



St. Peter's

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER
EST. 1980

Parent Handbook Policies and Procedures 2023-2024



School Office Hours
8:30 AM – 3:00 PM
Monday – Thursday

St. Peter's ECDC
20775 Kingsland Blvd.
Katy, Texas 77450

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St. Peter's ECDC Parent Handbook & Policies

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OUR PROGRAM

*Children are a Blessing and a Gift from the Lord.
Psalms 127:3*

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) is to provide a weekday early childhood learning program for children ages 15 months through 5 years in which each child can grow and develop spiritually, cognitively, physically, emotionally, and socially within a Christian atmosphere.

This program is a ministry of St. Peter's United Methodist Church and an outreach to the community. We strive to meet the needs of children and to encourage the development of Christian families through parent participation and education.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe each child is a gift from God, a special unique person valued for his own worth who is growing and learning independently while interacting with the environment through play, a "child's work".

Children develop and acquire skills at their own pace through a predictable sequence of developmental stages. St. Peter's ECDC provides a learning environment, based on intentional and purposeful play, which allows a child to build upon existing skills.

Classroom routines encourage active involvement, meaningful experimentation and reinforcement through repetition. Sensory, motor, cognitive and language skills are introduced through materials and activities which are both child-directed and teacher-directed. Emphasis is on the process rather than the product, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment in each child.

Believing each child is a special unique person, our developmentally appropriate environment provides learning opportunities for a wide range of abilities. We make every effort to include children of all abilities in our program and are responsive to the individual needs of the children.

We value the active involvement of parents in our program. Parents and teachers working together can support one another to provide positive learning experiences and to instill a lifelong love for learning.

GOALS OF ST. PETER'S ECDC

St. Peter's ECDC strives to facilitate children's growth in the following areas:

Spiritual Growth through a warm, caring, accepting Christian climate where children feel free to observe, explore, make mistakes, and live within the guidelines of a Christian community, and to develop knowledge of God's creation and how God loves us.

Cognitive Growth through a rich, stimulating, well-planned, age-appropriate curriculum and learning environment that encourages curiosity, imagination, creativity, problem

solving, and language development as children learn through active play, make believe, art, music, and firsthand experiences.

Physical Growth through activities and equipment that promote physical growth and development involving gross motor skills (large muscles) and fine motor skills (wrist and hand muscles), development of eye-hand coordination, and all senses in learning.

Social Growth through opportunities for children to work, play, and communicate with other children as they develop a growing awareness of the needs, rights, and feelings of others.

Emotional Growth through an atmosphere that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, and a positive attitude toward learning.

St. Peter's ECDC also strives to facilitate Parent Involvement through opportunities for parent participation and education, as school and family work together in planning and meeting the needs of the child.

NAEYC ACCREDITATION

St. Peter's Early Childhood Development Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Academy for Early Childhood Program Accreditation. NAEYC is the nation's largest organization of early childhood professionals. Annual reports and accreditation review every five years ensures that accreditation standards are continuously maintained. Accredited in 1987, St. Peter's Early Childhood Development Center was the third early childhood program in the Houston area to become accredited.

TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

St. Peter's ECDC is regulated by the Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) in order to protect the health, safety and well-being of the children in our care. A copy of the Minimum Standards is available for your review on the HHS website at: www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/. A copy of our most recent Licensing Inspection Report is available for review at any time in the display case outside of the ECDC Office. Information about our program is also available on the HHS website. The Houston Child Care Licensing office can be reached at 713- 287-3238.

CURRICULUM

When planning classroom activities at all levels, teachers consider a child's age group, interests and needs, as well as the concerns of the child and the family. Individual curriculum units are then adapted by each teacher to meet the interests and needs of the children, and to address the curriculum objectives appropriate to the class. Curriculum units include, but are not limited to, holidays, seasons, nature, local community events, and persons, places, and things relevant and important to young children. Classroom experiences include both individual and group activities and teacher-directed and child-directed activities. Center time in various classroom interest areas is also a daily part of the classroom experience.

ECDC uses *The Creative Curriculum*, a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that helps teachers implement developmentally appropriate practice to guide learning in literacy, math, science, social studies, and the arts, while also supporting children's social, emotional, and physical development. At the heart of *The Creative Curriculum* are its 38 Objectives for Development and Learning: Birth Through Kindergarten. These objectives are predictive of children's school success and conform to the State of Texas' early learning standards.

The Creative Curriculum further provides detailed information about the progression of learning for each objective, thereby guiding teachers in planning what to teach and when. It clearly defines reasonable expectations for each age group from birth to kindergarten, resulting in both continuity of instruction across all age levels as well as consistency of instruction within them. The objectives define the skills and knowledge your children will acquire during their time with us. Teachers use an assessment aligned with *The Creative Curriculum* to informally and formally assess your child's progress throughout the year.

OBJECTIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Objectives 1-14 describe major areas of child growth and development.

Objectives 15-36 focus on content learning.

Objectives 37-38 focus on English language acquisition for non-English speakers.

Social-Emotional

1. Regulates own emotions and behavior
 - a. Manages feelings
 - b. Follows limits and expectations
 - c. Takes care of own needs appropriately

2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships
 - a. Forms relationships with adults
 - b. Responds to emotional cues
 - c. Interacts with peers
 - d. Makes friends

3. Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations
 - a. Balances needs and rights of self and others
 - b. Solves social problems

Physical

4. Demonstrates traveling skills
5. Demonstrates balancing skills
6. Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills
7. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination
 - a. Uses finger and hands
 - b. Uses writing and drawing tools

Language

8. Listens to and understands increasingly complex language
 - a. Comprehends language
 - b. Follows directions
9. Uses language to express thoughts and needs
 - a. Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary
 - b. Speaks clearly
 - c. Uses conventional grammar
 - d. Tells about another time or place
10. Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills
 - a. Engages in conversation
 - b. Uses social rules of language

Cognitive

11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning
 - a. Attends and engages
 - b. Persists
 - c. Solves problems
 - d. Shows curiosity and motivation
 - e. Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking
12. Remembers and connects experiences
 - a. Recognizes and recalls
 - b. Makes connections
13. Uses classification skills
14. Uses symbols and images to represent something not present
 - a. Thinks symbolically
 - b. Engages in socio-dramatic play

Literacy

15. Demonstrates phonological awareness
 - a. Notices and discriminates rhyme
 - b. Notices and discriminates alliteration

- c. Notices and discriminates smaller and smaller units of sound
- 16. Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
 - a. Identifies and names letters
 - b. Uses letter-sound knowledge
- 17. Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses
 - a. Uses and appreciates books
 - b. Uses print concepts
- 18. Comprehends and responds to books and other texts
 - a. Interacts during read-aloud and book conversations
 - b. Uses emergent reading skills
 - c. Retells stories
- 19. Demonstrates emergent writing skills
 - a. Writes name
 - b. Writes to convey meaning

Mathematics

- 20. Uses number concepts and operations
 - a. Counts
 - b. Quantifies
 - c. Connects numerals with their quantities
- 21. Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes
 - a. Understands spatial relationships
 - b. Understands shapes
- 22. Compares and measures
- 23. Demonstrates knowledge of patterns

Science and Technology

- 24. Uses scientific inquiry skills
- 25. Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things
- 26. Demonstrates knowledge of the physical properties of objects and materials.
- 27. Demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment
- 28. Uses tools and other technology to perform tasks

Social Studies

- 29. Demonstrates knowledge of self
- 30. Shows basic understanding of people and how they live

31. Explores change related to familiar people or places
32. Demonstrates simple geographic knowledge

The Arts

33. Explores the visual arts
34. Explores musical concepts and expression
35. Explores dance and movement concepts
36. Explores drama through actions and language

English Language Acquisition

37. Demonstrates progress in listening to and understanding English
38. Demonstrates progress in speaking English

SPECIALS CLASSES

In addition to daily music and motor skills activities which are incorporated into the classroom curriculum, our program offers additional weekly experiences in music & motor skills and Spanish class for all ages.

In our music & motor skills class the children are exposed to creative movement activities, and a variety of gross motor activities and equipment. This class helps children develop control of their large motor skills and spatial awareness, as well as instill a love for physical activity and cooperative group play.

In Spanish class, children learn simple words and phrases in Spanish through songs and performing arts from different genres and cultures. The Spanish teacher always plans for stories using puppets, felt board, prop box, and other forms of literature to enrich children's vocabulary and print awareness.

TRANSITION CLASS

St. Peter's ECDC offers a four-day program for 5-year old's who are not quite ready for kindergarten. This program covers all the basic skills introduced in kindergarten. The curriculum includes math and phonics, whole language, inventive spelling, social studies, science, art and drama. Daily small group and center-based activities maximize learning.

STAFF

We are extremely proud of our ECDC staff. The staff is experienced in working with young children and is well trained in early childhood education (ECE). All are active in continuing early childhood education involving best practices and teaching techniques. All staff are certified in CPR and Pediatric First Aid.

Staff working with children younger than 24 months have annual training in Sudden Infant Death and Shaken Baby Syndrome. All staff are fingerprinted and must pass a criminal background check. ECDC does not require its staff to have adult immunizations. However, all staff are required to have their medical checkup for health and wellness clearance from their health care professional every two years. Every class is staffed with a lead teacher and a full-time assistant teacher to insure the proper teacher/child ratio.

ENROLLMENT GUIDELINES

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Enrollment is open to any child, provided our program can meet the needs of the child. St. Peter's ECDC does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color or national or ethnic origin in administration of its admissions, or educational policies, or any other school administered programs. St. Peter's ECDC reserves the right to place children in classes to maintain a reasonable gender balance.

REGISTRATION

Registration for enrollment takes place in January. All students continuing at ECDC will receive an application prior to registration. Children must be at least 15 months of age and not older than 5 years on September 1 of the school year for which they are registering.

Priority registration is given to currently enrolled students, members of St. Peter's United Methodist Church, siblings of currently enrolled students, and St. Peter's ECDC alumni. Each child may register for only one class per school year.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A parent or legal guardian must be a registered member of St. Peter's United Methodist Church to participate in priority registration. **Membership must have been established by December 31st prior to registration.**

ENROLLMENT FORMS

All forms necessary for enrollment must be received in the ECDC office prior to the child being admitted to class. There are no exceptions. Due dates are specific for each form.

Birth Certificate

A copy of your child's birth certificate must be on file in the ECDC office.

Medical Form and Immunization Record

A medical form must be completed for each child and must be signed and dated by the child's physician after June 1st.

All students must provide proof of current immunizations in order to attend our program. **We do not accept the *Exemption from Immunizations for Reasons of Conscience* Affidavit from the State of Texas.**

If your child is on a catch-up schedule for medical reasons, we will need written verification stating the medical reason, signed, and dated by your physician with the dates the *missing* immunizations will be given. If a vaccine-preventable disease occurs at ECDC, to which your child may be susceptible, you will be notified, and your child may be excluded from attending ECDC until it is safe for your child to return.

As your child receives new immunizations, please bring the doctor's written verification to the ECDC office so we can update our records. In addition, keep us informed regarding any changes with allergies and/or medications your child is taking.

Physical and Developmental Information

All attachments including individual care plan (ICP), allergy plan, recent evaluations, or intervention plans (IEP/IFSP) are reviewed by the special care team consisting of the SPUMC Executive Director, ECDC Director, ECDC Registrar, and ECDC Educational Support Specialist before your child's first day of school to ensure the proper care and accommodations are in place as required by state licensing.

§746.2202 TXHHS, Chapter 746 requires childcare providers to have supporting documentation of the child's special care needs provided by the child's licensed health-care professional and any intervention plans provided by a qualified professional affiliated with the local school district, or early childhood intervention program.

Your child's health care physician, specialist (e.g., allergist, etc.) or appointed early intervention program specialist will be contacted by our office to verify the plans submitted. Parents will be invited to a Special Care Plan meeting for proper integration and implementation.

Confidential Information Form

The *Introduce Us to Your Child* form is for the confidential use of the teachers working with your child. It helps them understand your child and your child's skills, interests and needs. It also provides important information about your culture, values, and language. Teachers use this information when planning classroom activities and curriculum.

Emergency Information and Authorization to Consent for Treatment Form

Always keep this information current. Should you have changes in emergency contact numbers, physician information or insurance, **please notify the ECDC office by email at ecdc.office@stpkaty.org. These changes cannot be made over the phone.**

Authorization to Pick Up Form

Only an authorized adult will be allowed to pick up your child from school. Authorized persons, other than parents or legal guardians, must be listed on the form. Any change to your form must be emailed or made in person in the ECDC office. Please advise the authorized individual to bring their valid Government Issued Photo ID with them to pick up your child. The individual will be required to show their ID to the ECDC staff member who is with the child.

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (e.g., custody order, restraining order, or protection from abuse order), the ECDC Director must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments. In the absence of a court order on file with ECDC administration, both parents shall be allowed equal access to their child as stipulated by law.

SCHOOL YEAR

SCHOOL CALENDAR

ECDC follows the Katy Independent School District school year calendar **except for beginning and ending dates and make up days**. When KISD has an early release date on an ECDC school day, we will be closed.

INCLEMENT WEATHER / SCHOOL CLOSURE

Should inclement weather require that the Katy ISD schools be closed, ECDC will also be closed. Please consult radio and Katy Independent School District (ISD) website for official word concerning Katy ISD closures. In the event Katy ISD has a delayed start due to inclement weather, ECDC will also have a delayed start.

ECDC will close in the following situations: being without power for more than 2 hours or without water for more than 1 hour. For any other unforeseen situation beyond the control of ECDC that might make it necessary to alter the school day, the ECDC administration will make decisions regarding school attendance for that specific day.

The ECDC Office will notify parents by email, through our ECDC social media, and the ***Class Tag App*** text regarding school closure, delayed starts, altered school days, updates or general announcements.

Any canceled or missed school days due to inclement weather or emergency closings beyond the control of ECDC will not be made up. There will be no refunds for these days.

FINANCIAL

TUITION

Monthly tuition will be collected using Tuition Express on the 3rd or 10th of each month. The monthly tuition for all St. Peter's ECDC programs is an annual amount divided into nine equal payments. As in any school, expenses are constant, which prevents credit or discounts for absence due to illness, extended vacations, scheduled holidays, Katy ISD inclement weather closings resulting in ECDC closure, and ECDC emergency closings due to situations beyond the control of ECDC.

St. Peter's ECDC collects all fees via Tuition Express software. This software allows ECDC to use a checking account or a credit card on file for any fees due. There is no charge for an ACH from a checking account, but there is a 2.7% processing fee for credit card services. Tuition Express enrollment forms are available in the ECDC office.

If a payment is not honored by your bank due to insufficient funds, a fee of \$15 will be assessed by St. Peter's ECDC. You will be contacted by the office to arrange a new

payment method. If it becomes difficult to meet the scheduled payment plan, please request an appointment to arrange a more workable plan.

REGISTRATION FEE

The Registration fees, including smock and tote fees, are due when your child is placed in a class in February. Pre-paid May tuition or deposit for the upcoming school year is due in May of the current school year. The only exception to this schedule is our Transition class. All fees for this class are due when your child is placed in the Transition class and **will not be refunded for any reason.**

WITHDRAWALS/REFUNDS

If a child must withdraw from our program, St. Peter's ECDC requires a **2-week written or emailed notification addressed to the Office and ECDC Director. The registration fees are nonrefundable with one exception.** For children in the 15 months to 4-year-old classes, if a family is moving out of the Katy/Houston area, the fee is refundable with written notification before June 1. **After June 1, the registration fees will not be refunded for any reason.**

Pre-paid May tuition is refundable only to families who leave the program before March 1 with 2-week written notification due to the difficulty of filling a vacant spot during the final months of the school year.

ARRIVAL

HOURS OF OPERATON

All classes meet from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. For children to benefit the most from a consistent routine and schedule, and for safety and security purposes, children must arrive no later than 9:15 AM. Classroom instruction begins at 9:15 a.m. and continues until 2:15 p.m.

ECDC understands that late arrivals happen or are sometimes necessary for scheduled appointments. For security reasons, the ECDC main entrance door is locked between 9:15 AM and 2:00 PM. The hallway double doors leading to the classrooms are locked between 9:15 AM and 2:15 PM. If you arrive after 9:15 AM, please let the ECDC office know. You will sign-in at the office and an ECDC staff member will walk your child to the classroom.

Parents are welcome to visit our school and observe their child at any time during the school day, so long as the visit has been prearranged with the teacher. If parents are visiting or volunteering in the classroom, they must first sign in at the ECDC office and obtain a visitor sticker before going to the classroom. Parents will need to sign out before leaving the building.

15-35 Months Toddler Classes

Drop off begins at 9:00 AM. Parents of 15–35-month-old children will park and walk their child to the sliding glass double doors under the covered walkway by the Porte cache. A teacher will then meet your child and take your child to class.

Three, Four, and Five-Year-Old Classes

Carline Drop off begins at 9:00 AM at the main entrance of ECDC drop off location. A teacher will assist your child in exiting the vehicle and in walking to the classroom.

If you have a child in the 15–35-month age range and a child in an older class, you will need to park and walk both your children to the toddler drop off location. This will help keep our drop off running safely and smoothly if you have children belonging in two different age level groups (preschool and toddler).

PARKING LOT SAFETY

Your child's safety is our number one concern. Our parking lot is extremely busy at arrival and dismissal times. Please watch for children and **DRIVE SLOWLY**; do not use your cell phone while in the ECDC parking lot unless you are parked.

Do not leave your vehicle running in the parking lot, except in extreme heat or cold to maintain interior or engine temperatures.

When walking through the parking lot, please hold your child's hand. **It is illegal to leave any child in an unattended vehicle, even for a short period of time. ECDC reserves the right to alert the police if a child is left unattended in a car.**

DISMISSAL

All parents must enter the main school entrance from the lobby in front of ECDC office. Doors by the Sunny Playground and SPLASH Lobby will be locked at ALL times during the week. **ALWAYS** bring your photo ID.

Dismissal is from 2:15-2:30 p.m. All children are to be picked up in their classrooms and signed out by the parent/guardian or an authorized person. If arriving earlier than the usual pick-up time, please be patient and wait in the lobby area as each classroom prepares for important transitions before releasing their students. An office staff member will open the hallway double doors leading to the classrooms as soon as it's time for you to be let in.

Before leaving the classroom with your child, ensure that the teacher is aware you are taking your child out of the room. Please see below for guidance on authorized pickup persons and change of transportation:

Authorized pick-up person(s):

- **First time pick up for an authorized contact person;** Please stop by the office before going to the classroom to show photo ID.
- Names on the authorized pick-up list need to correspond with the person's photo ID.
- Your authorized pick-up list can be updated at any time throughout the school year. It is highly recommended for you to stop by the office in person to update your pick-up list. If you are unable to do this in person, a written update is acceptable using the email address you signed up with at registration. Make sure to provide the pick-up person's legal name. The office will call you to verify this information.

Change in Transportation and pick-up person(s):

- **ALWAYS** notify the office if there is a “Change in Transportation” such as an early pick up or a late pick up, and/or a change in pick up person.
- Teachers will not release your child if they have not been informed of the changes in either the schedule and/or the pick-up person. The change in pick-up person **only** applies if the person is **NOT** on your authorized pickup list. Any listed person on your authorized pickup list is allowed to pick up your child. Please follow the policy in updating your authorized pick-up person(s).
- In case of an emergency, please call the office for a “Change of Transportation.” Parents must call the ECDC office for verification purposes and send a written email confirmation from the email used at registration before ECDC safely releases the child to the designated pick-up person that is not on the authorized list. Photo ID must match name on written confirmation from parent.

Late fees

Out of consideration for your child and your child’s teachers, please be on time at dismissal. If for some reason you find you will be unavoidably delayed, please call the ECDC office for the estimated arrival time (between 2:30-3:00 p.m.) so we may reassure your child that you are coming. School closes at 3:00 p.m.

After 2:30 PM, children may be picked up in the ECDC office. A written Late Pickup form will need to be signed at pickup. **A late fee of \$5.00 per child will occur on your account after the second late pick-up offense.** Late fees will double for any repeated late pickup throughout the school year.

DAY TO DAY

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

15 - 35 Months Toddler Classes

- Your child’s official ECDC tote bag for carrying his or her belongings.
- Student communication folder/supplied by ECDC. Stays in the tote bag.
- A dry and nutritious snack.
- A lunch in a divided plastic container and a drink, packed in containers that will keep food hot or cold as needed. Teachers cannot microwave children’s lunches. All food should be cut up and ready to eat – food should be cut into pieces no larger than ½ inch squares, grapes and hot dogs cut lengthwise.
 - *15–21-Month-old class: With the exception of breast milk, formula (ready-to-feed powder or concentrate formulas) and baby food must be sent in factory-sealed containers.*
- A complete change of clothes, including socks and shoes, appropriate for the season, in a gallon size Ziploc bag that is **labeled with the child’s first and last name**. This will be kept at school.
- Enough disposable diapers for the day and enough training pants and outer clothing if your child is being toilet trained.
- A personal rest or nap mat. The mat must be taken home to wash at the end of each week.

- A pacifier, lovey, security blanket, pillow, or stuffed toy for rest time ONLY if needed.

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

Three, Four, and Five-Year-Old Classes

- Your child's official ECDC tote bag for carrying his or her belongings.
- Student communication folder/supplied by ECDC. Stays in the tote bag.
- A dry and nutritious snack.
- A lunch and a drink packed in a divided container that will keep food hot or cold as needed. All food should be cut up and ready to eat. Grapes should be cut in half lengthwise and carrots and hot dogs cut in lengthwise strips to prevent choking. Sandwiches should be cut in small pieces. Teachers cannot microwave children's lunches.
- Your child's personalized smock which is purchased through the school for children in the three- and four-year-old classes. The smock will be sent home on the last day of each week for laundering.
- A complete change of clothes, including socks & shoes, appropriate for the season, in a gallon size Ziploc bag that is labeled with the child's first and last name. This will be kept at school.
- A personal rest or nap mat. The mat must be taken home to wash at the end of each week.
- All preschool aged children, including 4s and TK class will also have a quiet time for relaxation after lunch.

All Classes

At the beginning of the school year each teacher will notify parents if donated supplies such as Kleenex and wipes are needed. Preferences may vary so please consult your child's teacher.

Please be sure all personal items, such as clothing and containers that are brought to school are **clearly labeled with your child's first and last name**.

WHAT NOT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

Toys and Valuables

Except for a "security item" that may be needed during the opening days of school, or at rest time, all toys must be left at home. It is very difficult for a young child to share a favorite toy brought from home.

Some classes will have a regular "Show and Tell" day. Your child's teacher will let you know when "Show and Tell" is planned. Items that are brought for special theme days or items that might relate to the curriculum are always welcome, but items that can be easily damaged or broken should not be sent. If the child would like to share a fragile item, a photo may be sent to show classmates.

Play guns, knives, war toys, action figures and similar toys that relate to violence or aggressive play are not allowed in our program. In addition, please do not let your child bring money or other valuable items such as jewelry which might be lost or damaged. Gum and candy should also be left at home.

DRESS

Shoes - For safety reasons, shoes must be well fitting and have enclosed toes. **Tennis shoes are required for participation in motor skills and for playing outside on climbing equipment.** Sandals, Crocs, cowboy boots, and dress shoes should not be worn to school.

Dress - Please dress your child in comfortable, washable play clothes that allow your child freedom to run, jump, climb, and crawl. We do our best to protect clothing with smocks, but certain washable paint colors and damp playground sand do stain clothes and fabric shoes. Elastic waist bands on pants are preferred. Children are encouraged to be independent in the bathroom so please send your child in clothes that they can easily manipulate. Overalls are discouraged as well as belts or clothing items that have a lot of buttons.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Children enjoy and need outdoor play and exercise. Our children play outdoors in a variety of weather conditions throughout the year. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather. **If you feel your child should not be outside for whatever reason, please do not send your child to school. Unfortunately, we are unable to keep a child indoors during outside play time due to teacher/child ratios. ECDC also does not allow a child to sit in the ECDC office during outside play time.**

RELIGION

We welcome children and families of all faiths. Our teachers believe in the principles of Christian love, thought, and living as expressed in their daily lives. Children are helped to become aware of God's love as they participate in a caring Christian community. A short Chapel time is offered each week for 3, 4, and 5-year-old classes in addition to planned and spontaneous prayers and activities in all classrooms. An emphasis is placed on the development of such moral values as honesty, responsibility, accountability, kindness, cooperation, fairness, respect, and tolerance. We feel at this young age, these values are often as easily "caught as taught."

Chapel time is also introduced to the 15–35-month classes in March to enjoy simple prayers, songs, and developmentally appropriate storytelling together.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays will be celebrated in an age-appropriate manner in the classroom. Each teacher celebrates birthdays in a special way that is unique to the class. Your child's teacher will inform you of how birthdays will be celebrated at Parent Orientation. Children in our 3, 4, and 5-year-old classes will also have their birthday recognized in Chapel. **It is ECDC's policy that special birthday treats or snacks such as cupcakes, cookies, or cakes for the entire class are not brought to school. Texas Minimum Standards do not allow us to serve food that is homemade.**

School is not an appropriate place to distribute party invitations unless you are including the entire class. ECDC feels it is also inappropriate to pick up part of a class at school for an after-school birthday party. Children who are not included feel left out.

SCHOOL PARTIES

Children in our 15 to 35-month-old toddler classes enjoy holiday parties at Christmas and Easter only. All 3-year-old classes celebrate fall, Christmas, and Easter with class parties. All 4-year-old and Transition classes celebrate fall, Christmas, Friendship Day, and Easter with class parties. Parents plan the parties and provide lunch or snacks and favors. Signups to help with class parties will be done either on a signup sheet or via SignUpGenius.

Party Guidelines:

- Please keep parties, snacks, and favors simple, inexpensive and nutritious.
- Balloons of any type are not allowed at parties.
- Party Snack Guidelines will be sent home to help you in planning a healthy snack for your party. **Texas Minimum Standards require that snacks provided for the class by the parents must be prepared in an environment that is routinely inspected for food safety and prepackaged with an attached ingredient label. Snacks prepared in a home kitchen that is not regulated are not allowed.**
- When planning snacks for parties, please ask the teacher about **allergies present in the classroom**. Please provide an appropriate allergy free food/snack or ask the teacher to contact the child's parent to do so on the day of the party.

For safety and supervision reasons, St. Peter's ECDC has the following policy for school parties: For 3, 4, and 5-year-old class parties, **only the four** designated "party parents" may attend the parties. All toddler parents may attend both of their child's parties if they so choose. While siblings are welcome at ECDC family activities, we encourage you to make arrangements for younger siblings, if at all possible, when you are attending a class party. We want you to be fully present with your child and your child's classmates, and younger siblings can be a distraction. For the safety of everyone, you are needed as extra "helping hands" in the classroom during class parties.

GRADUATION

ECDC does not celebrate graduation in the 4-year-old classes as not all our 4-year-old children go on to kindergarten in the fall, and children at this age do not understand its meaning. There will be many opportunities for you and your child to celebrate graduation in later years when your child is older and better able to understand and appreciate the significance of the day.

Preschool 4- and 5-year-old classes celebrate the school year with class picnics in May.

ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM

Some of our classrooms have a class pet. Caring for a class pet helps children connect with nature, develop empathy for other living things, and build self-esteem as they take on the responsibility of caring for the pet.

Your pets and other animals are welcome to visit but may be brought to school only when the visit has been prearranged and approved by the Director. Parents will be notified in advance and leashes and cages will be required if appropriate. Vaccination records must be on file in the ECDC office before the animal can be brought onto school premises.

BREASTFEEDING

Mothers are welcome to breastfeed their children on the benches outside of Asbury Hall. If more privacy is desired, mothers may use the sitting area in the Women's Restroom across from the Sanctuary.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Our teachers are empathetic and understanding when dealing with children as they learn to play and work with others. Our teachers know that young children make mistakes and experience occasional difficulties in their "trial and error" efforts to master and control their feelings and behavior and to understand and live within our complex social system.

Our teachers use various methods of positive techniques for guidance and behavior management to help children develop and grow in self-control. At no time will a child be physically punished, threatened and/or intimidated. Methods our teachers use include:

- Redirection
- Positive reinforcement by praising and encouraging appropriate behavior
- Use of logical and natural consequences
- Anticipation of potential problems and elimination of potential triggers
- Use of consistently enforced classroom rules to remind a child of behavioral expectations.
- Individual and group discussions about acceptable behavior

When none of the above methods seem to be effective, a "safe space" in the classroom may be used to help the child regain focus and self-control. Home and school need to work closely together to develop consistent guidelines and a consistent plan of action when problems with behavior occur. Please contact your child's teacher and /or the Director should you feel there is a problem in this area. Your child's teacher will do likewise.

If your child has experienced or is experiencing any type of stressful or traumatic emotional experience, please inform your child's teacher. This will enable your child's teacher to better understand and deal with any behavior changes or difficulties your child may be exhibiting at school as a result.

For persistent or excessive behavior problems or concerns, parents will be contacted by the teacher and/or the Director and with the assistance of the ECDC Educational Support Specialist, an individualized plan of action that recognizes and encourages positive behaviors may be developed. It is important that home and school, work together in this situation. If after two weeks, improvement in behavior is not seen, the parents will be notified and further corrective measures may be taken as the Director deems necessary, including, but not limited to, removal from the program if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child or other children in the program.

INCLUSION

ECDC feels a strong Christian commitment to work with and help the children and families in our program within the limits of our capabilities. Our setting is not designed, nor our staff trained, however, to handle children with extreme developmental delays, severe physical handicaps or very difficult behavior. For children with needs we feel we are not adequately

meeting, the parents will be contacted by the teacher, ECDC Director, and Educational Support Specialist.

Depending on available resources and our facilities, we will make every effort to accommodate a child's developmental delays, physical handicaps, or very difficult behavior. In certain instances, the Director may recommend that an extra aide be brought in to "shadow" a child throughout the school day for the school to meet the child's needs; this aide will be provided at the parent's expense.

The Director and Educational Support Specialist may also request a professional evaluation. Parents will be referred to ECI-Project Tyke if the child is under the age of three, to the ECSC program at the elementary school where the child is zoned if the child is over the age of three, or to a private professional. Such evaluations could result in a recommendation for additional services or an alternate school environment. **If a family chooses not to pursue a professional evaluation or the recommendations from a professional evaluation, the child may be removed from the program at the Director's discretion if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child.**

TOILETING POLICY

Children develop toileting success at their own pace when they are physically and developmentally ready. Preschool age is when children begin to independently 'go potty' on their own with appropriate guidance and motivation. Summer is the best time to practice potty training! Help your child practice at home before school begins. Resources are available at the office for potty training. We also have parent workshops about successful potty training. Be on the lookout for Classtag announcements and ECDC social media posts.

All toddler classrooms have their own diaper changing table, while all our preschool classrooms have low level toilets appropriate for young children.

Teachers realize that accidents happen and will check the child for wetness or accidents especially right after nap or rest time. Children are never asked to wipe up floors or help clean up the restroom after a toileting accident, with one exception. If due to the nature of a toileting accident, the teacher feels that having the child "help" to clean up is a necessary and important part of the learning process, the teacher will involve the child's help in an appropriate manner. The parents will be notified of any changes to your child's potty routines so home and school can work together.

Toddlers (15 - 35-month classes)

For toddlers, before true potty training can begin, the child must be physically and psychologically ready to begin the process. Parents can watch for signs of readiness, provide a consistent method when potty training, and support the child without stress. Parents should relax and encourage their child to learn to trust their own body as their child reaches this developmental milestone.

Readiness signs:

- Recognizes bodily function as it occurs
- Stays dry for long periods during awake daytime hours
- Recognizes the urge to eliminate before it occurs
- Controls bowel movements

- Comprehends and follows simple directions
- Effectively communicates need to “go”
- Able to stop the flow of urine.

Whatever the age, until the child has reached readiness, there is nothing to be gained from potty training except frustration and low self-esteem. Children will not train successfully until they are both physically and psychologically ready.

As children make the transition from /pull-ups to underwear, parents should send at least 2-3 extra sets of clothes, underwear and socks and an extra pair of shoes. Hassle-free clothes that are easy for a toddler to manipulate up and down should be worn (no belts, overalls, onesies). Pants with an elastic waist band and underwear that is slightly big are easiest for a toddler to pull up and down.

Regardless of the child’s age, ECDC policy does not allow teachers to hold down a boy’s penis when the child is sitting on the toilet or standing up.

Three Year Old’s

To encourage and support self-help skills and toileting success, teachers will encourage the child to wipe. Teachers will help wipe or clean a child after he has used the toilet if needed. Children at this age may not be sufficiently proficient in their bathroom hygiene to completely clean themselves on their own. In order to ensure that teachers are aware of instances where children need toileting help, restroom doors are kept open in three-year-old classes.

Four- and Five-Year Old’s

Children have successfully been toilet trained and teachers are not expected to wipe or clean a child after the child has used the toilet. If necessary, however, teachers will encourage children and offer suggestions for cleaning. This policy encourages and supports children’s self-help skills and protects our teachers from any potential physical, sexual, or emotional abuse allegation. Restroom doors in four and five-year-old classes are therefore normally closed when a child uses the restroom. If a child is not sufficiently proficient to satisfactorily clean themselves, the teacher may help the child. The restroom door will remain open in these instances.

BITING POLICY

Biting is common among toddlers. Children at this stage of development do not always have the words to express themselves. Their way of expression may come in the form of hitting, pushing or biting. If your child bites or is bitten you will be notified by your child’s teacher. All names remain confidential. Preventative techniques will be used in the classroom to prevent future biting and to protect the other children.

Biting usually stops by the age of three. Most children by then have the confidence and language skills to express their needs. If an older child should bite, all parties involved will be notified by the Director. All names remain confidential. The teacher will work with the parents to understand the reason for the biting, and a plan of action will be developed.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Differences and disagreements are a part of life and St. Peter's ECDC recognizes the need for healthy communication and a way to handle grievances. All parents are encouraged to express questions and concerns as they arise. In general, classroom issues should first be addressed with the teacher by scheduling a meeting to properly discuss and address questions and concerns.

If this does not result in a satisfactory resolution, or if the situation warrants another approach, parents should contact the Director. If still unresolved, the matter may be taken up with the SPUMC Executive Director. The purpose of implementing this type of process is to establish an open and healthy line of communication between our families and the staff of ECDC. We are very proud of our "open door policy", and we hope that our families will take advantage of it in order to promote trust and unity.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Information regarding children who attend St. Peter's ECDC, including enrollment, medical information and assessments, is private and confidential. ECDC will not disclose information about a child, except as required by law, without the written permission of the parents or legal guardians. Parents or legal guardians may request to see their child's information at any time.

COVID-19 POLICY

In the event that Texas Health and Human Services, Child Care Licensing, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) require ECDC to implement its COVID-19 policy, ECDC will do so. The current ECDC COVID-19 Policy may be adjusted as changes are made by the Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Licensing, and the CDC.

A current copy of the COVID-19 protocols and policy is available in the ECDC office upon request.

POLICY CHANGES

Parents will be notified in writing or by email of any policy changes which may occur after this handbook is distributed. Acknowledgement of all such changes must be signed and dated by each family and received in the ECDC office either in writing or by email reply.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENTS

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Parent Orientation

Parent Orientation is a **mandatory meeting** for all parents prior to the start of school. Parents will have the opportunity to meet their child's teachers, learn about their child's day at school, the daily routine, expectations (both the parents and the teachers), curriculum, classroom procedures, activities, and communication. Parent participation and volunteer opportunities along with ECDC Parent Council information will be shared. This event is for PARENTS ONLY. Childcare is not provided.

Meet the Teacher Day

Meet the Teacher Day is held the week before school begins for **children and their parents** to meet the teachers and other children in the class. Children will have the opportunity to explore and become familiar with their classroom. The visit is a valuable first step in building a trusting relationship between the children and their teachers and is most beneficial in helping to ensure a smooth and successful transition from home to school. Teachers will contact parents in mid-August to schedule a time for 'Meet the Teacher' or have a schedule available to sign up at Parent Orientation.

Meet the Director Day

During the first week of school, all parents, both new and those returning to ECDC are invited after drop off to stop by and visit with the Director in the Asbury Hall. The Director will share his or her own early childhood experiences and background, answer any questions or concerns, and/or share short and long terms goals and projects for the school.

Parent Conferences

As a NAEYC accredited program, we advocate for families to attend and participate in parent teacher conferences. Parents are provided written reports about their child's development and learning at least two times in a school year. The child assessment plan provides families an opportunity to raise questions or concerns about how the assessment methods will meet their child's needs.

During the month of November, parents will receive a progress report which includes interests, adjustment to school and goals to work on or practice at home. In April, parents of all children will receive a written evaluation covering all aspects of their child's development: social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive, as well as the content areas of literacy, math, science and technology, social studies, and the arts.

A schedule will be given for parents to sign up for a parent conference. A phone conference option is available for those parents who can't make it in person.

If a parent feels an interpreter is needed during the conference, the parent should make arrangements to bring someone with them to interpret.

All teaching staff receives annual training on the Creative Curriculum Assessment by a certified trainer, the curriculum coordinator, and/or the ECDC Director.

Should parents feel the need for an in-person conference at any point during the school year to discuss a concern about their child's development and wellness, they should contact their child's teacher using the teacher's work email so that arrangements can be made. Additionally, teacher consults with the Director and the Educational Support Specialist may result in follow-up meetings, if necessary.

We ask that parents please not confer with the teacher in the morning car line or in the classroom at afternoon pick up. It is best to discuss progress or problems in a private conversation. It also affects the safety and quality of supervision when adults are engaged for more than five minutes of conversation. Arrival and dismissal are considered 'high times' in NAEYC's developmentally appropriate

practice (DAP) and require the teacher's attention to be on the children as much as possible.

ECDC Newsletter

The *ECDC Newsletter* will be emailed monthly and posted to our ECDC website. The newsletter contains information regarding school updates and events, the school calendar, and ideas for school to home connection activities. Periodically early childhood development information will be included. These newsletters provide additional insight into your child's school day and development.

Class Tag App

ECDC uses the Class Tag app for school-wide announcements, reminders, and important events. Teachers post a daily summary of children's activities, photos, and only uses the text messaging feature of Classtag for emergency purposes.

E-mail

All other non-emergency correspondence should be through the teacher's work email address. Teachers usually respond in the morning during prep time before classes begin. You may also call, leave a message, or email the ECDC office during office hours for any general questions.

Parent Notifications

Contact information for all children, including emergency contacts, is kept on file in the ECDC office. Teachers also have a copy of this information. In the event you must be notified, you will be contacted by email, phone, or Class Tag App message. **We kindly ask that you check your phone or email during the day while we are caring for your child, in case we are trying to reach you.**

Social Media

It is the policy of St. Peter's ECDC that our teachers do not "friend" the parents in their classroom on social media or accept "friend" requests. At the end of the school year, teachers may accept "friend" requests from parents if they so choose. **For privacy reasons, please refrain from posting pictures of your child's classmates on your social media page without specific permission from the child's parents. If you do not want your child to be featured on the ECDC social media pages or website, please notify the Office and/or Director by email. Children's names will never be used.**

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

ECDC Parent Council

Our school is supported by the ECDC Parent Council. This Parent Council is comprised of 12 to 21 members, two-thirds of whom must be St. Peter's United Methodist Church members, the ECDC Director and Assistant Director.

The ECDC Parent Council has been established to support the administration, teachers, and students of St. Peter's Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC), a ministry of St. Peter's United Methodist Church. To support the ECDC program, the parent council's objective is to: Raise funds to help the program's expenses to purchase high quality classroom materials, school equipment, and other needs as deemed necessary. Assist

the program's expenses in retaining high quality administrative and teaching staff through programs than can include, health and wellness, professional development, morale encouragement and scholarship. Coordinate school-wide events and assist with community outreach programs. Provide engagement and volunteer opportunities to ECDC parents and families. *All volunteers volunteering more than once must complete a background check and Safe Sanctuary training.*

The following Council programs are just a few of the way's parents can get involved. If other opportunities arise during the school year, you will be informed through the ECDC Newsletter, emails from the ECDC office, or notes sent home with your child.

Homeroom Parent

The homeroom parent is the main contact person for the class and is the liaison between the classroom teachers and parents. The classroom teacher handles the selection of the homeroom parent.

Library on Wheels – LOW (4 and 5-year-old classes)

Library on Wheels is sponsored by our ECDC Parent Council. Parents volunteer to take the library cart to their child's classroom each week, and children will have the opportunity to check out books weekly from the cart. The LOW subcommittee chair seeks guidance from staff for developmentally appropriate (DAP) books and/or criteria to ensure an appropriate and exciting library selection as well as to establish a working schedule. The subcommittee is responsible for organizing the books, putting together instruction for parent volunteers, and a letter for families about LOW. Parent volunteers oversee the check out and check in of the books.

STEAM Train

The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEAM) cart is sponsored by our ECDC Parent Council. Parents volunteer to take the cart to their child's classroom once a month. The STEAM chair will submit a relevant lesson to the Director or Curriculum Coordinator for approval. The subcommittee prepares all developmentally appropriate materials and instructions for each lesson. Parents implement the STEAM activities that have been prepared by the Parent Council.

Fundraisers

Our budget depends entirely on income from tuition and fees. Fundraising efforts permit the purchase of additional equipment, supplies, and high-quality materials which enrich our program. We appreciate and welcome your participation in these efforts.

The annual Fall Family Festival, sponsored by the ECDC Parent Council, is our largest fundraiser. The Parent Council also sponsors a Spring fundraiser and additional fundraisers during the school year as well.

Program Evaluation

Each Fall and/or Spring a program evaluation survey is sent to every family. Parent input and involvement are very important to St. Peter's ECDC, and we encourage each family to participate in the survey. Parents will receive an email with the link to complete the survey.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

SNACK

Parents will provide a small, dry, nutritious mid-morning snack for their child each day. Your child's teacher will let you know what type of snack container is preferred. Suggested snacks can be found on the ECDC website @ www.stpetersecdc.org. All children will be served water with their snack.

LUNCH

Children should bring a wholesome, nutritious lunch and drink packed in a divided plastic container that will keep food hot or cold as needed for the noon meal. **Teachers cannot microwave children's lunches.** Lunches should include a balance of foods chosen from the Basic 4 food groups: Dairy, Meat/Meat Alternative, Fruits/Vegetables, and Grains. Drinks should be 100% fruit juice, white milk or water with no added sugars. Well balanced meals provide the food children need to grow, think, fight infection, and fuel their bodies. All foods should be finger foods if possible and ready to eat. Please send eating utensils, spill proof cups, etc. if needed. **Glass containers and pull-tab cans are not allowed.** To reduce the risk of choking, please do not send pretzels, nuts, popcorn or round hard candies.

Although we encourage all children to bring a wholesome, nutritious snack and lunch, St. Peter's ECDC is not responsible for the nutritional value of food brought from home. As a NAEYC accredited center, we have recommended size/portions and healthy guidelines posted on each classroom's bulletin board.

ALLERGY- FREE CLASSROOMS

Because some children have extreme food allergies, classrooms may be designated an allergy- free classroom and certain foods such as peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, or other food items will not be allowed for snack or lunch.

If your child's classroom is allergy free, the teacher will inform you of this at Parent Orientation. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in these cases. A sign will be posted on the class's bulletin board along with a letter to inform parents about any new food allergies in the classroom.

Teachers will check children's lunch and snack and will notify parents if any food brought to school has the ingredients that may cause allergies to other children. Teachers also provide information to parents about upcoming food activities during the school year and verify consent for their child to participate.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

ILLNESS POLICY

Your child's health is a matter of major importance to us. Precautions are taken to safeguard the health of all children at ECDC. This includes refusing to admit sick children into the class and isolating children who become ill while at school. Should your child become ill during school hours, you will be notified to take your child home. If neither

parent can be reached, persons listed on the *Emergency Information* form will be called. It is important that all telephone numbers and information be kept current. **You are expected to arrive within 30 minutes of our phone call to you.**

Please email ECDC by 8:30 AM if your child is to be absent and the reason for the absence. If your child has a reportable communicable disease, (chicken pox, strep throat, etc.), please let the school know so the office can make the necessary report and notify other parents. Texas Minimum Standards require that a record be kept of all absences.

PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME IF YOUR CHILD HAS:

- **COVID-19 symptoms**
Fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, chills, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, muscle aches, diarrhea, headache
- Fever of 100.0 or has had fever during the previous 72 hours (child must be fever free without fever-reducing medication for 72 hours before returning)
- Diarrhea or vomiting or has had these symptoms during the previous 72 hours (child must be symptom free without the use of preventative medication for 72 hours before returning to school)
- Been on an antibiotic less than 24 hours
- A cold less than four days old
- A heavy nasal discharge, to the extent that it would interfere with class activities
- A constant cough that would interfere with class activities and participation.
- **Symptoms typical of a communicable disease (child must have a health care professional's statement that the child is no longer contagious before returning)**
- Or your child is lethargic, fussy, cranky, and generally not himself.

Parents have the best judgement of their child's behavior and disposition in coming to school ready to learn.

DOCTOR'S NOTE

If your child missed at least two scheduled instructional days or a week of school due to an illness, or because of an injury needing medical attention, parent is required to submit a doctor's note that the child has been cleared to come back to school and is able to participate in all school activities including gym, sensory play, and outdoor time without any restrictions (see Outdoor Play policy, p. 16).

MEDICATIONS

St. Peter's ECDC cannot administer **over the counter medications** other than Benadryl. Benadryl may be given if the parent or guardian has given written permission on the *Emergency Information* form.

ECDC will administer **emergency prescription medications**, such as those for allergic reactions or asthma, and **long-term prescription medications** upon parental request and with written authorization from the child's health-care professional. All medications or necessary medical devices prescribed by a physician are stored in a locked cabinet in the ECDC office and may be administered by a trained ECDC office staff. See Allergies

section below for EpiPen policy. All prescription medication must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name, physician's name, dosage, and frequency of administration. Medication can only be administered in amounts according to the label directions.

Parents must complete a *Medical Authorization Form and Action Plan*, which is kept on file in the ECDC office.

ALLERGIES

If your child has an allergy, please note the allergy on all forms. If your child requires medication or an AUVI Q or EpiPen for the allergy, a ***Medical Authorization Form and Action Plan*** must be completed before the first day of school and kept on file in the ECDC office.

ECDC Registrar will give the EpiPen to the child's classroom teacher. All teachers carrying an AUVI Q or EpiPen will be trained on when and how to administer the AUVI Q and EpiPen, as well as instructed on protocol for the safe keeping of the AUVI Q and EpiPen. An AUVI Q and EpiPen ***Medical Agreement Form*** will be given to the parent and the classroom teacher. After reviewing the form together, both the teachers and parent will sign the form and return it to the Registrar for safe keeping.

INCIDENT REPORT

Should your child experience a minor incident or injury at school, the staff member in charge will fill out an *Incident Report* to provide the parent with the details of what happened. After the caregiver completes the form, the Director, or if the Director is not available, the person in charge of the center must sign and date the completed report. Parent or the authorized person picking up your child must sign the report, and a copy of the report will be sent home with your child.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

In case of a more severe injury, appropriate first aid measures will be immediately taken to care for the child, and the parents or those persons listed on the *Emergency Information* form will be called immediately. For major medical problems or any incidents requiring immediate medical attention as deemed necessary through the evaluation by school staff and administrators will be handled by calling 911. If the child must be taken to the emergency room by ambulance, the Director and the child's teacher will accompany the child and will stay with the child until parents arrive and assume responsibility. An *Incident Report* will be completed.

SCREENINGS

Hearing and Vision Screening

All children in the 4 and 5-year-old classes are required by the State of Texas to have an approved hearing and vision screening performed by a certified evaluator or a private physician each school year. **Screening must be completed prior to January 1.** Any exceptions should be taken up with the ECDC Registrar. **ECDC no longer offers hearing and vision screening. Please see your family's pediatrician for screenings.**

Ages and Stages ASQ-3 developmental screening

ECDC administers the Ages and Stages ASQ-3 developmental screening and monitoring tool which includes questions about the child's communication/language, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving/cognitive, and personal-social skills. This service is provided to parents upon request.

SUNSCREEN/INSECT REPELLENT/TOPICAL

It is the parents' responsibility to apply sunscreen, insect repellent, or any topical on their child before the child comes to school. Teachers may not apply either sunscreen, insect repellent, or topical on a child at school.

PESTICIDE APPLICATION

St. Peter's ECDC periodically applies pesticides indoors and outdoors. Information on the times and types of application is available upon request.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Names on the emergency and authorized pick-up list need to correspond with the person's photo ID. Any updates to the authorized pick-up list and changes to the child's regular attendance in school must follow the ECDC dismissal policies and procedures.

In the absence of a court order on file with ECDC administration, both parents shall be allowed equal access to their child as stipulated by law.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

St. Peter's ECDC has an Emergency Preparedness Plan in place in the event of an emergency. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. Fire drills are practiced monthly, and severe weather and security threat drills are practiced at least four times per school year. A record of these drills is available for your review on the bulletin board outside of the ECDC office.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION LOCATION

Should there be an emergency that would make it necessary for us to leave our campus, we will evacuate to Kingsland Baptist Church, 20555 Kingsland Blvd., Katy, TX, 77450. Parents will be notified by email and/or ClassTag App. Please make sure to register in the ClassTag App to receive important information in the event of an emergency.

GANG FREE ZONE

As a licensed Child Care center, St. Peter's ECDC is designated as a "gang free zone" as required by Texas State law. Prohibited gang related activity in a gang free zone is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of a Child Care center.

PREVENTION, RECOGNITION, AND REPORTING OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

Texas law requires caregivers and any person who believes that a child is being abused, neglected, or exploited to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the DFPS.

A caregiver must make the report within 48 hours of the time the caregiver suspects a child has been or may be abused or neglected. All staff members involved will cooperate completely in all aspects of the investigation. Classroom coverage will be immediately arranged so the accused staff member can document her or his account of the event (s) in question.

All efforts will be made to preserve the confidentiality of the accused staff member, the child allegedly abused, plus all surrounding circumstances. At the same time, any and all relevant staff members (the accused, any witnesses, as well as administrators) are expected to give their full cooperation to authorities. If authorities determine the abuse allegation is unfounded, the accused staff member is immediately dismissed. Even after the allegation is resolved, any and all staff members who have information about the identity of the individuals involved and the details of the case are expected to keep this information confidential. No part of this private information may be revealed to any other person or agency unless required by law.

All ECDC staff members are required to complete one hour of annual training which addresses preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children.

What is abuse?

Abuse is physical, mental, emotional, or sexual injury to a child or failure to prevent such injury to a child.

What are general signs of abuse?

Children who are abused might show physical signs or sudden changes in their behavior or school performance. These signs do not prove that a child is being abused, but they could be a signal that the child or the family needs help.

Children might seem:

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults.
- Reluctant to go home (e.g., coming to school early or staying late).
- Very passive and withdrawn or aggressive and disruptive.
- Tired a lot or they might complain of nightmares or not sleeping well.
- Fearful and anxious.

Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained burns, bruised, black eyes, or other injuries.
- Apparent fear of a parent or caretaker.
- Faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school.

Signs of Mental or Emotional Abuse:

- Acting overly mature or immature for the child's age.
- Extreme changes in behavior.
- Delays in physical or emotional development.
- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent.
- Attempted suicide.

Signs of Sexual Abuse:

- Difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury in the genital area.
- Sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for the child's age.
- Running away from home.

What is neglect?

Neglect includes (1) failure to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter and/or medical care; and/or (2) leaving a child in a situation where the child is at risk of harm.

What are signs of neglect?

- Missing school frequently.
- Begging for food, stealing food, or stealing money for food.
- Lacking needed medical or dental care.
- Being frequently dirty.
- Saying there is no one at home to take care of them.

What are risk factors for victimization?

- Children younger than 4 years of age.
- Special needs of a child that may increase caregiver burden (e.g., disabilities, including intellectual, mental health issues, and chronic physical illnesses).

If you suspect abuse or neglect

You may want to talk with the child to see if there is a simple explanation. Two or more signs may indicate potential abuse. Consider signs in context of other behavior.

How to report abuse or neglect

- By Phone: Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400, available 24 hours a day
- Online: www.txabusehotline.org

When reporting suspected cases of abuse or neglect, provide the following information:

- Name of child
- Age of child
- Child's present location
- Parents' names and names of siblings in the home
- Type and extent of abuse
- Name of individual making the report
- Individual's title

Why phone in a report to the Hotline rather than use the website?

Reports made through the website take up to 24 hours to process. Call the Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 if:

- You believe your situation requires action in less than 24 hours.
- You prefer to remain anonymous.
- You have insufficient data to complete the required information on the report.
- You do not want an e-mail confirmation of your report.

What if the report is an emergency?

An emergency is a situation where a child faces an immediate risk of abuse or neglect that could result in death or serious harm. Call 911 or the local law enforcement agency.

Parent/Staff information

Parents and staff may find additional information on where to find help and parenting tips at www.helpandhope.org. Parenting classes, tips, and support can also be found at www.learntoparent.org. Parents of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect may find support and information at www.thethreadalliance.org/.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

REFERRALS AND RESOURCES

The staff of St. Peter's ECDC takes great pride in assessing children as they make their journey along the course of development. If for any reason it is determined that your child may benefit from additional services or resources, the Director and Educational Support Specialist will contact you and assist with resources or referrals.

The following services and resources are available through KISD or the public-school district where you reside:

- ECI Project Tyke is a year-round Early Childhood Intervention program. This program services children under the age of three with developmental delays.
- ECSE – Early Childhood Special Education services children between the ages of three and five years of age through the school district.
- For additional information regarding referrals, or resources please contact the Director or the Educational Support Specialist.

VALUE OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

As a child plays, many experiences are happening to enable that child to grow and mature. These “play” activities provide the much-needed opportunities for children to develop at their own pace, all the while discovering that they are truly a child of God.

Through BLOCKS a child:

- uses large muscles (lifting, carrying, and stacking)
- chooses sizes and shapes
- is actively involved in developing early math skills comparing sizes and shapes
- actively uses thought processes
- learns to make decisions
- experiments in working with others
- begins to recognize the rights of others
- learns to put materials away

Through HOME LIVING/HOUSEKEEPING materials a child:

- plays out home experiences
- develops muscular coordination (rocking, dressing dolls, “cooking”, setting table)
- has the opportunity to play alone
- has the opportunity to “help” (cook, set table, serve food, wash and dry dishes, feed and rock the baby, dress up)
- socializes with other classmates
- may begin to learn to cooperate with others
- reveals thought and attitudes through conversations
- may have worship opportunities (thanks at mealtime and other times)

Through PUZZLES AND MANIPULATIVES, a child:

- enjoys a sense of achievement and success
- learns to think and reason
- learns to solve problems
- learns or work independently
- has an opportunity to make choices
- may enjoy conversation
- develops fine motor skills

Through CREATIVE ART ACTIVITIES such as paint, playdough, finger painting, crayons, markers and various other art activities a child:

- enjoys sensory experiences (seeing, feeling, smelling, sometimes tasting)
- can think and plan for himself
- has an outlet for emotional tensions and frustration
- enjoys manipulation (squeezing, pounding, rolling, pushing, pulling)
- enjoys the success of having made his/her own creation
- enjoys colors and experimenting with them
- discovers many interesting ways to use materials
- has opportunities for social experiences
- develops fine motor skills

Through GROSS MOTOR SKILLS ACTIVITIES a child:

- has opportunities to develop large muscles and coordination
- can be a member of a team
- learns the enjoyment of physical activity.

Through PICTURES a child:

- enjoys looking at them and handling them
- learns to interpret them
- may enjoy conversation about the pictures
- develops imagination
- may understand stories more clearly
- may play out experiences similar to those in the pictures
- enjoys recognition of familiar objects

Through MUSIC a child:

- may become sensitive to the beauty and harmony of music
- may create own music
- has opportunities for feelings of wonder and worship
- feels good inside when music expresses a child’s mood
- enjoys relaxation and rhythmic responses

- enjoys listening to, singing, and playing music
- develops coordination through musical instruments
- has opportunities for emotional outlets
- develops social relationships through singing and enjoying music with others

Through BOOKS AND STORYTELLING, a child:

- may enjoy handling and looking at books
- may get new ideas and develop interests in various subjects
- learns to listen to stories
- may add to previous experiences
- increases attention span
- increases vocabulary
- develops an appreciation for the printed word
- enjoys the social experiences with an adult when reading together
- learns to take responsibility for the care of books

Through OUTDOOR PLAY TIME a child:

- enjoys the outdoors
- can use muscles through running, climbing, jumping
- can play alone
- can play with others
- develops a sense of wonder of God's creation
- can create and manipulate when using sand, dirt and water, etc.

Through NATURE/DISCOVERY MATERIALS a child:

- learns to appreciate the beauty of God's wonderful creation
- begins to associate God with experiences in nature
- enjoys sensory experiences (seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting)
- becomes aware of his surroundings
- learns to care for plants, animals and the environment
- may develop tenderness and love through association with classroom pets
- learns to respond more easily to new situations