



MINISTRY VILLAGE

early learning center

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# Parent Handbook

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1724 E. OLIVE ROAD

# **Ministry Village Early Learning Center**

1724 E. Olive Road, Pensacola, FL 32514

Main Telephone: (850) 378-8044

Email: [Info@MinistryVillageELC.org](mailto:Info@MinistryVillageELC.org)

[www.MinistryVillageELC.org](http://www.MinistryVillageELC.org)

[www.Facebook.com/MinistryVillageELC](http://www.Facebook.com/MinistryVillageELC)

# Table of Contents

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Welcome .....	1
Mission .....	1
School Contact Information .....	1
Hours of Operation .....	2
Licensing / Funding .....	2
Board of Directors .....	3
Staff .....	3
Ratios .....	4
Admissions .....	4
Media Release	
Enrollment Forms	
Withdrawal Procedure	
Tuition / Fees.....	6
Wrap-Around VPK Care	
Discounts	
Drop Off / Pickup Procedures .....	9
Florida VPK Program Attendance Policies	
Tardiness	
Health / Safety .....	11
Immunization Forms / Policies	
Illness / Injury Policy	
Medication Authorization	
First Aid	
Head Lice	
Potty Training	
Shaken Baby Syndrome	
Security / School Safety / Emergency Situations	
Food / Lunches / Nutrition	
Clothing	
Personal Belongings / Toys	

Academics and Curriculum.....	22
Parental Communication and Involvement .....	23
Annual Open House and Orientation	
Discipline / Expulsion Policy .....	24
Questions or Concerns? .....	29

## **Welcome**

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We are honored that you have chosen the Ministry Village Early Learning Center (ELC) to care for your child during this important developmental time. We endeavor to share the love of Jesus Christ with every child. It is our goal to nurture your child and help them develop as a whole person – emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically. We aim to provide Christ-centered high quality, early learning childcare programs for children from 3 months of age to pre-kindergarten. We engage, invest in and prepare the children to achieve kindergarten readiness, while we also assist their parents, guardians and families -- leading our community to a stronger and more capable future workforce.

## **Mission**

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We will deliver Christ-centered, high quality care to the children in our community. We will equip the youngest generation with the skills and processes they need to build a strong educational base, while welcoming every member of our community and ensuring that each one feels treasured, loved and supported.

## **School Contact Information**

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The main telephone number for the Ministry Village Early Learning Center is (850) 378-8044.

- Ministry Village ELC Director: Mrs. Kristi Zagar
- Email: [KZagar@MinistryVillage.org](mailto:KZagar@MinistryVillage.org)

The ELC also maintains a website at [MinistryVillageELC.org](http://MinistryVillageELC.org) and a Facebook page (@MinistryVillageELC) where we share general information, our calendar of events, and special announcements. The contact information for your child's teacher will be provided to you upon your child's classroom placement.

## **Hours of Operation**

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Our Early Learning Center offers child care Monday through Friday, 7 AM to 6 PM. Check-in for the regular school day begins at 8:45 AM and **instruction time begins promptly at 9 AM** in each classroom. We require all students to be clocked in by 9 AM and in their classrooms. If arriving after 9 AM, please email or text the director to advise that your child(ren) will be tardy. Please do not abuse this privilege, and keep tardies to a minimum. We observe national and religious holiday closings to include: New Years Day, Martin Luther King Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Teacher Planning Days in August, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. These holidays are subject to change based on demand. Participants in the free Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program will loosely follow the Escambia County public school calendar which is posted by the school district online at [ECSD-FL.SchoolLoop.com](http://ECSD-FL.SchoolLoop.com) and will also be available on the ELC's website. The ELC can also provide summer care for children whose ages/placement fall under our regular admission guidelines as space permits in the appropriate classrooms.

## **Licensing / Funding**

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The Ministry Village Early Learning Center is licensed under the Department of Children and Families (DCF#C01ES0341) and is an approved provider for Florida's free 4-year-old Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK). In addition, the ELC is licensed through the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI Approval #648587). We meet or exceed all standards set forth by DCF and ACSI, and the facility is regularly inspected by the Fire Marshall, ACSI and DCF to

ensure the safety of everyone in our facility. The Ministry Village ELC is a program of Ministry Village at Olive, Inc., a non-profit 501 (c)3 organization. We are funded through tuition and registration fees, private donations, and fundraising efforts.

## **Board of Directors**

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A Director administers the ELC and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the facility. The ELC Director reports to the Executive Director of Ministry Village at Olive and its Board of Directors.

## **Staff**

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The ELC staff members caring for your children are committed to providing a loving, Christian environment and sharing the love of Jesus Christ on a daily basis while providing quality care. The Director of the ELC holds a Director's license under the Florida Department of Children and Families. The teachers in the facility are certified in education and/or have experience teaching or working with young children. All staff members who are in the classroom and in daily contact with the children are fingerprinted and must pass a Level 2 background screen in the state of Florida as well as nationwide. Staff members are also required to have completed 45 hours of educational training along with 10 hours of continuing education each year.

We are committed to high standards of excellence for our staff and our facility. Staff requirements meet or exceed the standards required by the State of Florida Department of Children and Family Services as published in Chapter 65C-22 Child Care Standards of the Florida Administrative Code.

**Staff members are not available to provide off-site private childcare for a child currently enrolled at the Ministry Village Early Learning Center.**

## Ratios

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The Florida Department of Children and Families defines our class size and child/teacher ratios.

Class	Teachers	Children
Infants	1	4
One year olds	1	6
Two year olds	1	11
Three year olds	1	15
Four year olds*	1	20
Five year olds	1	25

\*During VPK instruction hours, class ratio for four year olds is 1:11 or 2:20.

## Admissions

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To enroll in the Ministry Village Early Learning Center, submit a completed application form as well as the **non-refundable registration fee of \$100 per child**. Classroom placement is based on the child's age as of September 1, which is consistent with the Escambia County School District placement policy.

Students registering only for the free VPK program with a Certificate of Eligibility obtained through the Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County are not charged registration or supply fees.

Admission is prioritized in the following order: reenrollment of current students, siblings of current students, children of staff members, and new students. Reenrollment for current, returning children begins on February 1 for the following school year. Enrollment opens for new students on March 1.



**Parents must complete and return all required forms prior to the child's first day of attendance.** All immunization and physical records are to be updated as needed. Current immunization requirements can be found on the Department of Children and Families website at [MyFLFamilies.com](https://www.myflfamilies.com) or by request from the Ministry Village ELC administration office.

**Media Release** – We ask for your permission to create, release and/or reproduce your child's photo, video, and/or likeness, and release and/or reproduce your child's artwork and creative writing for advertising and promotional purposes, including but not limited to, display on the ELC's website, social media, in-school bulletin boards, etc. Please note that your child's name WILL NOT appear in conjunction with your child's photograph on the website or social media at any time. A media release statement will be included in your enrollment application.

**Enrollment Forms** – The following is a summary of the forms required for admission and enrollment:

- Ministry Village Early Learning Center Application for Enrollment
- Florida Certificate of Immunizations / Shot Form or Religious Exemption Form
- Student Health Examinations Form, signed by your child's doctor
- Birth Certificate
- Ministry Village ELC Discipline Policy (page 24 in Ministry Village ELC Parent Handbook)
- DCF Brochure "Know Your Childcare Facility"
- DCF Brochure "The Flu Guide for Parents"
- DCF Brochure "Distracted Adult"
- DCF Brochure "Rilya Wilson Act"

**Withdrawal Procedure** – If it becomes necessary to withdraw your student from the Ministry Village ELC due to job/life change or move, please submit written notification to the ELC one month prior to withdrawal. Tuition will be due at the regularly scheduled time unless one month’s prior written notice is provided. The Ministry Village ELC operates year-round, including summer months. Families whose children will not attend the ELC during summer months but plan to return to the ELC in the fall must provide notice in writing at time of reenrollment for the future school term.

## **Tuition / Fees**

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Tuition and fees for the Ministry Village Early Learning Center are competitive and based on similar facilities in our area. **Fees are due on the 1st day of each month** and are not prorated or discounted due to school holidays, emergency closings, severe weather closings or child’s absence due to illness, vacation etc. Tuition is considered late if not received by the 5th calendar day of the month, and a late fee of \$25 will be added. ***If overdue tuition including any assessed late fee is not submitted by the 10th calendar day of the month, the child will not be admitted to the classroom and may lose his/her place in the program.***

Your child’s level of tuition will be determined by their age as of September 1 of the current school year. The final room assignment will be based on the director’s discretion. Florida’s VPK Certificate of Eligibility (COE) covers the cost of a child’s VPK instruction care. When VPK instruction hours end, children are available for pickup by an authorized parent or guardian, or must be enrolled in Wrap-Around VPK Care.

If you receive a voucher from the Early Learning Coalition (ELC), you will be required to pay your copay fee along with any tuition amount that is not covered. If your child is absent more than 3 days in a calendar month, the Early Learning Coalition states that you must provide documentation for the absence. Acceptable reasons are sick child (must have dr. note), funeral (must have obituary), court-ordered visit (must have court documents) or other approved reasons with documentation. There is an additional form that the ELC requires with the documentation. Office staff will provide the form. The Early Learning Coalition will only pay for 10 days of absence in a calendar month. If the Early Learning Coalition does not pay for any reason, you will be charged the full rate of tuition for the day(s).

**Wrap-Around VPK Care** is available for children attending the ELC with a VPK Certificate of Eligibility but needing care after VPK instruction hours end. Wrap-Around VPK Care provides care from the end of the VPK instruction time until 6 PM. These charges are noted in the Monthly Tuition chart.

A supply list for each class will be provided during enrollment.

Payments may be made by cash, personal check, cashier's check, or credit card. Please make checks payable to Ministry Village Early Learning Center, and note the child's name on the memo line. Payments may be made in person at the ELC office or online through the MyProcure App. Please do not leave payments in the classroom or with the child's teacher.

A late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged for any child picked up after the facility's closing time of 6 PM. Fees will be added to the account immediately and charged at the end of the month. If late pickups become an issue, the ELC Director will meet with the parents/guardians to find a solution. If a solution is not available, the family may be asked to withdraw from the ELC.

A surcharge of \$35 will be added to accounts for returned checks/insufficient funds and future payment by personal check will no longer be accepted on the account.

**Discounts** – Families with multiple children enrolled at the ELC will pay the full rate only for the youngest child; each subsequent child's tuition and registration fees will be discounted by 10%.

**A Fee Schedule showing current Monthly Tuition Rates is available from the ELC Director upon request. Rates are subject to change with a 2-week notice. Current rates are posted on the parent board inside the ELC building and on the ELC's website.**

## **Drop Off / Pickup Procedures**

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Classrooms open at 7 AM and instruction begins promptly at 9 AM. Parents and caregivers will register a fingerprint to provide a unique entry code for the facility's secure entrance system. The facility's exterior doors will be locked and only accessible to employees with a passkey. Parents and caregivers will be required to enter the building from the main entrance for drop-off and pickup each day.

**All children should be dropped off and in their classrooms by 9 AM. If your child will be late to arrive or will not be attending one day due to illness, doctor's appointment, etc., please call the ELC by 9 AM to notify the teacher that your child will be absent.**

Only parents and caregivers listed on a child's enrollment form will be allowed to pickup a child. Proper photo identification will be required. If someone arrives to pickup your child and that person's name is not on the enrollment form, we cannot and will not release the child until we have received proper written confirmation from a parent or guardian. No one under the age of 16 will be allowed to remove your child from the school at anytime, including siblings. You may add or delete authorized pickup names from your child's form at any time by providing written notice to the ELC office.

A parent or guardian must check students in and out each day using the ELC's attendance software.

If you must pickup your child during the day, before his or her normal release time such as for a doctor's appointment, please enter through the main entrance and someone in the ELC office will assist you.

**Florida VPK Program Attendance Policies** – For children enrolled in the state-funded VPK program, there are rules and regulations regarding attendance that must be followed.

Your child must be signed in and out daily using the Ministry Village Early Learning Center's attendance software. At the end of the month, you are required to sign a "Student Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate". This confirms that your child did attend during the month and that you wish for your child to continue in the program at this school.

Regular attendance is required for VPK. It is important that your child attend each day to receive the maximum benefit of the program. Our VPK program hours are Monday-Friday, 9 AM to 12 PM, excluding holidays. A holiday schedule will be provided at orientation.

**Tardiness:** Children arriving after 9:10 AM will be considered tardy. Any student who is tardy more than twice in a month may be subject to dismissal from the program.

**Absences:** If your child will be absent, please notify the office the morning of the absence. Upon return, please provide written documentation to the front office. Acceptable reasons for absence are illness, medical/dental appointments, death in the immediate family, compliance with court order, religious observance, and family vacation (not to exceed 5 days for the program year). Documentation such as a physician's note, obituary, copy of court papers, etc. are required for the fourth and subsequent absences during the month. VPK students should meet the 80% attendance requirement set forth by the state. If this is not met, the student may be dismissed from the program. Absences of five consecutive days without notification and proper documentation will be considered a withdrawal and are not eligible for re-enrollment.

If you should decide at any time after the start of the VPK program to re-enroll your child with another provider, it is your responsibility to notify the Ministry Village Early Learning Center. Per the state, each child is allowed one transfer during the VPK program.

## **Health / Safety** \_\_\_\_\_

We take the safety and security of your child very seriously and will follow every precaution to ensure they are cared for with the utmost respect. Our campus and parking lot are tobacco-free environments. This includes vaping.

**Immunization Forms / Policies** – An up to date, valid Florida Department of Health Immunization Form DH 680 or the Religious Exemption Immunization Form DH 681, is required upon enrollment for each child. Please verify that the expiration date on the form is valid for the current enrollment year. It is the parent's responsibility to update the child's form with the ELC when and if the child receives another immunization. The State of Florida Student Health Examination Form DH 3040 must be completed by your child's doctor and is valid for 2 years from the date the physical was performed. Notification will be given to parents if records are not current, and a child whose cards have expired will not be allowed to attend, regardless of a future scheduled doctor's appointment. At any given time, there may be children enrolled who are not fully immunized due to medical or religious reasons.

**Illness / Injury Policy** –

Sick children should not attend the Early Learning Center. Children with fevers of 100.4 degrees or higher, vomiting, diarrhea, bad colds (green mucus), conjunctivitis (pink eye), COVID-19 symptoms, or communicable diseases cannot attend any portion of the school day. **If a child has experienced any of these symptoms within the last 24 hours, the child should remain at home for the wellbeing of the ill child as well as to protect the other children and staff. Siblings of a child who is displaying signs of communicable illness will not be allowed to attend while the sibling is out.**



Parents/guardians will be called to pick up any child who has a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, symptoms of a communicable illness, or who has an incident of vomiting or diarrhea. The child will be isolated and made as comfortable as possible while waiting for pickup. The child(and siblings) is to be removed from the facility within one hour of notification. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contact(s) listed on the child's enrollment form will be notified. If a child is sent home from the ELC due to illness, he/she (and siblings) will not be allowed to return the next day. A minimum of 24 hours must pass symptom-free before the child can return to the ELC. Special circumstances, such as an outbreak, may lead us to increase the time to return to 48 hours.

If your child or someone in your home has been exposed to any of the following communicable diseases, please notify the ELC Director immediately: COVID-19, chicken pox, German measles, haemophilus influenzae, measles, meningococcus, mumps, strep throat, tuberculosis, whooping cough, giardia lamblia, hepatitis, salmonella, shigella, impetigo, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), rotavirus, fifth disease, or hand-foot-mouth disease.

Parents will be notified when exposure to diagnosed cases of communicable diseases has occurred.

For helpful information about the dangers of the flu and how to protect your child, visit [cdc.gov/flu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu) or [immunizeflorida.org](https://www.immunizeflorida.org).

**Medication Authorization** – If your child requires medication to be administered while in attendance at the Ministry Village ELC, an Authorization of Medication Form must be completed. The form must be submitted to the ELC Director, along with the medication. All prescription medication must be in the original container, dated, labeled by a pharmacy and prescribed in the child's name. Over the counter medication must be provided in its original container, along with a written doctor's note including dosage instructions if the child is under the age of the manufacturer's recommended dosage guidelines. This policy also applies to topical treatments including diaper creams, sunscreen and insect repellent. Fever reducer and cough medicine will not be given.

**First Aid** – All accidents on facility property will be reported immediately to the ELC Director to ensure proper handling of the incident. Accidents not requiring professional care will be reported to the parent by the end of the school day. The staff member present will complete an accident form, detailing the incident and injury. If the incident involves more than one child, names of the children involved will not be reported to other parents. Accident forms will be submitted to the parent or authorized pickup person for signature and will be kept on file at the ELC.

If an accident occurs that requires immediate medical attention, every effort will be made to contact the child's parent/guardian. The ELC does not assume any financial, medical or legal responsibility for decisions made due to the inability to locate a parent or secondary authority for approval. The Ministry Village Early Learning Center has CPR and First Aid certified staff

members available at all times the facility is operational. An ambulance will be called for transporting students if deemed medically necessary.

**Head Lice** - Children may be checked periodically for head lice. If lice or nits are found, the child will be isolated and a parent will be notified to pick up the child as soon as possible. Children will need to be treated with medication and be nit free before they are allowed to return to the classroom. DCF requires proof of treatment in the form of a receipt or empty box of the product. Parents are encouraged to always give notice to the ELC in the event that they find head lice or nits on their child at home. This will help prevent the spread of head lice at the ELC.

**Potty Training** - The potty training schedule is determined by each child's developmental level, and generally is introduced in the 2-year-old room. Teachers work with parents to establish a plan for consistency in training at school and at home. All of our classrooms from age 2 through 5 include in-room private bathroom facilities, with child-size sinks and toilets for their ease of use and comfort.

**Children enrolled in the 3-year-old program or above must be fully potty trained.**

**Shaken Baby Syndrome** – As mandated by the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Ministry Village Early Learning Center has a policy and procedure to identify and prevent shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma. All child care personnel, including substitutes and volunteers, who

work in our facility and care for infants have received training regarding guidance on safe sleep practices, preventing shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma; recognition of signs and symptoms of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma; strategies for coping with a crying, fussing, or distraught child; and the development and vulnerabilities of the brain in infancy in early childhood. The proper care and safety of your child is of the utmost importance to us.

**Security / School Safety / Emergency Situations** – The Ministry Village ELC was constructed with your child’s safety and security top of mind. A certified staff member will be present with your child at all times throughout the day. Constructed with impact-resistant glass, an advanced security system, and built to meet or exceed all of the latest building codes for safety and storm hardening, the ELC building is strong and safe. Security cameras will be recording inside and outside the facility at all times. The ELC administration has consulted with trained industry professionals to ensure that every necessary safeguard is in place.

The facility has a modern sprinkler system and smoke detectors throughout, and fire drills will be conducted on a monthly basis in accordance with the Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 65C-22.002(7). Department of Children and Families requires each facility to conduct 1 fire drill each month. Since these drills may include loud noises and flashing lights, every effort will be made to reassure your child during these drills.

The ELC will follow the guidelines and recommendations of the Escambia County School Board regarding emergency closures. In the event an emergency arises which makes it necessary to close the ELC, parents will be notified as quickly as possible. We will reopen once security officials deem the circumstances safe.

If we are required to evacuate the ELC building due to an emergency, we will be at the nearest possible shelter, which is Olive Baptist Church. You will be notified of any emergency situation requiring evacuation, and modified pickup procedures will follow.

We will follow the Escambia County public school plan related to the opening or closing of schools during severe weather situations. Please listen to the local radio and television stations concerning severe weather closings. If public schools are closed for weather emergencies, the Ministry Village ELC will also be closed.

**Food / Lunches / Nutrition** – Parents/caregivers must provide an appropriate lunch and snack each day for their child along with a spill-proof cup for water. If your child has allergies or dietary restrictions, please notify the ELC Director in writing with specific details so staff can ensure foods are not shared with children who have such allergies. Do not provide foods that will need to be warmed or cooked. Refrigeration is not provided for standard lunches or beverages, so consider including an ice pack. Each child should be provided easy to open food containers, in age-appropriate sizes. Please mark your child's lunch box, containers, and cups with their first and last name.

Snack and lunch times are included as part of our curriculum, and we would like to ask for your help and support. We encourage your child to sit at the table while eating, and we use this time to talk about healthy choices. Snack is a time to refuel our bodies in between meals. We like to use this time to teach the children the difference between a snack and dessert and to talk about food groups. You can support us by sending healthy choices and avoiding foods high in fat and sugar. Lunches should consist of foods from a variety of food groups and include a protein to give your child energy to get through their afternoon. Juice boxes/bags with high sugar content are discouraged. Look for a 100% juice option or a pouch with flavored water and zero sugars. Staff will fill your child's cup with water throughout the day. To be fair to the other children, please do not send in fast food. We also ask that you do not include candy as part of your child's lunch or snack. We celebrate holidays, birthdays, and many other days with sweet treats. Teachers may also be using a small piece of candy as

an incentive for hard work. Let's keep these foods (high in sugar and fat) as a special event and not a daily occurrence.

The Department of Children and Families lists some foods as choking hazards and require they not be served. These foods are as follows but not limited to: popcorn, nuts, whole grapes, cheese cubes, and hotdogs. (Grapes, cheese cubes, and hotdogs can be served if cut.) Get your children involved by allowing them to help prepare their food. By giving them options, you give them ownership in their meal, and they will be more apt to eat what is packed.

For a good resource on childcare nutrition, including guidelines for a healthy and balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and limits foods and beverages high in sugar and/or fat, visit the USDA MyPlate website at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov).

The Ministry Village ELC staff support both breastfed and formula-fed babies and will follow you and your physician's wishes when it comes to your baby's individual nutrition needs. Refrigerators are provided in the infant and toddler rooms for families to provide bottled infant formula, baby food or bottled breast milk. Mothers who wish to breastfeed during the day can speak with the ELC Director to prearrange accommodations.

Children age one and over should provide their own sippy cup from home, labeled with the child's first and last name.

Occasionally, teachers plan crafts or learning activities that involve food items. In order for a child to participate in these activities, written permission by a parent or guardian is required.

**This Ministry Village ELC Food Permission must be signed annually and is part of the application form.**

Birthdays and holidays are often celebrated with special food treats. For holiday celebrations, a sign-up sheet requesting specific foods and beverages will be placed in the classroom for your participation. Parents are welcome to recognize a child's birthday by bringing in store-bought treats for the class. Please notify the teacher one week in advance so an announcement can be posted in the classroom. Your child will be given special attention on his/her birthday and reminded that he/she is a unique and special gift from God! Our teachers will be happy to assist in distributing birthday party invitations if everyone in the classroom is included.

**Clothing** – Please provide a complete change of season-appropriate clothing (including undergarments and socks) for your child. Clothes should be labeled with the child's first and last name, placed in a plastic bag, and left at the ELC with your child's teacher. Be sure to update the clothes as the seasons change.

Each child should be dressed in comfortable clothing and shoes that encourage independence and allow for safe play.



Please remember that while the ELC uses washable materials (crayons, paint, etc.), clothing items are sometimes stained through creative play and art. Children must wear shoes that fit securely and have a rubber sole, like tennis shoes. Crocs, flip-flops, or thong-type sandals are not allowed and pose a danger on the playground. Children should not wear jewelry with any value, neither monetary nor sentimental.

**Personal Belongings / Toys** – Children are encouraged to leave personal toys, pacifiers, blankets, stuffed animals, etc. at home to avoid classroom disruptions. Teachers may occasionally invite children to bring in an item for a special “Show and Tell” Day. Please use your discretion on the types of toys that are appropriate for school, and avoid toys like guns, swords or items that are fragile or could pose a danger to other children.

Children attending the ELC for a full day will have rest time. Each child not placed in an infant room must provide a 1-inch thick nap mat made of washable material (vinyl) and bring a sheet and blanket for naptime. These will be sent home each Friday evening to be laundered and returned on Monday morning. If the mat becomes ripped or torn, DCF requires the mat to be replaced. Children will be expected to remain quiet and calm during rest time to minimize disruptions for others.

Diapers and wipes should be provided to the child’s teacher and labeled with the child’s first and last name. These items will be kept in the classroom and used only for your child. You will be notified to restock as items run low.

A \$1 per diaper/pull-up charge will be assessed to the child's account if diapers or pull-ups are not provided from home.

## **Academics and Curriculum** \_\_\_\_\_

The Ministry Village Early Learning Center utilizes The Creative Curriculum®. The Creative Curriculum® is aligned with the Florida Department of Education Developmental Standards, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) curriculum content and assessment guidelines, and the American Academy of Pediatrics developmental milestones.

Utilizing the latest research on early learning and brain development in children, we strive to prepare your child for kindergarten readiness and nurture their development in all areas. We focus on their Christian development by encouraging daily prayer, singing Christian songs, and learning weekly Bible stories. We hope to serve as an educational resource and partner to each family who places a child in our care.

Each child will be assessed on a regular basis to verify the ability to meet appropriate developmental milestones. Parents will be provided a copy of the completed assessment and if indicated, a referral to the Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County will be provided for additional hearing, vision and/or behavioral screening.

## **Parental Communication and Involvement** \_\_\_\_\_

We believe that a strong family foundation and home environment is vital to the healthy development of our children; therefore, we hope to support your family relationship and look forward to working with you to nurture your child. Classrooms will periodically invite parents and friends to visit the ELC for special events, and we hope you will participate. Parents are permitted to visit the school to observe their child's class or have lunch with their child with advance notice. For the security of the children at the ELC and to minimize classroom disruptions, please contact the ELC Director at least one school day in advance to arrange any visits taking place during school hours.

Teachers will send home notices to inform parents of activities and lessons taught in the classroom.

Anyone wishing to volunteer at the Ministry Village ELC must complete a fingerprint and Level 2 background check at your own expense. Please contact the ELC Director if you are interested in volunteering.

**Annual Open House and Orientation** – Each year, the Ministry Village Early Learning Center offers an Open House for new and prospective families to tour the facility and meet the teachers and staff. This optional event provides an informal, low-stress opportunity for your child to see the classrooms, meet the teachers, and experience the toys and playground.

Prior to each new annual school term, the ELC holds an Orientation for the parents or guardians of newly enrolled students. During this meeting, you will have the opportunity to ask questions, learn the facility's procedures, and be prepared to start the term. If you are unable to attend the Orientation due to a scheduling conflict, the information will be provided to you.

## **Discipline / Expulsion Policy** \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." The administration and staff of the Ministry Village ELC believe it is our responsibility to provide a loving and safe Christian environment for all of the children in our care. We will use positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior.

Discipline should be an encouraging learning experience, reassuring the children of Jesus' love for them. Methods of discipline used include:

- Redirecting negative behavior
- Teaching appropriate responses to challenging situations
- Giving positive reinforcement while celebrating appropriate behaviors
- Modeling of appropriate behavior
- Leading conflict resolution
- Reevaluating age-appropriateness of activities
- Providing consistency with expectations and consequences
- Allowing opportunity for the child to calm down in a quiet place
- Removing the child from the classroom (by the Director)

Physical punishment is not used, nor will your child be publicly humiliated or degraded.

**The ELC prohibits children from being subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating, frightening, or associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited. Outdoor play may not be withheld as a form of punishment.**

Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss their concerns about their child's behavior with teachers to work together on a plan for responding consistently to problem behavior. Our role at the ELC is to work together with parents to help children develop appropriate behaviors. Minor behavior issues may not be reported to parents and will be dealt with in the classroom. If a child's behavior becomes unmanageable, the parent will be notified and a strategy to correct the problem behavior will be developed. If the child presents a threat to the safety or wellbeing of other children or staff, hinders the learning of the other children, or continues to cause a disruption that requires more attention than our teacher ratio allows -- and after all discipline measures have been exhausted -- the ELC reserves the right to dismiss the child from the program. Behaviors that could lead to expulsion include but are not limited to:

- Bullying or hurting other children (pushing, hitting, kicking, biting, cursing, etc.)
- Threatening other children or staff with violent words
- Angry, uncontrollable outbursts
- Unacceptable parent/guardian behavior including but not limited to: vulgarity, intimidation, harassment, or violation of child care licensing regulations.

Biting is a common developmental expression for many children who are struggling to express themselves verbally; but that understanding does little to reassure someone who receives a bite. We understand biting is one of the most difficult behaviors to deal with in group childcare settings because of its effect on everyone involved. This and other challenging behaviors may occur for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, developing language skills, stress or change in environment, a need for emotional release, or feeling threatened. In order to alleviate some triggers for biting, our staff maintains the following practices that research has shown to help prevent biting incidents.

- Build Supportive Relationships - Staff members develop warm relationships with each child and get to know each child's unique qualities.
- Create Awareness of Environmental Influences - Children are given the opportunity to work individually as well as in small and large groups; a variety of engaging, developmentally appropriate play is available; staff members model appropriate behavior, and observe children to watch for times when they may feel overwhelmed.
- Target Social-Emotional Support - Children have a daily routine that they follow which allows them freedom and opportunity to meet their individual needs. Children learn to navigate through classroom transitions to build confidence and reduce stress. Staff discuss emotions through literature and other work and teach strategies for self-regulation.
- Redirect Physically Aggressive Behavior

If biting occurs, the following process takes place.

- The biter is calmly removed from the situation and told, "Biting hurts." We avoid any immediate response that may reinforce the biting.
- The child who was bitten is comforted and first aid is applied. The bite is washed with soap and water and an ice pack is applied to reduce redness and swelling.
- The child who bit will be shadowed to monitor and stop harmful behavior as well as determine what is causing the child to bite. The child will be coached and redirected as situations arise. Notes will be taken and filed in a behavior log.
- An Accident / Incident Report will be filled out for parents of both children involved. Confidentiality of both parties will be carefully protected. If the injury due to the bite broke the skin, parents will be notified immediately. Otherwise, parents will be notified upon arrival for pick up.
- Each child will be given positive attention for positive behavior.

If biting becomes excessive, these steps will be followed.

1. If a child inflicts 3 bites in a one week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, a conference will be held with the parents to discuss the child's behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
2. If the child again inflicts 3 bites in a one week period in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be suspended for 2 business days.
3. If the child once again inflicts 3 bites in a one week period in

which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be removed from the program.

If a child, who has been through step 1 and/or 2, then goes 3 weeks without a biting incident, we will go back to step 1 and repeat the process if the child bites again.

If a child bites twice in a 4 hour period, the child will be requested to be picked up for the remainder of the day. This will not count toward the 2 day suspension.

A similar procedure will be put into place and documented for all behavior which results in physical harm to another child. If a child physically harms a staff member, the child will be sent home immediately.

It is Ministry Village Early Learning Center policy to give children a verbal warning when a child hits or harms a staff member in any way. At second offense, the child will be sent home for the remainder of the day. After the third dismissal, the child will be removed from the program.

This policy is put into place to protect the wellbeing of all children and staff in the facility. Every effort will be made to prevent expulsion or dismissal of the child from the program.

We pray for your children daily and ask for God's love and guidance in all aspects of their care. Our goal is to teach love, compassion, trust, fairness, cooperation, and reverence for the family and life in God's world.



## Questions or Concerns? \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time, you have questions or concerns about the facility, curriculum, child care or your child's experience at the Ministry Village Early Learning Center, please contact **Kristi Zagar, the Ministry Village ELC Director**, at (850) 378-8044 or [kzagar@ministryvillage.org](mailto:kzagar@ministryvillage.org).

If the situation requires further attention, please contact the **Executive Director of Ministry Village at Olive** at (850) 475-1106.

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The Ministry Village Early Learning Center Parent Handbook will be updated throughout the year as necessary. To ensure that you have the most up to date information, please check the "Updated" date on the online handbook at the Ministry Village ELC website ([www.MinistryVillageELC.org](http://www.MinistryVillageELC.org)).