



ECEC

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER

PARENT HANDBOOK

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Dear ECEC families,

Welcome to St. John's Lutheran Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC)! We look forward to partnering with you.

St. John's Lutheran ECEC opened its doors to the community back in December of 1983. We have provided a caring Christian environment for children ages 2 through 5 years old for over 35 years.

The St. John's Lutheran ECEC philosophy is:

"We recognize and appreciate each child as a unique creation of God, who learns and develops in a way that may differ from others. We offer a warm and nurturing atmosphere in which your child will learn through a variety of experiences, play, and problem solving."

The ECEC uses the Creative Curriculum for Preschool, sixth edition. Creative Curriculum helps teachers build on the foundational knowledge of child development and best classroom practices and provides day-to-day, moment-to-moment support for helping every child to succeed. We also use the *Little Lambs Early Childhood Curriculum* a complete Christian development curriculum to support chapel instruction.

The ECEC operates as a non-profit, licensed, and accredited Christian Center. The ECEC is a ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church and is overseen by the ECEC Board of Operations under the Living Out Faith Ministry of the Church Council.

St. John's Lutheran Early Childhood Education Center has been accredited by NAEYC since 2008 and VCPE since 2021. The ECEC's commitment to a quality education for young children is reflected in these accreditations and certifications.

I feel very blessed to be taking on the role of Director for this coming school year. I have enjoyed getting to know our current families and am honored to work alongside this wonderful staff. After 10 years in leadership with public education, I am excited to be on this journey in early childhood education. These years anchor so much of the critical foundations needed for success in school. I also appreciate having my two youngest children joining me here at ECEC as well.

We welcome questions and suggestions and look forward to growing together in faith and education.

Sincerely,

Amanda Parks
ECEC Director



ST. JOHN'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Dear Parents and Guardians:

In his earthly ministry, Jesus welcomed children. We read this in Scripture: "And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them" (Mark 10:16). At St. John's Lutheran Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC), we also welcome children and strive to love them as Jesus has loved us. That is at the heart of what our Center is all about on a day-to-day basis.

We thank you for entrusting your child to our school's ministry. We firmly believe that each child is a unique gift from God, created in His own image, and very much loved and valued by our Lord. Our school staff work to promote a warm and loving environment in which children and their families can learn and grow together.

Please know that you and your family are welcome to participate in any ministry activity at St. John's. Information about congregational programs and activities may be obtained through our church's website (www.sjlc.com) or by calling the church office at 703-971-2210. Look for us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter!

If you do not have a church home, please accept this invitation to come and be a part of our family of faith here. We are a community of believers from many walks in life who come together in the name of Jesus Christ for worship, learning, service, and fellowship. Worship services are held on Sunday mornings at 10:30 AM with LiveStreaming options. If service hours change, we will advise you!

We're glad that you have chosen to enroll your child at St. John's and look forward to becoming better acquainted with you. May our Lord Jesus Christ richly bless you and your family.

Sincerely,

The Rev. John S. Meehan
Senior Pastor

**The A B Cs of St. John's Lutheran
Early Childhood Education Center
(ECEC)**

This handbook provides information and answers to questions you may have pertaining to the ECEC. We reserve the right to change policies as necessary during the year.



Absences:

If your child will be absent from the Center, we request that you inform us either by emailing the office at ecec.admin@sjlc.com or sending a message in Brightwheel. Full tuition is still required whether your child is present or absent. We will contact you after 2 consecutive days of absences if we don't hear from you. (See also, **Vacation**)

Accreditation: St. John's Lutheran Early Childhood Education Center is accredited through NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The reaccreditation became effective on April 1, 2018 and is good for five years. We are currently in the renewal stage of our accreditation with NAEYC. We follow standards of excellence in the education of young children.

We are also accredited through the Virginia Council of Private Education (VCPE). The VCPE is a private umbrella organization responsible for accrediting Virginia private schools.

Allergies:

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a form from the doctor detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatment, and care - this form can be found on the ECEC website and is often given during the enrollment process. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in each classroom and the kitchens. We are trained to familiarize ourselves with and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Anniversary of the ECEC:

St. John's Lutheran Early Childhood Education Center was founded on December 13, 1983.

Arrival and Departure:

Please enter the parking lot through the second entrance (furthest from Franconia Road), and park in a marked space. We ask that you do not pull up to the front door or park along the sidewalk. This area must be kept clear for emergency vehicles and school buses. Please do not leave your engine running.

No child should be left in a car unattended while dropping or picking up another child.

After signing in your child using the QR codes, please take your child to the restroom to wash their hands and use the restroom, if needed. Afterwards, escort your child to their own classroom at the time of drop off. **Be sure a staff member is aware of your child's arrival.** Please try your best to only drop off and pick up at the classroom doorways. If you drop off AFTER breakfast when Circle and learning time has begun, we ask that your child is dropped off at the office and we will walk them to class to limit disruptions to the learning environment. For now, you may go to classrooms any time after nap for pick up, but if the teacher is in the middle of instruction, they will not be available to talk with you at that time.

When leaving the Center in the afternoons, please be sure to check your child's cubby and collect their belongings. You will also need to sign out your child when departing the center. (See also, **Drop-off and Pickup** and **Late Pickup**)

Assessment:

When a child is enrolled, the child is placed in an age-appropriate class. Within six weeks, the child is given an initial screening assessment. This tool is used to determine, along with observations from teachers and staff and communication with parents, the strengths and needs of the child in all developmental areas. We also use the Creative Curriculum assessment tool throughout the year.

Twice a year, the teachers formally meet with the parents to discuss the progress of the child. Parents are asked to provide input for the evaluation. Teachers and parents can informally discuss their child's progress at any time.

In the event of a behavior problem or suspected delay in the development of the child, the teachers, along with the Director, meet with the parents and discuss their observations using the anecdotal records and work samples that have been collected. If your child has an IEP or is in the process of an evaluation, please share those documents with our office staff. If you need help with Child Find or have concerns, we are available to support you in the process.

Attendance:

For maximum learning benefit, it is important that the children be at the Center from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. During this period, we provide academic activities and follow a play-based developmental curriculum through the Creative Curriculum. We also incorporate Social Emotional Learning through Conscious Discipline.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-Ups:

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts or Approved Pickup. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In the event of a divorce or parent separation, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without knowledge of any custody arrangements, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to either of their parents.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after 6:30 PM we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the Fairfax County child protective services agency (703-324-7400) and authorities.



Behavior Management:

St. John's ECEC staff is devoted to providing a safe environment that promotes the development of our children's positive self-esteem and self-discipline. We understand there are differences among children according to their personalities, ages, and abilities. We believe that teachers can guide children toward self-discipline and social development. To provide proper guidance and discipline, the staff uses a combination of a safe and inviting environment, a carefully planned schedule and a variety of activities, equipment, and materials. Our teachers understand the importance of modeling through actions and words.

We will be implementing structures, lessons, and professional learning from Conscious Discipline this year. Our staff will be participating in E-courses called Handling Upset and then have a full day of Professional Development on our November 6th workday. Feel free to check out their website, they have great resources and podcasts. We will also be sharing family updates as we implement more of the program.

Each classroom will have a calming area in the room to provide a safe space for big emotions. We will work on teaching children how and when to use the area. Teachers will guide children and sit with them most of the time to assist in their self-regulation strategies. We have breathing tools, sensory items, and other resources to help aid in regulation.

For aggressive behavior or behaviors that disrupt the learning environment: the child shall be removed immediately so other children do not continue observing this behavior and can continue their learning. The child may go to the office to discuss why this behavior happened. For occasional behavior instances, the teacher or Director will inform families of the events that day. The teachers will keep documentation of events on children who display aggressive or disruptive behavior. For continued behaviors, families will be contacted for a parent conference with the teacher and the Director to develop a plan of action. Some behaviors may require an immediate early dismissal from school that day.

It is important that we have success and a positive experience for all parties at St. John's. If we do not see progress being made with aggressive or disruptive behaviors, termination of care may be considered. St. John's will strive to give families at least one week of notice before ending care.

Requirements for early pick up or expulsion due to significant behavior concerns do not change the required tuition fee. There will be no reimbursements made for students required to go home or stay home. If care is terminated and the student will not be returning, tuition payments will end at that time.

Birthdays:

You are welcome to celebrate your child's birthday with a special treat for either his/her class or all the children at the Center. We ask that you make arrangements with the teacher one week in advance. State Law requires that any food provided must be **commercially** prepared (i.e., individually wrapped cupcakes, cookies, crackers, etc.) and purchased at the store with an ingredients label visible. **No homemade foods are allowed.** Keep in mind that some children are allergic to eggs, peanuts, etc. so please check with the Director in advance to be sure what you plan to bring is acceptable for all students. The birthday treat will be served during afternoon snack if provided by 2:30 PM. Decorations, balloons, etc. are not permitted during this time. Your child will get a birthday crown and goodies from us. Invitations to parties outside the Center should be given to the teachers

to distribute to your child's classmates. The center will not provide contact information (emails, phone numbers, etc) for class families.

Brightwheel Online Parent Portal:

Brightwheel is an online portal that helps manage attendance, billing, and parent-teacher communications. With Brightwheel, teachers can send messages, pictures, etc. directly to parents' smartphones. You are welcome to download the Brightwheel app to your smartphone or go to mybrightwheel.com.

Please be aware that while teachers try their best to answer messages quickly, they are often busy with the children and cannot respond to messages/questions immediately. Most teachers will try to respond during nap time, but it might take up to 24 hours for a response. Teachers are not required to answer Brightwheel messages/questions outside of the ECEC business hours. Sending an email to the Director and/or the Administrative Assistant during the day is your best option. If there is ever a question that you require a more immediate response to, please call the school office at 703-971-3581.

Board of Operations:

The ECEC Board of Operations oversees the processes of the Center, provides guidance to the Director, and makes decisions on issues beyond the scope of the Director. The Board meets once a month. Voting members of the Board are church members and include a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and one additional member with no formal responsibilities. Non-voting members include the Director of the Center, the Pastor, the SJLC Director of Discipleship, the Living Out Faith Ministry Lead, and a parent representative. Additional parents are welcome to bring matters before the Board for the first 15 minutes of the meeting. If you would like to attend a meeting, please check with the Director for time and location.

Book Clubs:

Monthly book club flyers offer a good opportunity to purchase inexpensive books for your child. We have moved to online ordering, so you will get an email about every other month letting you know that our school is open for orders, and you can place your order online. **You are under no obligation to purchase any books.** The Center benefits from this program by receiving free books for our classrooms based on the number of orders placed by parents and friends.

Bulletin Boards:

A parent resources bulletin board in the entryway provides a calendar of activities for each month, menu, holiday notices and other parenting resources. There are parent resources on a variety of child rearing topics that can be found here – this corner is updated at least monthly. Additional resources can be provided upon request.

Each classroom also has a classroom bulletin board with pertinent information you will want to check weekly.



Calendar:

The ECEC calendar can be found on our website under the Parent Corner. **Please note dates the Center is closed.**

Cell Phone Usage:

The times you spend in the Center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with you about your child. To make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you **not** use your cell phone while in the Center except during the check-in/out process.

Check In/Out:

The Center uses a QR code to check in/out students daily. Parents should download the Brightwheel app to their smartphone and proceed with the check in/out process. Someone can show you how to do this on your child's first day. If you forget your phone or do not have access to the app, there is a check in kiosk in the entryway that can be used. If you need assistance, please stop by the office.

Christian Education:

The Center operates as a Christian environment. We teach the children biblical principles of loving and caring for each other as Christ our Savior loves and cares for us. Christian songs, mealtime prayers, the Lord's Prayer, and other prayers are included. We use the Little Lambs Early Childhood curriculum which is a complete Developmental Christian Curriculum for preschoolers. If you have any questions, please contact the Director. Chapel services are conducted once a week on Wednesday mornings by the Pastor, the Director of Discipleship, or one of the ECEC teachers. Chapel time includes a children's Bible lesson, songs, prayer, and benediction. The length of chapel is about 10 to 15 minutes.

Classes:

The Center has 4 classrooms that are broken up roughly by ages and development levels. Each classroom has a Lead Teacher, a Teaching Assistant, and/or Floaters that assist throughout the day.

- **The Kind Koalas:** This youngest group consists of 2-year-olds who are not potty trained or are working towards toilet training. The class's activities are oriented to language development, social interactions, and an introduction to group games. They follow the Creative Curriculum for two-year-olds. Parents must provide required supplies such as diapers, Pull-Ups, and wipes. The children remain in this class until they are potty trained and approximately 3 years of age. Parents will be given advanced notice when a transition will occur – most transitions occur at the beginning of the school year or the beginning of the summer program. Group size is approximately 10 children.
- **The Caring Caterpillars:** This group consists of 3-year-olds. The group's focus is on play-based learning and social/emotional development skills. They follow the Creative Curriculum for preschool. Children work at learning centers and develop a sense of responsibility and independence as they begin to follow more routines and use their new skills to attend to their personal needs. The child must be potty trained to move into this classroom. Group size maximum is 10 children.
- **The Bright Butterflies:** This group consists of 3- and 4-year-olds. Students in this class will most likely all be in the Pre-K class the following year in preparation for kindergarten the year after that. The focus is on the social/emotional development of each child to get them as confident as possible to be good friends and good citizens. They follow the Creative Curriculum for preschool. Group size is approximately 14 children.
- **The Pre-K Pandas:** This group is for children in their last year before starting Kindergarten. The focus is to prepare children for kindergarten, and we focus on the social/emotional development of each child to get them as confident as possible to be good friends and good citizens upon entering Kindergarten. They follow the Creative Curriculum for preschool and a unit on kindergarten preparation. Group size is approximately 20 students.

Clothes:

Children should dress casually and comfortably. **Shoes should be sturdy** with a safe sole, a closed toe, and a closed heel or heel strap such as tennis shoes or sneakers. **Flip-flops, sandals, and Crocs (or similar)** are not acceptable. **For emergency evacuation, the law requires that the children always wear socks.**

A sweater, sweatshirt, or lightweight jacket is always desirable. Weather permitting, children play outdoors a minimum of one hour each day. For cold days, please be sure your child has a warm coat, hat, and mittens. Please also provide your child's teacher with an extra set of clothes.

All garments should be labeled with your child's name. Remember that your child will be creative and will likely use glue and paint while at the Center. The Center is not responsible for stained clothes.

Compliance with Americans Disabilities Act (ADA):

St. John's Lutheran ECEC accepts children in compliance with the Americans Disabilities Act, its regulations, and any other local, state, or federal laws to service individuals with disabilities. We strive to make reasonable accommodations to individuals who can safely participate in a group care environment. We review each case carefully prior to enrollment. If your child is in special education at a public school, we require a copy of his/her individual education plan (IEP) or similar documents for inclusion in the child's files. The IEP will allow the teacher to provide the best learning environment for the child.

Communal Water-Play:

Unsupervised communal water play is prohibited. Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable diseases.

Confidentiality and Children's Records:

All information in your children's records, including your personal information, is privileged and confidential and will remain under lock and key. Teachers and staff are trained to be discreet. Our Center understands the importance of protecting the rights and privacy of children, their families, and our teachers. Parents and guardians may have access to their child's records upon request.

Cot & Mat Sheets:

Each child must have a cot/mat sheet -- **this is a licensing requirement.**

Caterpillars, Butterflies, and Pandas use mats to rest. Koalas use cots to sleep. Please provide a fitted crib sheet, *not a regular bed sheet*, since this fits our mats and cots the best. Your child's sheet must be taken home each Friday to be washed and returned the following Monday. Due to our limited storage space, **do not send sleeping bags, oversized blankets, or pillows.**

Cubbies:

Each child is provided with a cubby in the classroom to keep some personal belongings, papers, and artwork to go home. Notes from the teacher or Director may also be placed in the cubbies so please check your child's cubby daily.

Curriculum:

Our curriculum emphasizes community because the classroom is an important setting for developing the positive relationships that are the foundation for all learning. We use the Creative Curriculum program which was first introduced to schools in 1978. Through the years, many changes have been made. We are currently using the sixth edition. The curriculum is based on five fundamental principles. These principles are:

- Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning.
- Social-emotional competence is a significant factor in school success.
- Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning.
- The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions.
- Teacher-family partnerships promote development and learning.

Information about the curriculum is given to parents when the child is first enrolled. It is also listed on our website at <https://www.sjlc.com/ecec-curriculum>

Teachers are also being trained in Conscious Discipline during the 2023-2024 School Year. This is aligned with Creative Curriculum. Conscious Discipline is recognized as a leader in Social and Emotional Learning.



Discipline:

See **Behavior Management**

Drop-off and Pickup:

We open at 6:45 AM – please do not drop off your child prior to the opening. Parents are expected to accompany their children to their classroom and sign them in using the QR code. For the summer program, we open at 7:00 AM.

We close at 6:00 PM – please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time. It is imperative for the safety of the children that procedures are followed when dropping off and picking up your children from the Center. For the summer program, we close at 5:30 PM.

**In the event of late drop-offs, please try your best to drop-off your child prior to their class’s lunch time as it is very stressful for a young child to be dropped off during nap and usually results in other children being woken up by the noise.

Also, please try your best not to pick up your child between the hours of 12:30 and 2:30 PM as this causes a disturbance to the other children sleeping. If you need to pick up your child during naptime, **please send a message in Brightwheel that morning, as well as when you arrive to pick up your child, or call the office (please do not ring the callbox outside the door)** so we know to bring your child out to you. Ringing the callbox during nap tends to wake up the other sleeping children. (See also, **Arrivals and Departures** and **Late Pickup**)



Electronic Media:

Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media (i.e., TV, DVDs, streaming videos) viewing and computer use but, from time-to-time, we may use a show without advertisement as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator or we may show a movie on a special occasion or celebration day. All electronic media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child with a positive experience with increased understanding of the world. Electronic media will be offered occasionally only as a free choice, used to meet a developmental goal, and limited to no more

than 1 hour per week per group.

Emergency Closings or Inclement Weather:

The Center follows the Federal Government's Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regarding snow emergency's, late arrivals, and early dismissals. **While they may coincide, we do not follow the Fairfax County Public School's closings.** You can check the status of OPM by visiting www.opm.gov and clicking the "operating status" along the top menu, through the OPM Alert mobile app available for download to your personal device, or by calling 202-606-1900.

We will monitor weather events closely and inform families by email, messages through the Brightwheel app, and phone, if necessary, if we make any other decisions about closing the Center early due to safety concerns of and for our staff. In the event of a major community-wide emergency, the ECEC Board will make closing decisions and we will communicate those decisions with families in the timeliest manner possible.

Emergency Contacts:

When completing registration forms, parents must provide the Center with at least two emergency contacts that reside in the Washington D.C. Metro Area. We must have their full names, addresses, and phone number(s). These individuals will be contacted in the case of an emergency if we cannot reach the parents/guardians of the child and should be prepared to show identification should they need to pick-up your child from the Center.

Emergency Health Care:

By policy, the Center always has staff members who are trained in First Aid and CPR on site. Staff members with First Aid/CPR training will handle any minor mishaps that occur at the Center.

In more extreme or emergency cases, the Franconia Fire Department Ambulance will be called. Per the Release and Information for Emergency Medical Care form parents fill out upon enrollment, this gives parents' permission to have the child transported to a hospital or emergency room as needed.



Facebook:

You can find us on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/st.johnsecec/>. We post updates on fun events ECEC has or photos of activities the children are doing in their classrooms. We try to post weather and closing announcements on this page as well.

Family Communications:

We recognize the value and importance of families in our Center and would always like to be a support and resource for you. Open and frequent communication between parents, teachers, and the Director will strengthen a positive partnership that will enhance your child's learning experience. We promote communication through:

- Constant communication between parents and teachers.
- Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year.
- Seasonal newsletters and a Calendar of the Month.
- Posted weekly plan, describing the themes and suggested activities that will take place during the week in the classroom.
- Annual parent surveys.

- Email: If you have not received any e-mails from the Center, please notify the Director- we may have a typo!
- Our website is: www.sjlc.com/ecec The password for the Parent Corner is: 3c3cparent

Fees:

Activity Fee- From time-to-time there will be additional fees associated with special activities. In order for your child to participate in the special activities, the special fees will need to be paid in advance.

Registration Fee- A non-refundable enrollment/registration fee of \$100.00 per child is due annually at the time of registration. If you are registering more than one child, the fee is \$175.00 per family. (See also, **Registration**)

Late Pickup Fee- If you have two late pick-ups, more than 10 minutes, a late fee of \$20.00 per child will be applied at the second late pick up. Additional late pick-ups will be \$20.00 per child after 10 minutes, plus \$1.00 per minute after that. Late pick-up fees must be paid the following morning. (See also, **Late Pickup**)

Late Payment Fee- Any late payments will incur a \$20.00 late payment fee per week. (See also, **Tuition**)

Waitlist Fee- There is a non-refundable application/waitlist fee of \$50.00. Should your child be moved from the waitlist to the enrollment list, your wait fee will be applied to their registration fee. (See also, **Waitlist Policy**)



Hand Washing:

Before your child joins the group each day, please make sure he/she washes or sanitizes their hands. We encourage children to wash their hands regularly in order to prevent the spread of viruses. Please encourage this healthy habit at home also. Children must wash their hands before meals or joining any of the groups.

Health Care:

Virginia State Law requires a physical examination and immunization record on Form MCH 213F, Virginia Health Information Form/Comprehensive Physical Examination Report/ Certification of Immunization. The immunization record must be on file at the center **prior to the child's starting date** and the physical must be provided **within 30 days of the child's starting date**. If your child receives any new shot(s), please provide the center with a signed/dated copy of his/her new immunization records. Parents must provide an updated immunization record when their child turns 4 years old.

We ask you to ensure hand washing of your child before they join the group – this can eliminate approximately 75 percent of the risk of spreading illnesses. Parents can help us in our effort to keep your children healthy, so we ask your cooperation in the following ways:

1. If your child has been diagnosed with any of the diseases listed on the [Communicable Disease Chart](#) we ask that you notify us promptly. If they have been exposed to any of the diseases listed, we also ask that you notify us of this information.
2. If your child shows any of the following symptoms, you will be called and asked to come immediately. Please help us protect the other children by responding promptly. If your child has any of the following symptoms at home, we ask that you keep him/her out of school until the symptoms are gone for at least 24 hours or until your physician says it is all right to return.

The symptoms include: • fever greater than 100.4°F. • severe coughing - child gets red or blue in the face • high-pitched croupy or whooping sounds after coughing • yellowish skin or eyes • pinkeye - tears, redness of eyelid lining, followed by swelling and discharge of pus • unusual spots or rashes • sore throat or trouble swallowing • infected skin patches • crusty, bright yellow, dry, or gummy areas of skin - possibly accompanied by fever • headache and stiff neck • vomiting • severe itching of body or scalp or scratching of scalp

If a child appears cranky or less active than usual, cries more than usual, or just seems generally unwell at home, you are asked to look for any of the above symptoms or inform the child's teacher so that the child can be watched carefully for the development of symptoms. It is imperative that we all work together to keep all of the children who attend the center as healthy and happy as possible. If your child has an illness that requires more individual care than our staff can provide, we reserve the right to call the parents to pick up the child. A sick child should go home as soon as possible. If you are contacted and asked to pick up for any of the above reasons, you or an authorized pick-up person must pick up within one hour.

Notices will be posted informing parents if children are exposed to communicable diseases. Parents must inform the center if their child has been exposed to any diseases outside of the Center. Please notify the Center when your child will be absent due to illness.

Holidays:

A list of the current holiday/closing schedule is posted on the bulletin board next to the check-in kiosk, as well as on the Parent Corner of the ECEC website.

Hours of Operation:

Childcare services are provided from 6:45 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday during the school year, and 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday for the summer session. These hours are subject to change upon Board of Operations approval.



Illness:

See **Health Care**

Inclement Weather:

See **Emergency Closings or Inclement Weather**



Late Pickup:

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. Late fees of \$20.00 per child after 10 minutes and \$1.00 per minute per child thereafter will be added to their Brightwheel account. Late pick-up fees must be paid the following morning. **Repeated late pick up may result in childcare services being terminated.**

Please call the Center if you know you are going to be late picking up your child. When possible, you should make arrangements for him/her to be picked up by someone else and then inform us. Your being late may cause our staff members to be late for their own family obligations, so please be as considerate as possible when you are delayed. (See also, **Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-ups** and **Emergency Contacts**)

Should a parent fail to notify the Center of a late pick-up, and after repeated attempts to contact the parents and emergency contacts with no response, Child Protective Services (CPS) and the local police department will be contacted 30 minutes after the Center has closed. If it is determined that the child must be taken elsewhere until parents can be reached, the Center will release the child to CPS and/or the police.

Licensing:

St. John's Lutheran Church operates their childcare center under the policies set forth by the Virginia State Licensed Child Day Centers and as such must comply with the minimum standards set forth by this organization. The Health and Fire Departments and the Department of Social Services make frequent inspections. The results of these inspections are located on the bulletin board next to the check-in kiosk. We are currently licensed for student's ages two to five years and our capacity is 50 students. Please see the Licensed Child Day Centers page on the Virginia Department of Education website for additional information (<https://www.childcare.virginia.gov/providers/program-types/licensed-child-day-center>).

Lost Items:

We are not responsible for any items brought into the Center that become missing. Please label all your child's belongings with his/her name in a permanent marker. We have a lost and found basket located in the entrance hallway.



Masks:

At this time, masks are optional for children, staff, and parents unless you're in day 6-10 after a COVID-19 diagnosis, in that case, they are mandatory.

Meals:

The Center provides a family-style breakfast and hot lunch each day in the Church Dining Room, and a snack in the classrooms each afternoon to all enrolled students. The Center promotes good nutrition by serving well-balanced meals with milk and natural fruit juices, as well as wholesome snacks. We limit candy, cookies, and other high sugar treats to very special occasions. **Please do not allow your child to come to school with gum or candy at any time.** We will work with parents of children with special food needs provided you have submitted your doctor's recommendation form. Monthly menus are sent home at the beginning of each month, posted on the parent's bulletin board in the Center entryway, and posted in the Parent Corner on our website.

Our catering company is Jeffery's Catering. They are a licensed food service company that complies with all the requirements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jeffery's Catering also offers certain accommodations to allergies at your request.

Early morning snack: Children arriving prior to 8:00 AM may bring a healthy and low sugar breakfast to eat at the Center. We can provide milk, juice, cereal for the meal.

To learn when your child's mealtimes are, please check the daily schedule posted outside their classroom.

Medication:

Medications can only be administered with a written consent form. Each individual medication must have its own consent form. Medical consent forms are valid for only 10 working days unless it is a long-term medication, which requires a separate form to be completed by a physician. All records of administering of medications are kept on file for the duration of your child's enrollment. All medication, prescription or over the counter, must be in its original labeled container with the child's first and last name and clear instructions for administering.

Long term medications require a physician's authorization and signature. Ask the Director for the appropriate forms to be filled out. For sunscreen, lip balm, etc., see **Topical Non-Prescription Products**.

Only staff members who are MAT trained (Medication Administration Training) will be administering the medication and they will only be administered between the hours of 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM.

Multiculturalism:

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

**Naptime:**

Naptime at St. John's is between 12:15 PM and 2:45 PM, depending on the classroom. Although the children are not required to sleep, they are encouraged to stay on their cot or mat and rest quietly for about 45 minutes. It is a requirement for each child to have a sheet and cover to rest with per licensure.

Also, please try your best not to pick up your child between 12:30 to 2:30 PM as this causes a disturbance to the other children sleeping. If you need to pick up your child during naptime, **please send a message in Brightwheel that morning, as well as when you arrive to pick up your child, or call the office (please do not ring the callbox outside the door)** so we know to bring your child out to you. Ringing the callbox during nap tends to wake up the children.

Non-Discrimination:

St. John's Lutheran Early Childhood Education Center does not discriminate based on a person's religion, color, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, or disability. We provide care for families from all different backgrounds in a loving and caring Christian environment.

**Open Door Policy:**

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For safety and protection of the children, external doors for the Center and Church are kept locked at all times, with the exception of Sunday morning worship or special events. (See also, **Security**)

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

Oral Health Policy:

The ECEC provides the opportunity for children to brush their teeth after lunchtime to practice removing food and plaque – we do not use toothpaste, just water. A toothbrush is provided by the center for each child and is labeled with their name. The ECEC replaces the toothbrushes at least every three months – typically at the beginning of the summer program, the beginning of the school year, in December, and again in March.

Orientation:

Parents and children are invited to the Center for an Open House informal meet and greet visit prior to attendance. We will also hold a Back to School Night in the fall. At these events, parents can visit their child’s classroom, get acquainted with the class schedule, talk with the teacher, and have any class questions answered or concerns addressed.

Outdoor Play:

All children are required to participate in both morning and afternoon outdoor playtimes. When the temperature drops below 32 degrees wind chill or above 90 degrees heat index outside, or the air quality is unhealthy, we may cancel outside playtimes for the day. We check the temperature daily at weather.com and the air quality at deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/air/monitoring-assessments/air-quality-forecast. We also consult the heat index chart at weather.gov/ffc/hichart. In the instance of cancelled outdoor play, alternative indoor play will be provided. Please dress your children appropriately for outdoor/indoor playtime.

Water bottles are also permitted, and encouraged, for children’s use while playing outdoors (please, NO JUICES...water only). As with any other property brought into the Center, please be sure to mark all items with your child’s name clearly and with a permanent marker.



Parent Corner:

The Parent Corner is a password-protected page on our website that contains various resources, handbooks, forms and links. Please check it regularly as this is where we will update any changes to policies or information about upcoming events. The Parent Corner can be found at <https://www.sjlc.com/ecec-parent-corner> (password: **3c3cparent**).

Policies:

The Center complies with Virginia State Licensing Statutes. We establish policies to provide a safe, nurturing environment for the children. Any changes to or addition of new policies throughout the school year will be posted in the Parent Corner of the Center’s website.

Potty Training:

See **Toilet Training**

Progress Reports:

Parent/teacher conferences are conducted twice a year. A progress report is sent home by the end of the school year. Throughout the year your child’s teacher may send notes of praise or concern home to keep you

informed about progress between conferences. Parents or teachers may schedule a conference as needed. Assessment screening is accomplished within the first month of enrollment.

Prohibited Substances:

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs on the Center's premises is prohibited. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized, potentially toxic, substances are also prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.



Registration:

A completed registration form with an annual registration fee of \$100 individual/\$175 per family is required for enrollment. (See also, **Fees**)

The following information is required before any child will be accepted in the program:

- Completed Registration Form and registration fee
- Proof of Identification and birth
- Release and Information for Emergency Medical Care Form
- Infection Control Policy Form
- Parent Contract
- Physical examination and immunization form, completed and signed by a Physician
- Information on allergies and Allergy Display authorization form (if applicable)

Additional items needed before starting school:

- One fitted sheet and blanket for sleeping (labeled with child's name)
- Extra set of clothing (labeled with child's name)
- USDA Participation form
- Liability waiver



Security:

All exterior entrances to our building remain locked 24 hours a day with the exception of Sunday morning worship or special events. To gain admittance, please use the call box to ring the bell at the school's entrance, or use the doorbell located between the two sets of red doors located at the Church's main entrance. Upon leaving, please ensure that the door closes completely. Only individuals listed on your contact form may pick up your child. We reserve the right to ask for identification. (See also, **Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-ups**)

Separation:

We are sensitive to the fact that a child's first experience away from mom and dad in a new environment can be very traumatic. We are used to dealing with tears and anxiety. We make every effort to comfort and reassure the children during the transition. If your child is having difficulty, please let us know how you would like our staff to support (i.e.: talking with you and child, easing you out slowly, a quick hug and see you later 😊)

Smoking:

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor environment used by the Center are always non-smoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the Center's premises.

Social Media:

While we love when parents sing our praises to others, both by word of mouth and on social media, we ask that if there are any grievances with our Center that you first contact the Director, so we have the opportunity to investigate. This does not prohibit you from sharing your thoughts and feelings, but it does ask that you give us the opportunity to correct any oversights before you post them on the internet. (See also, **Special Concerns**)

Solicitation:

We prohibit the distribution of any literature or products at our Center.

Special Concerns:

In any community, and in the routine and regular process of daily living, there are inevitable situations or conflicts that are potentially negative for individuals or for the community. It is critical that long before conflict arises, an environment already exists that fosters mutual respect, tolerance, and clear, honest communication. The emotional health of a center is determined not by the absence of conflict, but by its quick and intelligent resolution. St. John's Lutheran ECEC is committed to responding to all family grievances within a 24-hour period and to resolving those grievances as quickly as possible. Concerns and grievances are most effectively addressed within the Center. If a specific classroom concern arises, you should discuss the issue with the appropriate teacher. We encourage you to discuss more general Center concerns with the Director, who will involve staff members as needed. If you feel that your problem is not yet resolved, you may then wish to speak with the ECEC Board or the pastor to pursue the matter further. Please ask the Director for the date and time of the next Board meeting if you are interested in bringing any issues to them.

If you wish to see your child's school file, please ask the Director, or an available supervisor. No staff members other than the Director or supervisor have the authorization to release a child's records.

Special Classes:

ECEC offers optional enrichment classes available for additional fees. Once classes are offered, the information will be emailed and sent via Brightwheel.

We reserve the right to change or cancel Special Classes as needs of the Center and interest of families vary.

Special Programs:

Throughout the year the Center presents special programs involving the children and their families. There is a Thanksgiving Luncheon, a Christmas program, a Mother's Day Tea Party, a Father's Day Event, and a Graduation for rising Kindergartners. We encourage parents, friends, and relatives to join us for these special events.

Summer Program:

The summer program starts after graduation in mid-June. The Center operates 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM during the summer session and children will be grouped according to age. During summer care, we may change group assignments accordingly by how many children are enrolled.

Suspected Child Abuse:

In compliance with the Virginia Code 63.1-2448.3, all staff members are required to report any suspected incidents of child abuse. All staff are required to take child abuse training yearly. If a staff member is suspected of child abuse, the employee will be immediately placed on leave of absence until the proper investigation is cleared by CPS.

While at our Center, please refrain from using any form of behavior that is not consistent with our behavior guidance policy. All staff members who witness any form of physical punishment are required by law to report the incident to the appropriate local authorities.



Toilet Training:

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

All children must be toilet trained except for those enrolled in the Kind Koalas class. (See also, Classes)

Topical Non-Prescription Products:

These products refer to sunscreen, insect repellent, lip balm, lotions, and diaper cream. For these products, we follow the manufacturer's recommendations for application. We do not accept any expired products. The products must be in their original containers and have the child's full name written on them and the **consent forms are good for 6 months**. These products will be administered only between the hours of 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM.

Transitions:

Your child's transition in childcare should be a positive and exciting adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Transition from home to Center:

Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At this time, please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

Transition between learning programs:

Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program.

Transition to elementary school:

We will provide you with information on local schools, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary school. We also host an annual Kindergarten Transition meeting each spring to help guide parents through the process.

Tuition:

Tuition is charged through Brightwheel and is typically charged weekly, the Sunday before services are provided. Alternate billing cycles (bi-weekly or monthly) can be accommodated at the parent's request.

All tuition must be paid promptly and on time. Any late payments will incur a \$20.00 late payment fee per week. If there are special circumstances, it is the parents' responsibility to communicate immediately with the Director. Any accommodation will be at the Director's discretion. You may be asked to keep your child home until your account can be settled, however, if any account should be in arrears more than 2 weeks, you will forfeit your child's class enrollment and any uncollected fees will be turned over to a collection agency at the parent's expense.

Tuition Assistance:

Through the use of a school dedicated fund, the Center may be able to provide tuition assistance for a short-term period to qualifying families. Short-term, non-enduring tuition assistance is for families that have had a recent hardship or are in the process of obtaining long-term tuition assistance through other government agencies. If you feel as though your family may qualify for temporary assistance, please speak with the Director as soon as possible, to help avoid late fees, collection efforts, and to not risk losing your child's enrollment spot. All decisions on the use of Tuition Assistance are at the Director's discretion with the guidance of the Center's Board of Operations, in some instances.



Vacation:

After one full year of consecutive enrollment, children who are enrolled in the year-round program at the Center are entitled to one vacation week without tuition payment. Your normal tuition will be excused for this week and your child will keep their class enrollment; however, they cannot physically be at the Center. We require 2 week's notice when you choose to take this 'vacation' week. If you have been here LESS than one full year of consecutive enrollment, you are entitled to one vacation week at half price tuition.



Waitlist Policy:

To place your child on the Wait List, please complete the Wait List Application and return to the Center with the non-refundable \$50 Wait List fee. Your application will not be considered complete until both are received.

Information on the Wait List Application must be complete and up to date. It is the responsibility of the submitter to inform the Center of changes.

Enrollment is offered based on priority and date of submission.

- Priority 1: Children of St. John's Lutheran Church and Early Childhood Education Center employees
- Priority 2: Siblings of currently enrolled students

- Priority 3: Children of SJLC Congregation members
- Priority 4: Children of previously enrolled ECEC families

Within each priority list, spots will be offered based on which classroom (or age-group) has the opening, then on a first come, first served basis based on the date the completed application has been submitted.

When space is offered, the parent/guardian has 48 hours to accept or decline the space. If your child is offered a spot and you decline, you may still remain at the top of the waitlist until you ask to be removed, or until we are unable to contact you after 3 attempts. If an attempt is made to contact a parent/guardian to offer a space and the parent/guardian cannot be reached within 48 hours, the vacancy will be offered to the next child on the list.

Once a space is accepted, registration fees must be paid within 48 hours. Tuition payments must begin no later than two weeks after accepting enrollment.

Water bottles:

Children are encouraged to bring their own water bottle that has a top or covered straw. Please be sure the bottle is clearly labeled with your child's name.

Weapons:

A weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff, or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called, and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

Website:

The ECEC official website is www.sjlc.com/ecec. Is there something you think would be useful for us to include on our website? Please feel free to make suggestions by stopping in the office or emailing the Director at ECEC@sjlc.com.

Withdrawal:

We require a 2-weeks' written notice when you withdraw your child from the Center. If no notice is received, you will be charged the full tuition for the two weeks after their last day.