



## *Highlands Child Development Center*

**PARENT  
HANDBOOK**

Revised August 2011

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Accredited  
Program of  
NAEYC

# Welcome

Dear Parent:

We are pleased to welcome you and your child to the Highlands Child Development Center. Highlands CDC is an important and integral part of the Highlands United Methodist Church. For over a decade this vital ministry has been one of our most important endeavors. Every family, child and staff member is a source of strength for our program and is a part of our extended family. Our congregation will do everything we can to care for and nurture your child and to make you feel comfortable during the time that you share your family with us.

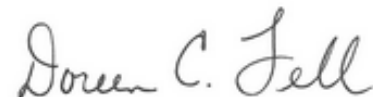
Your child's safety and emotional security, coupled with each child's total development, is our Center's primary focus. We also want to support and encourage your family as you raise your child in our community. Please know that you are always welcome at Highlands and encouraged to participate in the life of the church at any time.

This handbook will acquaint you with the programs, policies, and procedures of our Center. Please read it thoroughly and carefully. Should you have questions about the content or suggestions and concerns, please contact the Child Development Center office. Your child's welfare and experience at Highlands will be best served when we work together to provide consistent operations, loving care, and guidance.

Grace and peace,



**Reggie Holder**  
Director of Ministries  
Highlands United Methodist Church



**Doreen C. Fell**  
Director  
Highlands CDC

# **HIGHLANDS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

## **Statement of Purpose**

Highlands Child Development Center is a Christian, faith-based ministry of Highlands United Methodist Church. The Center strives to have a program which is inclusive, culturally diverse, and designed to meet the needs of church members and the community. All persons, regardless of race, creed, or faith, are welcomed to participate in our program. Christian holidays will be observed, but efforts will be made to create an awareness of, and appreciation for, other faiths and their religious practices.

Consistent with the Mission Statement of Highlands United Methodist Church, the goal of Highlands Child Development Center is to be a place where:

- all families are welcomed, valued, and encouraged to be part of community
- children experience and learn to share the love of God with others in a cooperative spirit of concern for others and the world in which they live
- children are encouraged to discover their God given gifts.

## **I. THE PROGRAM**

Highlands United Methodist Church Child Development Center is licensed through the Alabama State Department of Human Resources (DHR) and was granted accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in September 2002. Highlands CDC was reaccredited under the new NAEYC standards on May 31, 2008.

### **A. Staff/Child Ratio:**

The Center is committed to maintaining staff/child ratio in accordance with both DHR and NAEYC standards.

### **B. The Curriculum:**

This Center is dedicated to ensuring the quality of children's daily experiences in early childhood programs and promoting positive outcomes. The curriculum and assessment program utilized by our Center is Creative Curriculum. This program is congruent with NAEYC objectives and criteria. The curriculum provides opportunities for teachers to include concepts and activities that foster children's social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development. Key areas of content are integrated including literacy, science, math, social studies, creative expression, the arts, health and safety, as well as technology. Above all, the goal of the program is for each child to be challenged and happy in a nurturing environment conducive to learning. Biblical-based, interactive chapel is taught once a week for preschoolers.

Each class has a daily schedule that is flexible, yet predictable. It is a blend of large group, small group, child-initiated learning, creative self expression, and outdoor activities. Individual needs of the children are always the priority.

Time is provided for children to play alone, with other children, and in small groups. Children choose many of their own activities and learn through organized play. Teachers facilitate children's learning by encouraging involvement, asking open-ended questions, observing social interaction, and extending the learning experience. There is a strong emphasis on literacy. Children have many opportunities to be read to in an engaging manner in group or individualized settings as well as independent reading.

The Center offers a variety of Enrichment programs as a vital component of the overall curriculum. International Studies, Music and Art, as well as Spanish are integrated into the curriculum.

Our curriculum is comprehensive, developmentally and age appropriate, and is coupled with challenging experiences that make it an optimum learning environment.

### **C. Assessment Procedure**

Assessment is the process of gathering specific information about a child's knowledge, skills, preferences, behavior, and/or other unique characteristics for the purpose of making a decision about a child (Bailey & Wolery, 1992.) Assessment is ongoing; teachers formally and informally assess children's progress.

HCDC implements The Creative Curriculum Assessment Program. Family Conferences are held 2 times a year—Fall and Spring. Teachers and parents discuss the child’s progress. Parents are strongly encouraged to provide information about their child’s progress, interests, and any other information that would be helpful. Assessment results are essential to provide the teacher the necessary data to plan effectively to meet the learning needs of each child.

## II. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### A. Admissions

Admission to Highlands United Methodist Church Child Development Center is open to children ages 6 weeks through 5 years of age, regardless of race, sex, religion or national origin. Services are provided for families who need full day, five day a week care. Siblings of children currently enrolled and church members receive priority.

### B. Fees:

1. Deposit: At time of admission, a **non-refundable** deposit of \$200 per child enrolled will be required.
2. Registration and Supply Fee: A **non-refundable yearly** registration fee of \$75 and supply fee of \$175 is charged for each child enrolled in the Center. These fees will be due at the time of registration. If the child is withdrawn and re-enrolled, all of the registration fee and all or part of the supply fee will be charged again. Students enrolled after January 1<sup>st</sup> through May will only be charged ½ of the supply fee.
3. Tuition: For parents paying monthly tuition: Tuition is due on the first working day of each month. A late fee of \$5 per day will be charged if the tuition is not paid by the third working day of the month. Late fees will continue to accrue until the balance is paid. If the tuition is not received within 2 weeks of the monthly deadline, the child will be dismissed. The child may return only if the balance is paid in full; an additional deposit collected; and if space is available.

**The tuition charged upon entering the Center will remain the same as the child advances, unless an “across the board” tuition increase is implemented by the HCDC Board of Directors.**

**No refunds will be given for absences.**

4. Sibling Discount: Families with multiple children will receive a 10% discount on tuition for the **oldest** child attending the Center.
5. Late Pick-Up Fee: Children are to be picked up on time so that the Center can **close by 6:00 p.m.!** Failure to meet this policy will result in a late pick-up fee of \$15 for the first five minutes and \$1 per minute thereafter. Late pick-up fee must be paid immediately.

6. **Any week in which a Holiday is observed by the Center, full tuition will be due.**
7. Fees will be assessed for optional activities of the Center, such as annual pictures, field trips or special events.

### **C. Vacations**

Following **one full year of uninterrupted enrollment in our program**, a family may take one week of vacation without paying the tuition fee for that week. This policy will **only** be honored when the Center is given at least one month's notice of a planned vacation.

### **D. Withdrawals:**

Advance **written** notice of **at least four weeks** is required when a child is withdrawn.

### **E. Dismissals:**

The Center reserves the right to dismiss any child from enrollment for failure to pay tuition and fees. The Center also may dismiss a child, after consultation with parents, if the Center is not meeting the developmental needs of the child, or if the child's presence is interfering with the education of others.

### **F. Days and Hours of Operation:**

Highlands United Methodist Church Child Development Center is open from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday throughout the year.

The Center will be closed for national holidays.

(See Current Calendar)

There is no reduction in fees during holidays, and parents should make alternate care arrangements if they work on these holidays.

### **G. Arrivals and Departures:**

Parents have access to one of two entrances to the Child Development Center – the main entrance of the Church, or the secured door nearest the playground. As a safety and zoning requirement, no one will be admitted from the street. The entrance code on the playground door is confidential and is to be used by parents of the Child Development Center **only**. Under no circumstances, should anyone be allowed into the building as you enter or depart.

1. Upon arriving, the child must be delivered into the hands of his/her caregiver **and signed in by the parent**. **A full signature is required by DHR. Initials are not accepted.** This policy must be adhered to, if we are to be responsible for your child.
2. Parents are encouraged to arrive at the end of the day in time to chat with the child's teacher, assist in getting the child's belongings and **leave the Center by 6:00 p.m.** or late fees will be assessed.

3. **No child may be left over ten hours on a regular basis. Prior approval must be obtained for occasional exceptions.**

#### **H. Food and Nutrition Policy:**

1. The Center provides a breakfast snack, a full lunch, and an afternoon snack. The lunch menu is provided on a monthly basis.
2. A nutritious lunch with milk is provided for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.  
Meals are served family style in small groups in the classrooms. This provides opportunities for language development, positive interactions, and modeling appropriate behavior and manners during meals.
3. NAEYC requires the following criteria concerning food:
  - All baby food and junior food as well as bottles must be furnished by the parents. **NO GLASS BOTTLES** can be used. All items must be clearly **labeled** with the child's name. Baby food jars must arrive **unopened**. All opened jars should be taken home or disposed of at the end of each day.
  - All children who can eat a regular diet will be served according to the menu. Exceptions will be made for children under a doctor's written order, children with food allergies, and for children observing cultural traditions. In such cases, the parents will provide the food.
  - Our goal is to maintain a nutritional diet. Special treats may be served on holidays or birthdays.
4. All foods and beverages brought from home must be labeled with child's name and date.
5. Food that comes from home for sharing among the children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers.
6. Staff do not offer children these foods:
  - Hot dogs—whole or sliced into rounds
  - Whole grapes
  - Nuts
  - Popcorn
  - Raw peas
  - Hard Pretzels
  - Spoonfuls of peanut butter
  - Chunks of raw carrots
  - **Parents are requested to not send any of these foods to the Center.**

## I. Parties

Parents are encouraged to visit the Center and celebrate their child's birthday at the Center by presenting a special interest book or learning material from the Center's wish list in honor of their child. The Center requests birthday celebrations be scheduled in advance with the child's teachers and occur after naptime. Invitations to private parties away from the Center will be distributed only if every child in the class is invited.

## J. Health and Medical:

1. In compliance with state regulations, a current immunization record (Blue Card) verifying that all immunizations are up-to-date must be on file at the Center **prior** to the child's first day of attendance. The parents are responsible for providing updated records each time your child receives an immunization.
2. Parents should evaluate their child's health each morning. Children will not be admitted to the Center if they have severe colds, undetermined rash or spots, fever, severe headache, vomiting or diarrhea, or other symptoms of illness. If any such signs occur during the day, the parent will be notified to pick up the child. Children are not to return to the Center until **at least 24 hours** following any illness in which the child's temperature is over 101 degrees. Children may not be returned to the Center after a communicable disease such as chicken pox until a medical doctor has released the child or all symptoms have disappeared. Consult with the Director before returning the child to the Center. **A note stating permission to return to school is required from child's doctor.**  
**Please refer to the attached sickness policy for more specific guidelines relating to illnesses.**
3. Parents will be informed when a communicable disease has been introduced into the Center.
4. No prescription or over the counter (including diaper cream or sunscreen) medications can be administered by the Center staff unless a signed statement from a medical doctor is presented; the medication is brought in the original pharmacy container labeled with child's name, directions for administering, dosage and dates; and a medical authorization form is signed. The Center staff cannot give "as needed" or "until all is gone."
5. It is the responsibility of the parent to be sure that all medical information, including the child's doctor and other adults to contact in an emergency, is current in the child's record at the Center.
6. In the event of an accident or illness requiring emergency treatment, one attempt will be made to notify the parent. If that attempt is unsuccessful, the staff or Director will use their judgment and may contact 911 or contact the child's doctor to seek help for the child. The Center accepts no responsibility for expenses incurred as a result of a medical emergency. Staff cannot transport a child away from the Center for treatment.

## **K. Guidance Practices**

The Center staff are trained and experienced in planning an interesting, developmentally appropriate environment for young children. The schedule provides a variety of opportunities to release energy and rest bodies and minds. It is the goal of the Center to provide a positive experience for children to develop social skills and learn acceptable behaviors in different situations.

Positive guidance techniques of anticipating behaviors, redirecting behaviors, giving limited choices for behaviors, and providing quiet time for reflection on behaviors will be used. "Time out" will be used only in extreme situations.

## **L. Emergency Plans:**

1. Emergency plans are posted in each area of the Center and are practiced with the children at randomly scheduled times, at least once a month. Records of the practices are kept on file in the office.

Closings due to dangerous weather will be announced as early as possible. The Center will generally follow the **Birmingham City Schools closing schedule**.

During summer months, closings will be in line with other local Centers.

If the Center must close for emergency situations, the parents will be notified via telephone (Calling Post,) or e-mail.

## **M. Family Involvement Coordination:**

The family and the Center must work together for the benefit of the child. Parents are strongly encouraged to participate in any of the programs offered through the Center and to be with your child at the Center when convenient. The Center has an "open door" policy so parents are welcome to visit at any time.

1. The Center selects toys, materials, and equipment based on creative and educational values for the children. When toys and other personal items are brought from home, they become lost, the target of arguments, and may or may not be developmentally appropriate for other children or group play. Under NAEYC Health Standards, this practice is not acceptable. Therefore, parents are ask to leave them at home or in the car.
2. Children may use security blankets, pacifiers and/or one soft stuffed animal during nap time only. This policy is enforced for sanitation and safety reasons.
3. Daily written reports about the child's activities and interests will be provided at the end of each day. Preschool 3 and 4 provide weekly reports.
4. The staff will conduct regular assessments of your child's developmental progress. Parent conferences will be scheduled to report on his/her progress and to evaluate specific needs for each child. Conferences will be scheduled twice per year; however, parents may request a conference at any time by contacting the Director.
5. Families are encouraged to be involved in the activities sponsored by the Center and the Parent Council.

## **N. Grievances:**

Parents are encouraged to communicate directly with their child's teacher regularly. Open communication usually prevents problems from occurring. Should a matter not be satisfactorily handled with the child's teacher, please contact the Director to discuss the matter.

A copy of the book, *Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and Nighttime Centers* outlines the regulations on child care in Alabama. It is available in the Center office. A personal copy may be obtained by contacting the State Department of Human Resources, Office of Day Care Licensing at 943-4100.

## **O. Field Trips and Transportation:**

### **1. Field Trips**

Field trips taken by classes at Highlands Child Development Center will be an extension of the curriculum. Parents or guardians will be notified of the trip at least a week in advance. Parents are required to transport and accompany their child on the field trip.

The permission slip should have a place for the parent's signature and should be in hand before the trip.

### **2. Transportation**

Children must be transported by parent(s), guardian(s), or designated person(s) on a field trip. The Center requires the custodial parent/guardian or other designated person to sign children out upon each departure from the Center.

## **P. Confidentiality Policy**

1. Children's records are in a secure location under lock. Only designated staff has access to these records. Teaching staff have access only to the records of children presently in their class. Administrative staff has access to all children's records. Children's files must also be made available to the DHR representative and Jefferson County Department of Health.
2. In addition to DHR required information, assessment information is in each child's file. All assessment information is confidential.

## **Q. SIDS Policy**

1. Infants, unless otherwise ordered by a physician, are placed on their backs to sleep on a firm surface manufactured for sale as infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the US Consumer Product Safety Commission.
1. Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft items are not allowed in cribs or **rest equipment** for infants younger than 8 months.

2. The infant's head remains uncovered during sleep.
3. After being placed down for sleep on their backs, infants may then be allowed to assume any comfortable sleep position when they can easily turn themselves from the back position.

#### **R. Dental Health Policy**

1. Teaching staff provide an opportunity for tooth brushing and gum cleaning. This begins when a child enters the Toddler 1 Class and continues through the Preschool 4 Class.
2. The use of toothpaste is not required. Toothbrushes will be provided and discarded quarterly. An exception to this policy is if a child becomes ill, his/her toothbrush will be discarded and replaced with a new one.
3. Twice a year the children will receive instruction on proper brushing techniques. This service is the result of our on-going partnership with Dr. Frederick Smith, Pediatric DMD.

#### **S. Safety**

All children in the Center participate in a monthly Fire/Evacuation Drill and Tornado/Severe Weather Drill. The Center also conducts a monthly "Code Red" Drill to ensure children's safety in the event of a security breach.

The Center observes Ozone Warnings throughout the summer and cold weather warnings throughout the winter, therefore limiting outdoor activities. In these situations, activities will be in the church's Fellowship Hall.

### III. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Parents should plan to give their child some time to adjust to the staff, other children, and routine at the Center. As a general rule, it usually takes one or two weeks for the child to adjust and to feel secure at the Center.
2. Please bring children to the room upon arrival, and SIGN them in on the appropriate sheet. **THE CENTER CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE UNTIL THE CHILD IS PROPERLY SIGNED INTO OUR CARE.** Children must also be signed out when they are picked up. Sign in and out using your official signature, i.e. signing a check. **No Initials!** This procedure is required for you and any other authorized person who may drop off or pick up your child. The Sign In/Out sheet is considered a legal document.
4. Be sure to LABEL ARTICLES OF CLOTHING or personal belongings (**especially bottles or sippy cups, including the top.**) This is important in all classrooms.
5. Each child needs at least two changes of clothes at the Center which should be kept in his/her "cubby." Please check to see if your child has any soiled clothes to take home at the end of the day. Please remember to bring replacements and provide seasonal clothing as needed.
6. All rest mats are to be taken home on Fridays and laundered.
7. Older siblings not enrolled in the Center must remain with parents at all times and are not allowed in the infant rooms.
8. **Be sure to inform the Center of changes in your home or work telephone number(s) or address.**

## **SICKNESS POLICY**

### **Children will be excluded from the Child Care Center for the following illnesses:**

- Illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.
- Illness that results in a greater need for care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children in the classroom.
- The child has any of the following conditions: fever (100.4,) lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, and/or other manifestations of possible severe illness.
- Diarrhea or stools that contain blood or mucus.
- E.coli 0157:H7, until diarrhea resolves and two stool cultures are negative.
- Vomiting two or more times in the previous 24 hours unless the vomiting is determined to be from a noncommunicable disease and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
- Mouth sores associated with drooling, unless the child's physician or local health department authority states that the child is noninfectious.
- Rash with fever or behavior change, until a physician has determined the illness not to be a communicable disease.
- Purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, often with matted eyelids after sleep and eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eye), until examined by a physician and approved for readmission, with treatment.
- Tuberculosis, until the child's physician or local health department authority states that the child is noninfectious.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
- Streptococcal pharyngitis, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated, and until the child has been afebrile for 24 hours.
- Head lice (pediculosis), until after the first treatment.

- Scabies, (includes ringworm) until after treatment has been completed.
- Varicella (chicken pox), until the sixth day after onset of rash or sooner if all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis, until 5 days of the appropriate antibiotic therapy (which is to be given for a total of 14 days) has been completed
- Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 6 days after onset of rash.
- Hepatitis A virus infection, until 1 week after onset of illness or jaundice.

A child must be free of fever **without medication for 24 hours** prior to returning to the Center. However, if the fever is a result of teething or ear infection, it will be up to the Director's discretion as to when the child can return. Should a child become ill while attending our program, the child will be separated from the other children. Parents/guardians will be notified to pick up children as soon as signs of illness appear (please see list above). If the parents/guardians cannot be reached, an emergency person will be contacted. **Please refer to list above for time frames of return.** Parents/guardians must keep current the name of the child's doctor and the names of other adults to contact in the event the parent cannot be reached. In order that the Director may alert other parents, please report to any illnesses or exposures to communicable diseases that occurred outside the Center. The Director will inform parents if the child has been exposed at the Center.