



United Inner City Services

HOME OF ST. MARK CHILD & FAMILY DEVELOPMENT CENTER

St. Mark Center Family Handbook



2008 East 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri, 64127

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Our Mission, Philosophy, and Goals

Mission

St. Mark Center is an integral part of The United Inner City Services mission to provide opportunities and support to families for the promotion of the community and personal empowerment to enhance the quality of all said lives. Our mission is to promote the wellbeing, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children in our community and our center, by providing quality early childhood education in a stimulating and developmentally appropriate environment while supporting their families.

Philosophy

Children learn best through hands-on experiences and discoveries that stimulate their curiosity and creativity. All children learn literacy concepts through multiple opportunities in their play activities. For example, you will find all types of writing instruments at the writing station, in the house area, and in the block areas. These activities are supported through our curriculum, *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* and *Creative Curriculum for Infant, Toddlers & Twos*. We also believe in the importance of exposing children to music/movement, storytelling, dance and the visual arts. The Arts encourage experiences that foster positive self-images and social competence. With the Arts as an integral part of all children's experiences, the curriculum, whether it involves writing, letter recognition, numbers and languages, is experienced through storytelling, singing, dance, sculpture and painting.

Program Goals

Our goal is to promote the social competence of every child and to empower families. It works with the whole family to create the best possible experiences for the child's optimum growth and social development. It is St. Mark Center's goal to increase the family's skills in dealing with day-to-day tasks, as needed. To realize these goals, the center meets the Head Start Performance Standards which:

- 1) Promote a child's cognitive, creative, physical and social development and multi-ethnic cultural awareness.
- 2) Provide a safe, stable and responsive program in which parents may place their child for care and early education.
- 3) Increase the family's positive approach toward their child's future health care and physical development.
- 4) Support a child's self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity, and self-discipline.
- 5) Enhance the child's mental processes, and conceptual and communication skills.

- 6) Support the family member's relationships with each other and with others in their community.
- 7) Enhance a sense of dignity and self-worth within the child and the family.

The Curriculum

At St. Mark Center, we use the *Creative Curriculum for Preschool* and the *Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos* as one of the guides for children's learning and development. The Creative Curriculum balances both teacher-directed and child-initiated learning, with an emphasis on responding to children's learning styles and building on their strengths and interests. Through active learning, young children construct knowledge that helps them make sense of their world. As children follow their intentions, they engage in creative ongoing interactions with people, materials, and ideas that promote emotional, cognitive, social, physical, and linguistic growth. Children learn from active, intentional, and meaningful play. The following areas are promoted by the Creative Curriculum:

- Social and Emotional Skills
- Physical Development (gross and fine motor)
- Language
- Cognitive
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- The Arts
- English Language Acquisition
- Positive Adult-Child Interactions

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool offers support in the form of teaching guides, which provide step-by-step, daily guidance to help teachers plan meaningful learning experiences that engage and challenge children at all times of the day. The teaching guides feature studies, which are in-depth investigations that begin with children's questions and encourage them to apply skills in literacy, mathematics, the Arts, and technology as they explore concepts in science and social studies.

With The Creative Curriculum, teachers have been trained in and are beginning to use The Project Approach. The Project Approach refers to a set of teaching strategies which enable teachers to guide children through in-depth studies of real world topics. A project is defined as an in-depth investigation of a real world topic worthy of children's attention and effort. Teachers observe children to see what they are interested in. They use this

knowledge to plan discussions and investigations. When children have knowledge and are interested in the topic, they engage and learn incredible things.

St. Mark Center's Arts @ St. Mark programming connects St. Mark Center students and their families to high quality arts experiences provided by Kansas City visual and performing artists. Activities include daily curriculum-integrated activities for St. Mark Center students ages six weeks to five-years; exhibitions that serve as learning and engagement springboards for student and community activities; exposure to arts experiences throughout Kansas City; family engagement opportunities; and community performances and events that serve the entire 12th Street corridor surrounding the Center.

Parents are encouraged to ask the teachers about the curriculum and the activities and experiences that they plan for children. Teachers will share detailed information with you about the curriculum when meeting with you for home visits and parent/teacher conferences. Please feel free to review your child's parent board for more information about the curriculum.

Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive classroom management program and a social-emotional curriculum that is used in classrooms. It is based on current brain research, child development information, and developmentally appropriate practices. It has been specifically designed to make changes in the lives of adults first. The adults, in turn, change the lives of children.

Conscious Discipline is a way of organizing schools and classrooms around the concept of a School Family. Each member of the family—both adult and child—learns the skills needed to successfully manage life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, communicating effectively, being sensitive to others' needs and getting along with others.

These strategies allow teachers to draw from within themselves to become proactive instead of reactive during moments of conflict. Teachers stay in control of themselves and positively influence children. Self-control is not pretending to be calm in difficult moments. Self-control is the ability to reach out and empathize with others; to accept and celebrate differences; to communicate feelings directly; resolve conflicts in constructive ways; and to enjoy becoming a contributing member of a community. As adults begin to change their attitudes and behaviors, so will the children in their care. We cannot teach behaviors and skills that we do not possess ourselves.

Preschool classrooms will use Conscious Discipline on a daily basis as a tool for classroom management and to help children learn to manage their own behaviors. Classrooms will also utilize "I Love You" Rituals, also on a daily basis along with "Wish

You Well” during circle time and “Welcome Back Ritual”.

Infant and Toddler classrooms will utilize Baby Doll Circle time on a daily basis. These children will use baby dolls to sing to and rock, much as the way they are taken care of. Songs and activities used by parents will also be incorporated.

School Readiness Goals

St. Mark Center strives to ensure all children meeting the following school readiness goals prior to their transition to kindergarten. Head Start defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

Goal 1: Approaches to Learning Children will be curious, take initiative, be creative, progress in problem solving skills, and persist in their interactions with materials, activities, and peers and adults.

Goal 2: Social and Emotional Development Children will gain knowledge of themselves and their feelings as well as feelings of others. Children will engage in and maintain positive relationships and interactions with peers and adults.

Goal 3: Language and Literacy Children (including those with dual languages) will build expressive and receptive language skills for conversation, communication, and literacy in developmentally appropriate ways along with concepts of print, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and emergent writing.

Goal 4: Cognition, including Math and Science Children will use math and science regularly and in everyday routines to acquire skills in number sense, counting and cardinality, classification, number operations, patterning, measurement, analyzes data, spatial relationships, and identify, compare, compose and decompose shapes; and explore cause and effect relationships, describe and record observations and investigations of objects (both living and nonliving), develop capacity to understand objects and events in the natural world, and analyze results and draw conclusions.

Goal 5: Physical Development and Health Children will demonstrate control of small and large muscles for movement, navigation, and balance and acquire knowledge of healthy and safe living including personal care routines.

Goal 6: History and Social Science Children will learn about the expectations of social situations, how to participate within a group/community, conflict resolution, the relationship between people and the environment in which they live, and a sense of time and place.

Goal 7: Visual and Performing Arts Children will show interest, explore, and represent in four areas of artistic expression: visual art, music, drama, and dance.

Program Description

St. Mark Center has been providing quality early childhood education services for 50 years. Quality childcare and education services for children have always been a priority at St. Mark Center. We serve private-pay families, state-pay families, and Head Start/Early Head Start families in the program. We are in partnership with The Family Conservancy to serve our Head Start/Early Head Start families. We have an open door policy for all our families; you are welcome to visit the classroom anytime during the day. As a program, it is our goal to meet the overall needs of each child in our setting. In meeting this goal, we meet formally with parents four times a year: two-education home visits and two parent/teacher conferences. We promote educational experiences by using the *Creative Curriculum* as one of the tools in all our classrooms along with *The Project Approach* to learning. The Arts is an important part of the daily experiences offered to the children.

Important Phone Numbers and Center Address

St. Mark Center
 2008 East 12th Street
 Kansas City, Missouri 64127
 Main Number: 816-994-5400
 Fax Number: 816-994-5405
 Hours of Operations: Monday-Friday, 6:30am to 5:30pm

Executive Director: ext. 101
 Deputy Director of Education and Programs: ext. 106
 Early Learning Director: ext. 108
 Director of Family and Community Engagement: ext. 111

Room:	Extension:	Room:	Extension:
Rainbow	145	Purple	121
Turquoise	122	Green	125
Orange	119	Yellow	124
Red	120	Blue	123

Early Childhood Education Services

Screenings

We are a comprehensive early childhood program that provides screening for all areas of a child's growth. Screenings include hearing, vision, height, weight, blood pressure, hemoglobin testing, and developmental (motor, language, cognitive, and social-emotional). The results from screenings provide information to you and your child's teacher to assist with planning for your child's future development and to determine if a referral for further evaluation is needed.

Developmental Screening and Referral Process

Each child is screened on a reliable and valid developmental screening instrument within 45 days of attendance. The purpose for the developmental screening is to get baseline information on your child's development for planning in the classroom. The result of the screening is shared with you as the caregiver.

If there are any areas of need, the teacher and/or the Instructional Support Staff will meet with you to discuss next steps and to develop strategies to promote growth in the concerned area(s) for both school and home. If the team (caregiver, teacher, and Instructional Support Staff) decides that further screening is needed to assist the child's growth in the concerned area(s), we will have a parent meeting to discuss the areas of concern. During that meeting, you would have the option to fill out a Request for Intervention form from our partner, The Family Conservancy (TFC). TFC staff will come to the classroom to observe your child and/or send a referral to the Kansas City, Missouri School District to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of your child. As the caregiver, you will play a vital part in the entire process and your input will always be encouraged throughout the process.

Child Assessments

Assessments are formally completed three times a year on all children. The teachers collect children's work samples, photos, and observation notes continuously to create a comprehensive portfolio for each child to use as a guide of documenting a child's development.

The tool used to assess children in the fall, winter and spring is the Desired Results Developmental Profile (2015) or DRDP. The tool assesses the children's development in the following areas:

- Approaches to Learning - Self-Regulation
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy Development
- English-Language Development (Preschool-Aged Dual Language Learners)
- Cognition, Including Math and Science
- Physical Development - Health
- History - Social Science
- Visual and Performing Arts

This information is shared with parents during parent/teacher conferences and at educational home visits.

The Learning Genie App provides a flexible portfolio and assessment rating tool for child development observation, documentation, and assessment rating. This tool enables the teachers to share learning contents such as ebooks, songs, and parenting tips.

Medical and Dental

Each child enrolled must have a physical and dental examination completed annually. If you do not have a medical or dental provider, our staff will assist you in obtaining one. The Family Advocate will also work with you to obtain follow-up medical or dental care, when necessary.

If your child has a health need that must be monitored by staff, you will be required to get documentation from their physician on a form that will be given to you before your child attends the center. We will also create a Classroom-Individual Care Plan with you and the classroom teachers. This plan will be kept in the classroom to assist teachers in meeting your child's needs. the teachers if a concern arises with your child(ren).

Nutrition and Child Care Food Program

Meals are prepared to meet the nutritional requirements of the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program and in compliance with Head Start Performance Standards. Arrangements are made for all infants, toddlers, and children who have any special food or dietary needs.

We encourage children's independence and decision-making by practicing family-style dining. We allow children to help set the table, serve themselves, and choose the food and amount they want to eat. "Happy or clean plates" are discouraged, for this tends to encourage overeating.

Children are encouraged to take small portions of all foods. But not forced. More food is available on the table for a designated time if a child wants more. Children are encouraged to taste, but are not forced to eat. During family-style dining, staff, parents, and volunteers model social skills, proper table manners, the use of utensils, and positive eating habits by sitting and eating with the children, taking small portions, and being willing to try new foods.

For any child with any allergies/ food restrictions, the parents will follow the procedures of getting documentation from their child's primary care physician stating what the child can and cannot have. We will work with the Kitchen Manager to ensure that the substitutes are being made for your child. Parents are given a menu along with the monthly newsletter so that you are aware of what we are serving.

The Family Advocate gives all classrooms an Allergy List with the children's food allergies and other medical information to ensure that everyone who cares for your child is aware. The Allergy List is updated quarterly, or as needed. This information is confidential on the Teacher Board with a cover sheet.

Transition between Classrooms and to Kindergarten

St. Mark Center recognizes the importance of providing children with an effective transition process to maintain developmental gains they have achieved. We will provide you with information and/or workshops on school readiness and potential questions to ask as a caregiver of a kindergartner.

With commitments from community partners, parents, and ongoing communication with the local school district, it is our goal that each child and family unit is supported and ready to enter kindergarten.

When it is time for a child to transition to a new classroom, you will be informed in a timely manner in order for your child and you to visit the classroom and meet the teachers. Children will be transferred to his or her new classroom based on their developmental level, not just because they have turned a certain age. The Early Learning Director and Education Coordinator will meet with you to plan the transition process and discuss any questions and/or concerns that you may have about the process.

Continuity of care is utilized in the infant and toddler rooms. Primary teachers (caregivers) will move with their children during their first 3 years at St. Mark. Preschool age children (3-5 year olds) will remain in their same classroom all 3 years while attending St. Mark. If there is a request from a parent to move their child to another classroom, a conference will occur and the administrative team will ask for the request in writing. Every effort will be made to discourage room changes. It is St. Mark's philosophy that transitions for children are disruptive to their development. If a solution can not be found to keep your child in his/her originating classroom together we will explore transition options.

Parent Committee Meeting

The Parent Committee meeting is a monthly occurrence held at the center. Together with the Family and Community Engagement Director an elected group of Parent Committee Officers facilitates and plan the meeting each month. St. Mark parents will elect a chairperson and a vice chairperson to attend the Head Start Policy Council monthly. Parent/guardians who currently have a child(ren) enrolled at the center are parent committee members. The meetings involve planning for center activities and specialized training for parents.

The Head Start Policy Council is made up of parents and community representatives who participate in the policy, budget-planning, and decision-making processes of the local Head Start Grantee. St. Mark Center has two parent representatives each fiscal year to represent the center at monthly Policy Council meetings. The Policy Council serves as a link between Head Start, parents, partners, and other stakeholders.

The Policy Council has the opportunity to initiate suggestions and ideas for program improvements and to receive information regarding action taken and recommendations.

Parents who serve on the Policy Council and other committees are elected at the Center level. If you want to know more about serving on a committee or the Policy Council please contact your Family Advocate.

Parent Volunteer Opportunities

Head Start programs rely on parents, the community, and partnerships with other agencies for a skilled and diverse volunteer pool. Volunteers provide a wide range of services and support that helps Head Start children and their families.

When volunteering in the classroom, it greatly enhances the adult-child interactions.

Classroom volunteers read stories, extend children's play, and support children's involvement in various activities in learning centers.

You will be asked to sign the volunteer in-kind form each time you and/or a family member spends time in the classroom assisting the teachers and/or interacting with the children.

Volunteers are always welcome. We are a state-licensed facility, therefore siblings cannot be in the classrooms with those volunteers due to safety reasons. Please arrange for childcare for your other children when visiting your child's classroom. If you have any questions, please feel free to give the Family Advocate or Director of Early Learning a call at (816)994-5400.

Parent/Teacher Conferences and Education Home Visits

Head Start policy requires our teachers to conduct **two** Parent/Teacher Conferences and **two** Home Visits between August-July with each child's parent/guardian. Teachers will share current information related to your child's growth and development. Together, you will establish learning goals for your child and give input into the curriculum. These meetings give you the opportunity to ask questions you may have about your child, the classroom, and the center.

Early Childhood Education Fees and Collection Policy

Fees are due weekly and are collected by the front desk receptionist. Payments are to be made weekly prior to service. Invoices will be provided on Tuesday for the upcoming week and payments are due by 5:30pm on Friday. If payments are not current, childcare services will be terminated and the child will be put on the waiting list for re-enrollment. Prior to re-enrollment, the entire balance must be paid in full. Children

receiving Head Start services may continue to attend during Head Start hours only. However, extended day hours will not be an option.

Fees have been prorated to adjust for the days when the agency is closed. Fees are due every week of the year except for winter break, spring break and preservice.

Late Child Pick-Up Policy

The center closes at 5:30 pm (3:00 pm if not enrolled in the extended day program). We do understand that emergencies come up and you may be late picking up your children. We ask you to call us to let us know when you are going to be late and inform us of your expected time of arrival. If someone else is going to pick-up your child(ren) who is not on the pick-up list, you must identify yourself by providing your EZcare code, provide the name of the person picking up and their relationship to the child. Please note that the person must have their picture identification before we are able to release the child(ren) to them for pick-up.

We begin charging a late fee at 5:31pm (3:01pm if not enrolled in the extended day) regardless of circumstances. You will receive a copy of the amount you owe for your late fee at the pick-up time.

The late fee is \$8.00 for the first minute and \$1.00 for every additional 15 minute interval per child.

The parent will sign the late pick-up form and pay the appropriate fee the following school day. If the child has not been picked-up by 6:30 pm and there has been no contact with the parent, the child may be considered neglected and the Police or the Division of Social Services may be contacted.

Returned Checks:

Checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$35.00 service fee, payable immediately. Following an infraction, we will no longer accept checks from your family. You be required to pay with a money order and/or a cashier's check.

Missouri Child Care Assistance Program:

All children who receive Missouri Child Care Assistance funds must have written documentation from the State at the time of enrollment. If you do not have the proper documentation at the time of enrollment, you will be considered a private-pay family and will be responsible for all childcare fees. Your fee status will change once all proper documentation for your Child Care Assistance funds is on file at the center.

It is the responsibility of each parent to maintain a current status with Missouri Child Care Assistance and renew it before expiration. If the parent allows their assistance to expire, the parent will be responsible for paying the applicable private pay family rate.

Please note, depending on the State's assessment, you may have a weekly co-pay for which you are responsible for along with your Child Care Assistance funds.

Classroom Color and Age Group Served:

Room:	Age Group Served:	Room:	Age Group Served:
Rainbow	Preschool 3-5 year olds	Blue	Preschool 3-5 year olds
Turquoise	Preschool 3-5 year olds	Red	18 months-3 years
Green	Preschool 3-5 year olds	Purple	18 months-3 years
Yellow	Preschool 3-5 year olds	Orange	6 weeks-18 months

Monthly Center Newsletters

The monthly newsletter is compiled and sent home each month to keep you informed about center activities, parenting tips, and other helpful information. The monthly menu is sent home each month along with the newsletter. The monthly newsletter and menu will also be posted on the parent board in each classroom. We encourage you to take time each month to review both documents.

Morning Arrival

All families are encouraged to have their child(ren) signed in and in their classroom by ***no later than 8:45 am each day***. Children will be considered tardy at 8:46 am. It is imperative that you make every effort to get your child to school on time and ready for learning. If you have compelling reasons to have your child's arrival time to be latter that 8:45 am please see your family advocate for a possible exception to the policy. Please make sure your child is well rested the night before. If you child is going to arrive late, please call the front desk to inform them of the late arrival. If your child is consistently late, your Family Advocate will schedule a meeting with you to create an attendance improvement plan. It is our goal that all children receive all experiences offered throughout each day to foster their development.

For some, this will be the first time your child has separated from you for any length of time. This may be a stressful time for you and your child. Even some returning students may have a little anxiety and some separation issues for a short time. Try to establish a routine of saying goodbye with your child. Making it fairly quickly and not drawing it out will make it easier both for you and your child. If you are having a problem, please alert a teacher to help. Usually, if there are tears when you leave, they clear up quickly right after you depart. Please feel free to call us if you wonder how your child is adjusting. We hope to make transitions and separation as easy as possible for both of you.

If your child has a doctor's appointment before school, you will need to contact the center's receptionist at (816) 994-5400, so it can be documented that your child will be late due to a health appointment. You **MUST** present a doctor's statement upon arrival. If your child has an afternoon appointment, bring them in at the regular scheduled time before 8:45am and pick them up in time to get them to their appointment.

All parents and children must enter and exit the building through the main entrance. Children may not be dropped off or picked up from an outside entrance. To ensure each child's safety, parents must accompany their child to the classroom and sign them in on the appropriate form. The center opens at 6:30am. Head Start hours are 8:00 am - 3:00

pm and should not be dropped off before 8:00am. Head Start children who arrive early can wait in the front hallway with their parents until time to go to their classroom.

Communication with Families

Communication with families happens both formally and informally. Information regarding center activities, program updates, progress towards learning goals, and parent meetings are shared using the following methods:

- Parent/Teacher Conferences (twice a year, minimum)
- Learning Genie App
- Home Visits (twice a year, minimum)
- Newsletters (monthly)
- Incident/Accident reports
- Daily Reports (infants and toddlers)
- Program Calendar (annually, as needed for change)
- Informational/Event Flyers (as needed)
- Parent Boards (in each classroom)
- Phone Calls (as needed)
- UICS/St. Mark Center Website (www.uicskc.org)
- Email News (as needed)
- Text and Voice Messaging (as needed)
Text STMARK to 313131 to receive text messages from the Center.
- Parent Committee Meetings (monthly)
- Minutes from Parent and Policy Committee Minutes (monthly)

Teachers and caregivers have informal conversations during drop-off and pick-up about their children and/or the program. As caregivers, you have access to each classroom's phone line allowing you to contact your child's teacher as needed. Please keep in mind that when teachers are in the classroom with the children, it is important that they are actively engaged with children.

Program Monitoring

What does monitoring mean to St. Mark Center?

Monitoring is the process of reviewing center activities to determine whether predetermined standards for quality are being met.

Why is monitoring important?

The intent of monitoring is to ensure that children and families receive quality, comprehensive services that equip children with the skills necessary upon leaving St. Mark Center to begin kindergarten ready to learn. Continuous monitoring provides validation that progress towards program excellence in programming is occurring. Monitoring also provides the data needed to support requests for continued funding on the local, state, and federal levels.

Scope of Monitoring Activities

We use the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards, Head Start Performance Standards, Head Start Act and State Childcare Licensing Regulations to determine how program activities are delivered. These standards and regulations provide the focus for all monitoring activities. The following are areas that are monitored:

- ✓ Early Childhood Development and Education
- ✓ Health and Safety
- ✓ Health Services (mental health and dental health)
- ✓ Disabilities Services
- ✓ Family Services

We share information about the comprehensive monitoring activities with families during parent committee meetings. Parents are invited and encouraged to participate in the Head Start Grantee's annual self-assessment.

Parent Grievance/Complaint:

Parents and teachers are encouraged to have a dialogue to discuss any concerns: The following procedures will govern the hearing and the resolution of parent complaints if it cannot be resolved with the specific center staff person:

- 1) Complaints are submitted in writing to the Early Learning Director and/or the Director of Family and Community Engagement. The complaining party will receive a response within 24 hours. If the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the person or entity complaining, the person or entity proceeds with step 2.
- 2) The complaining party shall submit the written complaint to the Deputy Director of Education and Programs and the complaint response from the Early Learning Director and/or the Director of Family and Community Engagement. The complaining party will receive a response within three (3) working days or sooner. If the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the person or entity complaining, the person or entity proceeds with step 3.

3) The complaining party shall submit the written complaint to the Executive Director and the complaint response from the Deputy Director of Education and Programs and the complaint response from the Early Learning Director and/or the Director of Family and Community Engagement. The complaining party will receive a response within three (3) working days or sooner.

We will make every effort to find a solution while maintaining confidentiality for all parties involved. **Please note that there will be two administrators who will sit in and listen to all complaints made regarding the staff, the center, the program, and other areas of concern.**

GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential for each child's progress. Children must maintain 85% attendance per month (no more than 4 absences). Parents must call the center to report why their child is absent and how long they may be out. If a child falls below the attendance percentage, your Family Advocate will meet with the parent to discuss the barriers preventing the child's attendance. If the child is found to be consistently absent, the family will be placed on a 45-day attendance contract. If the contract is violated, the child will be placed on the waitlist and the child's slot will be replaced.

Inclement Weather

If St. Mark Center is closed for inclement weather or other emergencies, the following are the sources that are available for you to use to find out this information:

- Text message notification: signing up is required to receive messages (Text STMARK to 313131 to receive text messages.)
- Agency's website: www.uicskc.org
- Facebook page: United Inner City Services-Home of St. Mark Center Child and Family Development Center
- Follow us on Twitter @UICS
- Local television stations: KMBC 9 and KHSB 41 (*weather related only*)

Please supply the center with up to date emergency contact information in case we need to close early due to bad weather or other emergencies.

Emergency Drills

In each classroom and throughout the center the facility's emergency plan for fire, tornado, active shooter, earthquake, and other emergency drills is posted. Please take

time to review these plans in your child's classroom. We practice the fire drills monthly, tornado drills once every three months, and other drills annually with the children.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting:

All St. Mark Center staff and management are mandated reporters by local and state laws and are required to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. Suspected cases of child abuse and neglect are reported to the Missouri State Hotline in Jefferson City. The toll free number is 1-800-392-3738 for emergencies and online at <http://www.moga.mo.gov/mostatutes/stathtml/21000001151.html?me=210.115> for non-emergencies.

Release of Child:

Children will be released by the center staff to those who have been authorized for pick up on the "Class Enrollment Sheet" (must be 16+). If you are sending someone other than the individuals authorized on this sheet, you will need to call the front desk, identify yourself by providing your Easy Care code, provide the name of the person picking up and their relationship to the child. They must present picture identification to the receptionist at the time of pick up. The receptionist will make a copy. We advise you to add everyone to the authorization list who you believe may pick up your child(ren).

If staff determines that the adult picking up the child is unable to safely provide care for the child, the procedure will be as followed:

- The staff person will ask the individual picking up to wait while the staff contacts an administrator to come to the room. Staff can say, "I think an administrator wanted to speak with you. Please wait a minute." for example.
- If pick up person refuses to wait, the staff will contact the front desk for assistance and to inform them of the situation.
- The administrator will calmly approach the individual and ask to speak with them privately.
- The administrator will state concern for the safety of the child.
- The administrator will offer to contact another authorized person to pick up the child.
- You or a administrator will notify local authorities if unable to contact an authorized person or if the adult tries to take the child despite your concern. If the child leaves in a vehicle, staff will record information about the vehicle, ie make and model of car including license plate.
- If the individual is not the primary caregiver, a call will be placed to the primary caregiver to notify them of the situation.

Notify the Early Learning Director as soon as possible to inform them of the situation.

No child will be released without proper information and identification. Please keep us informed of a change in your child's health, address, phone number or family situation.

Discipline and Guidance

St. Mark Center staff strives to teach children the skills needed to self-regulate their behavior. We use Conscious Discipline techniques in our classrooms to assist children in gaining social-emotional skills. We believe children need guidance and understanding in redirecting their misbehaviors. We understand that children vary in their level of ability to manage their own behavior. It is the responsibility of adults to guide children in this process by setting clear expectations, redirecting behavior, being consistent with consequences, and modeling appropriate behaviors. We try to practice preventive discipline as much as possible, by carefully planning class time, keeping to a predictable schedule, redirecting inappropriate behavior, and responding consistently to behaviors and consequences.

We understand that children vary in their level of ability to control their own behavior. Young children are generally active, inquisitive, and eager to try new experiences. It is the responsibility of adults to guide children in this process by setting clear limits and expectations, redirecting behavior, enforcing consequences and modeling expected behavior. By establishing expectations that are age appropriate; providing a consistent and supportive environment; anticipating and eliminating potential problems, we discourage undesirable behaviors.

St. Mark Center discipline policy is as follows:

1. Have a range of strategies for dealing with the difficult behavior:
 - Explaining why this behavior is not acceptable
 - Giving the child the chance to calm down and regain control
2. Use positive statements of expected behavior and refrain from threatening or punitive measures.
3. Each class will post positively stated classroom expectations.
4. Suggest an appropriate alternative such as distraction and redirection.
5. Get on child's level and reinforce expectations and talk privately with children.
6. Designate a location in each classroom to provide a quiet area for the child to reflect and calm down. This area is not meant to be punitive but a positive approach to assisting children in regulating their feelings.
7. If a child is out of control, and would potentially cause harm to him/herself or others, call an Education Administrator who will provide assistance in the classroom. As a last resort, the Administrator may remove the child from the situation.
8. The following, as a means of correction, is unacceptable:
 - Hitting, shaking, biting, or any other physical restraint
 - Humiliating, threatening, or isolating a child
 - Depriving child of food

- Suggesting a call to parents about the situation or otherwise taking away things such as outdoor time, certain toys, or other items or experiences children enjoy.

If a child is displaying persistently challenging behavior, a meeting will be arranged with the child's parents, teacher, administration, and, when necessary, a representative from Mid-America Head Start to share mutual concerns and potentially send a Request for Intervention. If a parent avoids or refuses to meet with the program staff or refuses the resources provided to them, it may be evident that the child and family may be referred to another program for placement.

Reasonable and appropriate modifications will be made for all children. Training will be provided for all staff to ensure they have the tools necessary to address dangerous child behaviors. Children will not be excluded from the program unless keeping the child in care poses a significant risk to the health or safety of the child or anyone in contact with the child and the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level.

Discrimination Policy

St. Mark Center does not discriminate in its enrollment or employment practices based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, status as a veteran, or HIV/AIDS infection status.

Dress and Footwear

Your child should be dressed in clothing appropriate for play and weather. Children must wear sneakers or other closed-toed rubber-soled shoes. Outdoor time occurs every day unless the temperature is below freezing, an ozone-alert day, or if there is some form of precipitation.

When the weather is cold, please dress your child warmly in a hat, a coat, gloves, long pants, or other appropriate clothing. In warm weather, shorts and other summer type of clothing should be worn. All children must keep an extra change of clothing at school for possible accidents during the day.

Note: If you need assistance with clothing or footwear, please contact your Family Advocate. Flip-flops, open toe shoes and sandals with heels are not permitted due to safety concerns.

Licensure

Since October 1973, St. Mark Center has been licensed by The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. The state monitors our center periodically for compliance with safety and health regulations. Licensure rules are available upon request for your review.

Confidentiality

All information that is shared about your child and family will be kept confidential. The only information that will be shared with outside partners is done so with your prior approval. As a partner with Mid-America Head Start, all our Early Head Start and Head Start children's information will be shared for monitoring purposes and to ensure that quality services are being provided to families.

Birthdays and Special Occasions

The curriculum used at St. Mark Center is based on sound early childhood principles and developmentally appropriate practices. Teachers observe and listen to the children and develop lesson plans and projects that promote physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth based on those interests and what is developmentally appropriate for the children in the classroom. Young children can be over stimulated by the consumerism associated with major holidays (Halloween, Christmas, Easter, etc.) We are interested in facilitating an environment which offers meaningful experiences for children reflective of family traditions from all children in the classroom. There will not be an emphasis on specific holiday celebrations or activities. Conversations about the diversity of ways people celebrate is encouraged and will be included as part of planning with families to create a multicultural and anti-biased curriculum.

If children continually bring up holidays, we ask them something specific their family does and ask the other children to share as well. This is a simple conversation that can even occur during family-style dining.

As we remain culturally sensitive to all of our families enrolled in our program we will not accept birthday treats, balloons or special lunches provided by families. Once per month each class will celebrate all monthly birthdays, enrollment anniversaries or special days (i.e. birth of siblings) as a group. The children along with the teachers will prepare a special celebration for that day.

Change of Clothing

Each child must have a complete change of clothing in their cubby at school at all times. Providing these clothes will ensure that your child remains in clean, dry clothing all day. It is important that you label your child's clothing with their name before bringing it to the classroom. Please make sure to send clothing for the season of weather we are currently experiencing.

Center Field Trips

Field trips are scheduled for the children to foster their learning and awareness of many different experiences in the community. Parents are welcome to go on all of our field trips to assist the staff in ensuring that our children are safe. Our goal is that all children take part in scheduled field trips; if your child needs additional assistance, we may request family assistance on the field trip. The teacher will notify the family of the request in a timely manner.

Holidays

We will be closed on the following holidays:

- New Years Day
- MLK Day
- President's Day
- Independence Day
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- The Friday following Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

Written notices will be posted and you may refer to your center calendar.

Staff Development Days

On our Annual Center Calendar, you will see specific dates when the center will be closed for Staff Development Days. These closings allow teachers and other staff to receive required trainings and to spend time on their professional growth and development. We will also post notices around the center as a friendly reminder of the center closing dates as they approach.

Required Immunizations for Entry

	0-2 month	3-4 months	5-6 months	7-18 months	19 months to Kindergarten Entry
DTAP/DT	N/A	1	2	3	4+
POLIO	N/A	1	2	2	3+
HIB	N/A	1	1+	2+	3+
HEP B	1	1+	2	2+	3+
PCV	N/A	1	2	3	4+
MMR	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
VAR	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 or proof of disease

Medication at Center

The following steps outline the center's medicine policy:

1. Parents must fill out a licensure Medication Authorization Form completely.
2. Medicine will be given to the child only by staff who has been trained in how to administer medication.
3. The parent or legal guardian must be the person who fills out the form and gives the medication to the teacher or Family Advocate.
4. All medicine must be in the original container and labeled clearly by a pharmacist with the following information.
 - a. Child's name
 - b. Name of medicine
 - c. Dosage to be given
 - d. Method of administration
 - e. Frequency of administration
 - f. Expiration Date
5. Controlled medications must have a doctors note with it with the following information.
 - a. Child's Name
 - b. Name of medicine
 - c. Reason for medicine
 - d. Dosage to be given
 - e. Method of administration

- f. Frequency of administration
- g. Expiration Date

All non-prescription medication (including sunscreen, bug spray, or fever-reducer) shall be in the original container and labeled by the parent with the child's name, and instruction for administration, including the times and amounts for dosages.

* All medication cups and/or syringe must match the recommended dosage.

Please note that no medication will be given to any child if it does not meet the above criteria.

Illness and Exclusion

St. Mark Center staff will observe all children for communicable diseases and other signs of illness on arrival and throughout the day. Your child must not attend school if any of the following signs and/or symptoms are present:

- Severe headache and stiff neck
- More than one diarrhea stool
- Grey or white stool
- Severe coughing
- Difficulty or rapid breathing (especially if infant is under six months)
- Yellowish skin or eyes,
- Pink Eye (tears, redness of eyelid lining, irritation, swelling or discharge of pus)
- Unusual spots and/or rash
- Sore throat
- Infected skin patch(es)
- Vomiting more than once
- Severe itching of the body and/or scalp
- A fever of 100 degrees or above by mouth or 99 degrees under the arm

As a licensed center by the state of Missouri, we are not allowed to have a child participate in class activities if any of the above signs and/or symptoms are present.

Your child must be free from fever, diarrhea, and/or vomiting for 24 hours before returning to the center unless otherwise noted by a licensed physician. If your child has a communicable disease, they must have a signed doctor's release form before they can return to class. Each child's caregiver will be notified immediately when a communicable disease occurs in the facility.

The child will be kept in the classroom away from the other children until someone picks up the sick child from the center. If the child needs to be out of the classroom, the teacher will inform an administrative staff. The administrative staff will get the child and take him/her to the office and keep them comfortable until they are picked up.

We ask that all parents, guardians, and emergency contact persons respond immediately when you are called concerning your child's illness. If you must send someone who is not on your child's emergency release form, the parent or guardian must call the center to give the person's name. They must bring a driver's license or some other legal form of picture identification.

Nap/Rest Time

Nap/rest time will be encouraged for all children. If a child does not want to rest on their cot after thirty minutes they will be allowed to get up to play in a quiet area until nap/rest time is over, according to the daily schedule.

The center provides a sheet for your child's cot and we ask you to provide a small blanket with your child's name written on it. The blanket must be taken home every Friday for cleaning then returned Monday mornings.

Tooth Brushing/Oral Health

Prevention and early intervention and are based on the premise that a child must be healthy in order to be ready to learn. Good oral health for infants, toddlers, and preschool children serves as a precursor to adult oral health and is essential for a child's behavioral, speech, language, and overall growth and development. Our policy on tooth brushing is as follows:

- For children age two and over
 - Once daily, after a meal, Head Start staff (or volunteers, if available) should assist children in brushing their teeth using a small smear of fluoride toothpaste.
- For children between one and two years of age
 - Once daily, after a meal, Head Start staff (or volunteers, if available) must brush children's teeth with a soft bristled toothbrush, using a small smear of toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- For infants under the age of one
 - At least once during the program day, staff or volunteers must wash their hands and then cover a finger with a gauze pad or soft cloth and gently wipe infant's' gums. As a child gains teeth, brushing with a toothbrush will occur.

Screen Time Policy

Because we care about the health and well being of the children in our care, we follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations on Screen Time:

- Children under 2 should have no screen time
- Children age 2 and over should watch less than 30 minutes per week at child care, and less than 2 hours per day total.

Toys from Home

Please do not send or let your child bring toys to the center. They may misplace it, another child may take it, or it may get broken. Teachers may have a Show-and-Tell day in their classroom. Please make sure that the item is labeled with your child's name for these occasions.

Please send toys back to the center if your child accidentally takes a center toy home without approval from the teacher.

Food and Drinks

We participate in a child and adult food program. Because of this participation, outside food is not allowed. Please do not send your child to the center with food and/or drinks. We provide a healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack for all children daily. We encourage all children to be at school by 8:30am when breakfast is served, so that they can start their day with a well-balanced breakfast.

Money

Child(ren) are not to bring money to the center under any circumstance.

Family Information Board

There is a Parent Information Board outside all classrooms. On the board, you will find the classroom Weekly Lesson Plan and Individualization Plan, Monthly Menu, program updates, Creative Curriculum objectives, MARC Head Start School Readiness Goals, and other pertinent information. Please take time several times a week to review the board for updates and changes. Also note the documentation that is posted in the classroom and hallways. This will let you know the work that is occurring in the classroom and learning that is taking place.

Resources

Our school has a wide variety of resources available. Please check the resource area located in the front lobby. There is also an employment resource book located in the family advocates office. Other resources are available upon request; please see your Family Advocate.

Substitutes

There will be time when the center might have to use substitute teachers to make sure we are meeting the adult/child ratio. If you have any questions regarding your child's substitute, please feel free to see the Early Learning Director.

Inclusion Program

We are an inclusion program. We accept children of all ability levels. We make every effort to ensure that transitions into the center are productive and successful for all children, including children with disabilities. We work closely with The Family Conservancy and the local education agencies to ensure that children receive the services they need to be successful. We also work closely with parents to make sure that you are an advocate for the rights of your child. Some children have special needs for which an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) may be developed. The teacher will incorporate the IEP or IFSP goals into the weekly classroom activities and experiences.

Smoke Free Environment

St. Mark Center is a smoke free environment. We ask our Staff and Parents not to smoke anywhere on St. Mark Center property. This is a request that promotes good health for all.

Infants and Toddlers

The infants and toddlers have daily activity sheets that you can put your comments on in the morning, even though you may tell your child's teacher. Please take time to get your child's activity sheet at the end of the day and discuss with your child's teacher any questions you may have regarding your child's day. Children in the Orange, Red, and Purple rooms are not allowed to wear the following items in their hair at the center:

- Beads of any size
- Hairballs
- Rubber bands of any kind
- Barrettes
- Hair Clips

This is for the safety of the children. These items are potential choking hazards. If your child comes in with any of the above items in their hair, or otherwise, you will be asked to take them out. Failure to do so will result in your child not being accepted for the day and you still will be charged your regular weekly fees.

Safe Sleep

Infants under the age of 12 months will be placed on their backs for sleeping. Prior to sleep, teacher will check the infants to ensure they are comfortably clothed so that they do not overheat; that all bibs, necklaces, and garments with ties or hood are removed; and that the temperature in the room is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.

Infants will be directly supervised by sight and sound at all times. While supervising infant sleep, teachers will be assessing for the following:

- a. Breathing: teachers will look for the rise and fall of the chest and stomach to observe for breathing.
- b. Temperature: teachers will monitor that sleeping infant does not get too hot. Signs that an infant is too hot include sweating, damp hair, flushed cheeks, heat rash, and body temperature by touch, restlessness, and/or rapid breathing.
- c. Absence of head covering: A teacher must ensure that sleeping infants' heads remain uncovered during sleep and to readjust clothing as needed.

Open Door Policy

We have an open door policy at the center. You do not need to make an appointment unless you need to meet with your child's teacher or support staff. You are free to visit in your child's classroom at any point during the daily schedule and we encourage you to attend field trips. We encourage parents to share their hobbies, skills, and abilities with the children. If you would like to come and share, please communicate with your child's teacher so that you can be added to the daily schedule. If you need to meet with your child's teacher, please feel free to schedule a time, so that they can give you the time and attention needed.

Please feel free to contact the office if you have any questions or concerns.

Parking

On any given day we have over 90 families dropping off and picking up their children to and from our school. We have 20 parent/visitor parking spots available. The front of the building is emergency vehicle and bus designated parking only. In a effort to respect all families and keep everyone safe it will be required that you only park in the spaces provided. The police will be called if you continue to park in the emergency vehicle and bus designated areas to help enforce safety. We take keeping you and our children safe very seriously.

Also please note this is a one way parking lot. Enter from the east and exit from the west. Speed limits shall not exceed 2 miles per hour.

Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct

In order to maintain a stable, consistent, and respectful environment that is conducive to learning, St. Mark Center parents are expected to abide by the following guidelines:

1. When providing behavioral guidance to children at a St. Mark Center function or in the facility, parents will utilize positive methods. The use of corporal punishment (i.e., physically striking a child or inflicting physical punishment) or verbal humiliation is prohibited.
2. Parents will treat UICS-St. Mark Center staff and other UICS-St. Mark Center parents and volunteers with courtesy and respect. Verbal or physical threats toward staff and/or other parents are unacceptable. Cursing or swearing is not allowed at any time on the premises.
3. Disputes that arise between adults will be discussed in a calm manner and in a location away from children.
4. Parents, staff, and volunteers will not smoke on the property.
5. Complaints that are not able to be resolved with the assistance of center staff will be addressed in accordance with the Grievance Policy outlined in the Parent Handbook.
6. In your daily conversations with each other, please remember to be respectful and ever-mindful that little ears may be listening...and eyes watching.
7. Parents will refrain from gossip and visiting classroom that their child is NOT enrolled.

Violation of this Code of Conduct could result in termination of services.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Parent Handbook

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the St. Mark Center Parent Handbook. I understand that it contains important information on policies and procedures. I realize the handbook is not intended to cover every situation which may arise, but is simply a general guide in which to refer.

I understand that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with this Handbook and that I agree to follow the provisions and other policies/rules of the center.

I acknowledge and understand that this Parent Handbook supersedes and replaces any and all prior handbooks or materials previously distributed.

Please note: St. Mark Center policies and procedures are subject to change to reflect the needs of the program, children, and families we serve.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Room: _____

Child's Name: _____

Room: _____

Child's Name: _____

Room: _____

Child's Name: _____

Room: _____

(Please complete and give to receptionist or Family Advocate)

