep items cold for the children.

If your child forgets his/her lunch/snack, a staff member will call you to bring lunch/snack for your child. In case you cannot be reached, the ECC will provide a lunch/snack from our **limited** food pantry, and **you will be billed \$5.00**. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure their child has lunch.

Snack:

Well-balanced meals/snacks provide the food children need to grow, think, fight infection, and fuel their bodies. Please visit www.fns.usda.gov/tn/myplate to find information on the nutritional value of food, information on food allergies, and choking hazards.

Food Allergies:

St. John ECC takes food allergies very seriously. If a child is allergic to certain foods, the Director must be informed, and a physician's **action plan** must be on file in the office. Some severe food allergies may require excluding the allergen from the classroom. All families are expected to comply because the removal of the allergen will provide a healthy and safe environment for all children.

BIRTHDAYS / PARTIES

Party Days (Happy Birthday Jesus; Jesus Loves Me; He is Risen; etc): Parents can only send age appropriate, **non-edible treats to be sent home** with classmates.

Birthday Celebrations: We enjoy remembering each child's birthday during the year with special activities. Your child's teacher will plan a day that works best for you. If your child has a summer birthday, we will celebrate their birthday during one of our monthly "Birthday Blessing" times. Gifts cannot be exchanged. It is entirely optional for a parent to provide a birthday treat for their child's class on their special day, to be enjoyed during snack time. Parents are encouraged to bring nutritious snacks such as banana, pumpkin, or zucchini bread or muffins. Fruits and cheeses are also a nutritious snack. Packaged items coming from home for class distribution must include nutritional information.

If you plan to have a private party with all of your child's classmates, you are invited to send invitations to school to be passed out by the teacher. Unless all of your child's classmates will be invited or if children from other classes are to be invited, we ask that you please contact the school office for available numbers and addresses that you may need. **Do not bring** the invitations to school.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Each day the children will have nap time after lunch. Children will sleep on their own vinyl mat which will be kept at school. The bedding will be sent home at the end of each week to be washed and returned the following week. Due to space and storage facilities, **roll type bedding will not be allowed**. We recommend a king size pillowcase to cover the mat. Children are encouraged but never forced to sleep. Children may bring 1 small stuffed animal/doll to school for naptime. **No toys from home are allowed**. No food, drinks, or bottles will be allowed during nap time. Napping and non-napping children are supervised at all times.

Nap Mats are available for purchase from St. John. Mats purchased outside of St. John must be: waterproof, measure at least 1 inch thick, have two different colored sides, be labeled with the child's name and meet school office approval. The Kinder-Mat brand meets all these guidelines. If mats become damaged during the school year, parents are responsible to replace at their cost. The children use these mats during their rest time in the afternoon.

We have designated “private” areas available for nursing moms. Please contact office administration for assistance.

Participation: Children should be able to independently participate in all school activities.

If you have any concerns beyond those addressed by the Director, you may contact our Senior Pastor in the church office at 281-373-0503 or Texas Health and Human Services at 800-252-5400 or at www.dfps.state.tx.us. Our facility number is 819924. We have a copy of minimum standards in each classroom, the library, and the office. The most recent licensing inspection report is posted.

Listed below are operational policies required by Minimum Standards that you must be aware of:

1. Discipline and Guidance – pg. 22
2. Expulsion Policy – pg. 23
3. Emergency Plans – pg. 18
4. Procedures for conducting health checks – pg. 20
5. Procedures for parents to discuss concerns with the director – pg. 8
6. Procedures for parents to participate in operation activities – pg. 16
7. Procedures for release of children – pg. 13
8. Illness and exclusion criteria – pg. 20
9. Procedures for dispensing medications – pg. 21
10. Immunization requirements for children – pg. 17
11. Meals and food service practices – pg. 24
12. Procedures to visit the center with securing prior approval – pg. 16
13. Procedures for parents to contact Child Care Licensing (CCL), DFPS, Child Abuse Hotline, and CCL website – pg. 25

Please be sure you understand these policies completely. Thank you.