



# FAMILY HANDBOOK

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. General Information</b>	<b>3</b>
A. Philosophy	3
B. Mission	3
C. Vision	3
D. Goals	3
E. Values	3
F. Non-Discrimination	4
G. Ages Served and Hours of Operation	4
H. Steps to Enrollment	4
<b>II. Programs and Partnerships</b>	<b>5</b>
A. Infant/Toddler Care	5
B. Partnership Programs	5
C. Before and After School Programs	5
<b>III. Early Education</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Staff	6
B. Curriculum	6
C. Assessment	7
D. Special Needs	7
E. Home Visits and Conferences	7
F. Communication, Family Involvement, Family Services	7
G. Classroom and Center Transitions	8
H. Guidance	8
I. Field Trips	8
J. Rest Time	9
K. Cubbies	9
L. Clothing	9
M. Toys	9
N. Television, Video Viewing, Internet Usage	9
O. Complaint Procedure	9
<b>IV. Nutrition and Health</b>	<b>9</b>
A. Meals and Nutrition	9
B. Physicals and Immunizations	10
C. Accidents and Injuries	10
D. Medical and Dental Health Care Homes, Health Insurance	10
E. Childhood Illnesses	10
F. Medication Administration Policy	10

<b>V. Program Policies and Procedures</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>A. Confidentiality</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>B. Location of Children</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>C. Identification of Children</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>D. Private Employment of Staff</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>E. Celebration Policy</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>F. Weather – Excessive Hot/Cold Weather</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>G. Visitor Policy</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>H. Arrival and Pick-Up</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>I. Cell Phones</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>J. Non-Authorized Pick-Up</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>K. Child Custody</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>L. Safety</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>M. Transportation Policy</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>N. Emergency Procedures</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>O. Publicity</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>VI. Tuition and Fees</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A. Tuition Policy</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>B. Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (C-CCAP)</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>C. Returned Checks, ACH and Credit Care Decline Charges</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>D. Collections</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>E. Late Pick-Up</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>F. Drop-In Care</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>G. Get Well Center Care</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>H. Vacation Policy</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>I. Illness Policy</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>J. Snow days</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>K. Holidays</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>L. Withdrawals</b>	<b>16</b>

**The policies and procedures outlined in this Handbook have been established with the best interest of all children enrolled at the Colorado Springs Child Nursery Centers DBA Early Connections Learning Centers.**

Prior to enrolling your child, we request that you review our handbook. All families must sign a written statement agreeing to abide by these policies at the time of enrollment.

**Thank you for choosing Early Connections Learning Centers.**

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **A. PHILOSOPHY**

Early Connections provides a nurturing, safe, secure environment where children can learn, grow and thrive. The early years are the vital period for children to develop the learning foundations necessary for lifelong success. Our early care and education program focuses on school readiness and helps young children acquire the skills and attributes they need to enter school prepared to learn and succeed.

### **B. MISSION**

Early Connections Learning Centers' mission is to provide high quality, comprehensive early care & education for **ALL** children.

### **C. VISION**

- Early Connections Learning Centers will be viewed as a valuable and critical community asset.
- Early Connections Learning Centers will be a pioneer in early education.
- Early Connections Learning Centers will be renowned for creating future generations who reach their full potential.
- Early Connections Learning Centers will work to help build a community whose culture is defined by its focus on its children.

### **D. GOALS**

Early Connections' goals are:

- To provide high quality early learning supports, environments and comprehensive health supports
- To provide families with meaningful community and parenting supports
- To provide opportunities for children to grow in language development, literacy skills, cognitive development, positive social interactions, physical development and engagement in the arts
- To provide program staff with the knowledge, skills, and supports to work effectively with and on behalf of families and children.

### **E. VALUES**

**Respect:** Revel in the goodness of all people. Appreciate people from different backgrounds and treat all people with dignity. Provide and accept open and honest feedback.

**Excellence:** Ensure quality in every task. Work hard and achieve our desired outcomes.

**Professionalism:** Attract and retain highly skilled staff dedicated to continued development and growth. Be recognized as progressive leaders in the industry who are up-to-date on changes and leading the way through continuous improvement.

**Honor Our Legacy:** Cherish our history and legacy and the past contributions to today's mission.

**Integrity:** Do the right thing.

**Optimism:** Approach our mission with a positive outlook that is strength-based and encourages fun at work.

## F. NON-DISCRIMINATION

Early Connections does not discriminate on any basis in regards to hiring practices or enrollment. Early Connections is dedicated to promoting full inclusion of children into all aspects of program services. Every effort is made to provide comprehensive services to all children including those with special needs. Early Connections is a multi-sited corporation and provides services in accordance with the ADA. Some centers are in environments/buildings that do not allow us to meet all the physical needs for some children and their families. We make every effort to make reasonable accommodations and will work with your needs to the best of our ability.

## G. AGES SERVED AND HOURS OF OPERATION

Early Connections accepts children 6 weeks to 14 years of age as follows:

Early Connections at Antlers Place	18 months – 6 years	6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Early Connections at The Day Nursery	2½ years – 13 years	6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Early Connections at Sand Creek	3 years – 12 years	6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Early Connections at South Chelton	6 weeks – 6 years	6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Early Connections at Fremont	3 years – 5 years	8:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. 11:45 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Early Connections at Trailblazer	3 years – 5 years	7:55 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. 11:40 a.m. – 2:25 p.m.

In case of emergency, we request notification of any delay in picking up your child. If a child is still at the center at 6:00 p.m. and we have not heard from you, we will attempt to contact all emergency contacts. If we are unsuccessful in reaching an emergency contact by 6:30 p.m., the proper authorities will be notified.

## H. STEPS TO ENROLLMENT

**STEP 1:** Tour your prospective center and receive your enrollment packet

**STEP 2:** Meet with Enrollment Specialist prior to your child's first day. (Approx. 20 minutes)

**Please bring the following completed forms:**

- ✓ Application for Child Placement
- ✓ Consent to Treat
- ✓ Income Eligibility Form
- ✓ Developmental History
- ✓ General Consent Form
- ✓ Acknowledgement and Release Form
- ✓ Sleeping Mat Permission Form (Toddlers only)
- ✓ Pacifier Waiver (Infants only)

**Also, don't forget these:**

- ✓ Immunization Record
- ✓ Physical or date of physical appointment
- ✓ Parent/Guardian ID
- ✓ Financial Information
  - 4 weeks of most recent paystubs **OR**
  - 3 paystubs if military (LES's) **OR**
  - A letter from the employer documenting the pay, number of hours worked per week, and frequency of paydays. This letter **MUST** be on company letterhead.

**STEP 3:** **Family Orientation:** (Approximately one hour)

Meet with Director and Classroom Teacher. You know your child better than anyone. This meeting gives us an opportunity to get to know you and your child so we can best meet your family's needs.

**STEP 4:** **Child's First Day – WELCOME!**

## **II. PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### **A. INFANT / TODDLER CARE**

Families that have children enrolled in the infant program are responsible for supplying enough clean bottles for a day's use and at least two changes of clothes per day.

The center will provide formula and baby food. Infants will only be fed foods approved by the family. With your infant's best interests in mind, the center will not introduce any new foods into your child's diet.

To prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost, please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, etc.). Early Connections will not be responsible for lost or damaged items. Colorado State licensing requires all bibs, necklaces, and garments with ties or hoods be removed from the infant upon arrival to the center.

Families of children enrolled in the toddler program are responsible for supplying six diapers, baby wipes, and at least two changes of clothes per day. Because it is not developmentally-appropriate and goes against licensing criteria, we will not make any attempts to toilet train children less than 18 months old. Toddlers should always wear close toed shoes to prevent tripping.

### **B. PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS**

#### **Colorado Preschool Program**

Early Connections, in conjunction with Colorado Springs School District 11, has four sites that participate in the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). Sites are located at The Day Nursery, Antlers Place, Fremont Elementary and Trailblazer Elementary. The Colorado Preschool Program, a state-funded program, is designed to serve three and four year old children who face learning readiness challenges due to individual and family risk factors. The program is intended to increase kindergarten readiness skills prior to entering kindergarten. This partnership allows parents an additional educational option and offers full-day, full-year care.

#### **Head Start /Early Head Start Programs**

Early Connections and Community Partnership for Child Development, the local Head Start/Early Head Start grantee, have an innovative and collaborative program that offers full-day, full-year early education for children that meet Head Start/Early Head Start eligibility guidelines.

Early Head Start Partnership classrooms for children 6 weeks-3 years of age are offered at South Chelton. Head Start Partnership classrooms for children ages 3-5 years are offered at Antlers Place, The Day Nursery Sand Creek and South Chelton.

### **C. BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

#### ***Early Connections Learning Centers at The Day Nursery***

Families of children kindergarten through 5th grade attending the before and after school program at The Day Nursery can enroll their children at Columbia Elementary, 835 E. Saint Vrain, 328-2700. Transportation to and from Columbia is provided by School District 11. A transportation agreement must be signed by the family and kept on file at the center. Families of children enrolled at The Day Nursery who do not attend Columbia Elementary or Pikes Peak Prep will be responsible for their own transportation arrangements to participate in our before/after school program.

#### ***Early Connections Learning Centers at Sand Creek***

Sand Creek Elementary has an on-site program specifically for the children enrolled at that school.

#### **School-Age Curriculum and Supervision**

Early Connections School-Age programs provide a rich learning environment that is developmentally-

appropriate for school-age children. Our program is designed to support school success and enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, reasoning, openness to diversity and that which is different from ourselves, and the ability to work and play with others. As adults interact with the children, they observe their behaviors and abilities. These observations are used as a guide for evaluating, planning, designing and implementing teaching strategies that can be tailored for each child's individual needs.

Early Connections School-Age programs strive to support children's educational goals by providing materials that strengthen academic skills, facilitating communication with teachers and offering homework support. Recreational equipment, arts and crafts are also available.

Early Connections School-Age program staff is responsible for the direct supervision of all children. Children will remain within sight and sound of Early Connections teachers at all times.

Any child suspended from their elementary school will not be permitted to attend Early Connections during their non-scheduled time. For example, Early Connections cannot provide care for the child while he/she should be in school however he/she may attend the after school hours.

### **III. EARLY EDUCATION**

#### **A. STAFF**

All of our staff members are hired in compliance with the requirements and qualifications set forth by the Colorado Department of Human Services Division of Child Care. All staff members of Early Connections are placed in well-supervised team situations with scheduled breaks. In addition, staff members participate in staff orientation and ongoing staff training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practice, observation and assessment, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism. Staff are encouraged to evaluate and improve their own performance based on feedback from a variety of sources including families. If you have comments to offer a staff member, please complete a communication form and turn it into the Center Director.

The staff of Early Connections is mandated by Colorado State law to report any evidence or knowledge of suspected child abuse or neglect to the County Department of Human Services.

#### **B. CURRICULUM**

Early Connections provides a rich learning environment that is developmentally-appropriate to the specific age in each classroom. Our program is child directed and initiated. We have a flexible daily routine that allows children to advance through the day at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring is hands-on and is facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making and problem-solving, responsibility, independence, reasoning, openness to diversity and that which is different from ourselves, and the ability to work and play with others.

The curriculum at Early Connections is **The Storybook Journey**. It is based on the philosophy that children speak to us through their behavior, that play is the child's vehicle for understanding the world, and that the child and family must be the central focus when developing programs that value and initiate lifelong learning. Storybooks and children's literature inspire the journey and lay the foundation for planning developmentally-appropriate programs for young learners.

Large and small group activities are planned for each day, indoors and out. The daily routine allows for a variety of interactions between children and their peers and adults. As adults interact with the children, they observe their behaviors and abilities. These observations are used as a guide for evaluating, planning, designing and implementing teaching strategies that can be tailored for each child's individual needs.

### **C. ASSESSMENT**

Early Connections has selected Teaching Strategies GOLD (GOLD) as the method of measuring child outcomes. GOLD is an ongoing performance assessment that allows teachers to evaluate children's progress in the natural setting of the classroom. GOLD consists of child observations, documentation, and summary reports to parents.

The system is structured around nine broad curriculum areas: social/emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, science/technology, social studies, and the arts. The purpose of this assessment is to help teachers get to know your child better through observation and to learn about your child's skills and behaviors. Individual child assessment information is kept confidential. Access to individual information is limited to the teachers of the child, parent/guardian, Center Director, and Curriculum/Assessment Director. Information is also added to the Colorado Department of Colorado's Results Matter Data Base. The mission of the Results Matter program is to positively influence the lives of children and families by using child, family, program and system outcomes data to inform early childhood practices and policy.

This is a valuable tool to use when meeting with families during Home Visits and Conferences (4 times per year). By sharing what we observe, we will get a clearer picture of your child than either of us would alone. We then use our information to create individualized learning goals and guide the classroom curriculum to meet your child's needs.

### **D. SPECIAL NEEDS**

Early Connections strives to meet the individual needs of all children. Reasonable accommodations are made for children with special needs. Teaching staff incorporate IFSPs, IEPs, and any other individualized plans into the curriculum. When possible, adaptive furniture will be provided to allow children to fully participate in the classroom activities and program. Open communication with families is essential to ensure the child's needs are met.

### **E. HOME VISITS AND CONFERENCES**

Family participation is encouraged and welcomed. Early Connections uses the Home Visits/Conferences model for family support and communication. The Home Visits/Conferences model is designed:

- To guide families and teachers with a way of sharing valuable information about their child;
- To individualize the planning process for each child in the context of their family, culture, and community;
- To explore ways to use a child's family's strengths to promote growth and development;
- To utilize practical, everyday activities and routines to enhance each child's development at home, in school, and within the community;
- To create an ongoing process for recording the growth and development of the child.

Each family (with the exception of school-agers) receives two home visits and two conferences with their child's teacher each year. Visits will occur upon enrollment and in January, May, August, and November. These may take place in the home, at the center or another mutually-agreed upon location. The teacher and family discuss the child's strengths, likes, dislikes, styles of learning, development and progress. We will also take this opportunity to work together to set individual goals for the child. Information on child growth and development as well as ideas to use at home to promote growth will be given to the family.

A family may request a conference regarding their child's progress at any time. Early Connections encourages families to communicate concerns through conversations with their child's teachers or Center Director.

### **F. COMMUNICATION / FAMILY INVOLVEMENT / FAMILY SERVICES**

Early Connections believes that children thrive when the relationship between the family and the center is a partnership. We strongly believe in positive two-way communication. Spanish translation is available upon request. Families are encouraged to communicate with teachers and administration in whatever way is most convenient for them. This may include by phone, notes, email, or in person.



Information is shared with families through verbal conversations, newsletters, fliers, family boards, notes, phone calls, posters, conferences, and e-mail.

Early Connections has an open door policy and offers many opportunities to be part of your child's early learning experience and to connect with other families. Opportunities include:

- Family Nights for a night of learning and play with your child.
- School Readiness Events are open to all of our families and offer interesting topics about early childhood development and school preparation.
- The Parent Action Committee (PAC) is a family-driven group that focuses on the needs of all families including planning family nights, setting up trainings and classes, collecting the annual family surveys and making recommendations for program improvements.
- Volunteering is always welcome. Ask your child's teacher about the many ways you can help.
- Each classroom offers one family involvement activity per month. We call these Classroom Celebrations, and they usually reflect our Storybook Journey.

All Early Connections employees have been trained to treat all children and families with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. If difficulties arise between families and staff, we encourage families to share their concerns with the Center Director either verbally or in writing. Through communication we will work to resolve the issue. If you are not satisfied with the solution we encourage you to contact the Vice President of Center Operations.

Our Center Directors have a variety of ways to support our families. These include:

- Assist families with locating community resources
- Help families obtain emergency assistance in areas such as food, clothing, utilities, housing and counseling
- Assist families with successful transition to school
- Access to a Family Resource Lending Library

## **G. CLASSROOM AND CENTER TRANSITIONS**

Early Connections strives to make the transition from one classroom to another or from one center to another as smooth and welcoming as possible. If a child is moving into a new classroom the family will be consulted and a transition meeting will be arranged prior to the move. The transition meeting will include the family, current lead teacher and the lead teacher in the new classroom. This gives the family an opportunity to meet the new teacher, learn about the class, set new goals and discuss any concerns.

## **H. GUIDANCE**

Guidance at our centers is positive and re-directive. Children are treated with dignity and respect at all times. If children display persistent challenging behavior, families will be asked for advice and assistance in developing an individualized plan to support the child's needs. There are times when the needs of some children cannot be met by the programs at Early Connections. When those needs cannot be met, alternative placement is recommended and/or required.

## **I. FIELD TRIPS**

The children of Early Connections go on supervised trips at the discretion of the Center Staff. If it is not possible to walk, Early Connections may use the City Transit System or contract with a private organization. Contracted buses meet safety standards and are equipped with safety seats for children under 6 years of age. We welcome you to join your child on field trips. Permission slips for each field trip must be signed by the family. Field Trips for infants and toddlers are limited to short walks near the center.

We ask for your cooperation to have your child dropped off on time for field trips. Departure times are coordinated with transportation and event times. To ensure your child's safety, children will not be permitted to be dropped off or picked up at the field trip site by a parent/guardian/sponsor unless the parent remains with them. First aid supplies, emergency contact information and cell phones are taken on all trips.

Walking shoes are required for field trips. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking and make it difficult for your child. Please send your child in sturdy walking shoes.

#### **J. REST TIME**

All preschool age children in care more than 4 hours will participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and after a short period of rest, they are given quiet activities. Older children will also be provided a rest period if needed. Cots/mats and blankets will be provided by the center. These items are washed and disinfected weekly. Personal items may be brought in to help the child rest; however, they must be small enough to fit in the child's cubby.

#### **K. CUBBIES**

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a "cubby." This will provide storage space for your child's personal belongings. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

#### **L. CLOTHING**

Children should dress in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including painting, outdoor play, sand, water and other sensory activities. Please dress your child in clothes that allow for full participation in all classroom activities and outdoor play. Sturdy closed-toed shoes are required for your child's safety. Our classroom staff take precautionary measures to protect your child's clothing; however, in the event that your child's clothing is damaged or lost, Early Connections will not be held responsible. Each child should have a minimum of one change of clothing, labeled with the child's name.

#### **M. TOYS**

Early Connections does not allow your child to bring toys, food or money to our centers unless requested by your child's teacher. Early Connections will not be responsible for lost or broken items.

#### **N. TELEVISION, VIDEO VIEWING AND INTERNET USAGE**

Early Connections only allows television or video viewing if it corresponds with the curriculum or if it is educational. We encourage adult and child interaction and believe that children learn through individual and small group play.

Some of Early Connections' classrooms have computers and/or access to the internet. Children have opportunities to play educational games and programs. Internet usage is closely monitored by the classroom staff, and the children are only allowed access to age-appropriate web sites.

#### **O. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE/ABUSE REPORTING**

At Early Connections Learning Centers, we make every effort to provide a safe environment for your children. In some instances you may have questions or concerns regarding your child's care at our centers. If this should occur, please contact your Center Director. If your concerns are not resolved, you may contact, Cindy Morgan, Vice President of Center Operations at (719) 632-1754 ext. 1017. A report may also be made to The Colorado Department of Human Services at 1575 Sherman Street, First Floor, Denver, CO 80203 or by phone at (800) 799-5876.

Should there ever be any concerns regarding child abuse, you should seek immediate assistance from the El Paso County Department of Human Services at 105 N. Spruce St., Colorado Springs, CO 80905 or by phone at (719) 444-5700.

### **IV. NUTRITION AND HEALTH**

#### **A. MEALS AND NUTRITION**

Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack are served each day. During meal times the children and adults serve family-style. Family-style meal service occurs when the dining table is set with individual plates and

flatware. Food is placed in small bowls from which children can help themselves. Children and the teachers sit at the same table and share the same meal. Children are encouraged to serve themselves from food passed around each table. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Weekly menus are posted and available for parents/guardians/sponsors. Children are encouraged to eat the healthy foods included on our menu.

Children with food allergies must have a special diet statement from their physician that lists appropriate food substitutions. Special diet statements must be updated at least annually.

**For safety reasons, we ask that no food be brought into our centers unless specifically requested by your child's teacher.**

## **B. PHYSICALS AND IMMUNIZATIONS**

An up-to-date immunization record is required prior to the child's enrollment date. A physical examination by a physician or an appointment date is required upon enrollment. The appointment must be within 30 days of admission. Infants and toddlers under 2 years of age must follow the recommended Academy of Pediatrics schedule for routine health evaluations. An annual physical is required for children between the ages of 2-6. A physical is required every three years for children 6 years of age and who have completed the first grade. If your child has a food or medicine allergy, a physician must indicate the allergies on your child's physical form. If there is a food allergy or intolerance, a special diet statement must be completed by the physician noting the specific food substitutions that need to be offered. This special diet statement must be updated once a year.

## **C. ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES**

If your child becomes injured while in our care, you will receive a written accident report. If medical attention is required, the family will be notified immediately and if necessary we will transport your child by ambulance. If your child is taken for treatment, we will provide you with a Notice of Claim form.

## **D. MEDICAL AND DENTAL HEALTH CARE HOMES/HEALTH INSURANCE**

One of our health care goals is for all children enrolled in Early Connections to have a primary care physician and dentist. If you would like information regarding doctors or clinics that are accepting new patients or Medicaid clients, please call our medical staff between the hours of 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. at 632-1754, ext. 1016.

## **E. CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES**

When a child's fever reaches 99.5-100.9, Early Connections will call to notify the parent. For fevers over 101.0, the child needs to be taken home.

When a child experiences symptoms that result in greater care than the staff can provide or compromises the health and safety of the other children, the child must be picked up from the center.

Some contagious illnesses may require your child to be on an antibiotic for 24 hours before returning to the Center.

## **F. MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION POLICY**

For the protection of your child, Early Connections will only administer medication during operational hours when the medication dosage cannot be adjusted to exclude the hours your child attends our centers. This includes medication for children with disabilities/special needs. In lieu of Early Connections administering medication to your child, parents/guardians have the option of coming to the center to administer medication themselves. Your child's physician can often prescribe antibiotics and/or other medications for your child that only need to be administered two times a day. Please request your child's physician to prescribe medications for your child that only needs to be administered two times a day at home. In instances in which your child requires medication and/or nebulizer treatments in excess of twice a day, we have strict guidelines for your child's safety that must be followed. Early Connections will only administer prescription and non-prescription medications with a written order from your child's physician and with parental consent. We require our medication form to be filled out with the exception of acetaminophen and ibuprofen. (Authorization to

administer acetaminophen and ibuprofen can be granted on your child's physical form.) Medication permissions for medications, other than acetaminophen and ibuprofen, on physical forms are no longer permissible.

Parent/guardian is required to schedule a meeting with an Early Connections Health Professional and an Administrative Staff member anytime that your child is prescribed a medication that needs to be administered during child care hours. This meeting must be held prior to Early Connections administering medication to your child. This meeting may be waived at the discretion of Early Connections administration if a child is placed on a routine medication accompanied by a complete Medication Administration Form.

The Division of Child Care requires the following for over the counter and prescription medications:

- Written order of an MD, DO, PA, or NP
- Written parental consent
- Child's name
- Licensed prescribing practitioner name, telephone number and signature
- Date authorized
- Name of medication and dosage
- Time of day medication is to be given
- Route of medication
- Length of time medication is to be given
- Reason for medication. The reason needs to be specific, it cannot be "as needed" or "PRN"
- Side effects or reactions to watch for
- Special Instructions

Medications must be brought to the Center in the original pharmacy container appropriately labeled by the pharmacy or person with prescriptive authority along with a copy of the medication authorization order. Please inform center administration if your child is currently on medication. It will also be the parent's responsibility to supply the medication syringe or dropper.

Anytime a child who requires medication discharges from one of our centers and re-enrolls, the parent/guardian must once again meet with Early Connections Health Professional and an Administrative Staff member.

Early Connections Learning Centers will not administer medication to children whose Medication Administration Form and/or Nebulizer Administration Form is incomplete

## **V. PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **A. CONFIDENTIALITY**

All records concerning your child are confidential. Information regarding your child will not be released without your written consent, with the exception of those requested by our regulatory and partnering agencies. Confidential information is kept locked and/or is password protected. All staff sign Early Connections' confidentiality policy.

Early Connections is mandated by Colorado state law to report any evidence or knowledge of suspected child abuse or neglect to the El Paso County Department of Human Services.

### **B. LOCATION OF CHILDREN**

With your child's safety and well-being as our primary concern, it is the family's responsibility to sign their child in/out and accompany him/her to their classroom upon arrival and pickup. In the event your child's class is out of the building, he/she will join another group until their class returns. All children will be accounted for by use of attendance recorders and field trip attendance lists.

### **C. IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN**

All classrooms monitor attendance by updating their attendance records throughout the day and by counting and matching the numbers of children present with names on attendance records. Children are accounted for at least once every 15 minutes and when transitioning from the classroom to another location and upon return. The number of children and adults present are recorded every 30 minutes.

### **D. PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT OF STAFF**

Early Connections strongly discourages families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (e.g., babysitting). Any arrangement between a family and an Early Connections' employee for employment or services outside the program and services of Early Connections is an individual endeavor and private matter, not connected or sanctioned by Early Connections. An Acknowledgement and Release form confirming this policy must be signed by parents/guardians/sponsors.

### **E. CELEBRATION POLICY**

Early Connections does not celebrate holidays. This allows Early Connections to offer a developmentally-appropriate program and to ensure that all children can participate in all activities. Our children learn to respect all cultures and to appreciate the value of diversity within all our families. Early Connections will encourage classroom or center celebrations such as classroom events, Storybook Journey, harvest festival, winter wonderland party, or friendship week. **For safety reasons, we ask that no food be brought into our centers unless specifically requested by your child's teacher.**

### **F. WEATHER - EXCESSIVE HOT/COLD WEATHER**

Children have access to a shaded, sheltered or inside-building area at all times to guard against the hazards of hot or cold weather. Please keep in mind that the children go outside every day so they should dress accordingly. If your child is not feeling well enough to participate in outside time, he/she should be kept at home.

### **G. VISITOR POLICY**

For your child's safety and protection, all visitors entering one of our centers must sign in and out at the front desk with their name, address and reason for the visit.

### **H. ARRIVAL AND PICK-UP**

Each family will be given a 4-digit security code upon enrollment. This code will allow access into the center. Our goal is to provide a safe environment for children, so please use discretion before giving your code to anyone else. Please DO NOT hold the door open for others. The person behind you may not be a parent.

Early Connections utilizes an electronic signature system to monitor child drop-offs and pick-ups. This system requires a fingerprint scan from each authorized individual who wishes to drop off or pick up a child. If a fingerprint cannot be obtained, two numerical codes per authorized person will be used instead. If an authorized person wishes to drop off or pick up a child and their fingerprint is not already registered, the center administration will register that individual. No child will be released to any person without prior approval from the enrolling parent/guardian/sponsor or to any person less than 18 years of age. Parents less than 18 years of age will be allowed to pick up their own children. Until we are familiar with you, a photo ID will be required before any child is released.

If staff members feel that the adult picking up the child is not in a condition to be driving, any one of the following options may be exercised:

- We may contact additional authorized adults who can pick up your child;
- Pay for a cab (fare will be charged to your account);
- If the parent/guardian/sponsor or other adult is aggressive or threatening, we will call 911.

**If this situation happens repeatedly, we will discontinue care of your child.**

## **I. CELL PHONES**

Early Connections requests that families do not use cell phones during drop off or pick up times. This is a time for the staff to share information with you about your child and we need your full attention.

## **J. NON-AUTHORIZED PICK-UP**

In the event that someone who is not authorized arrives to pick up a child, the child will not be released and the parent/guardian/sponsor will be notified. If possible, we will try to prevent the child from seeing the non-authorized person. If the child does see them, we will try to prevent them from coming together physically (i.e., the person picking up and holding the child). The non-authorized person will be informed that they need to leave the premises immediately or the authorities will be called. We will do as much as possible to prevent the non-authorized person from taking custody of a child. If a child is removed, we will attempt to get the license plate number of the vehicle they are driving and to report this matter to authorities. We will not take unnecessary risks with our staff, the child, or other children to prevent abduction.

## **K. CHILD CUSTODY**

If there is a custody issue, we are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian/sponsor with legal custody. We will ask for a certified copy of the most recent court order. Without a court document, both parents have equal rights to custody. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent has legal custody where there is no court documentation. If an agreement cannot be reached between family members, Early Connections will follow the wishes of the enrolling parent.

## **L. SAFETY**

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

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

**This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.**

## **M. TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency an ambulance will be called to transport. The family will be notified immediately after calling 911.

## **N. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Each center has a separate evacuation plan in case of fire, inclement weather or if a lock down becomes necessary. These plans are posted in the individual centers and reviewed with the children and staff on a regular basis. In the unlikely event that a child should become lost or separated from a group, all available staff will look for the child. If the child is not located within ten minutes, the parent/guardian/sponsor will be notified by phone, the authorities will be notified, and this will be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Child Care Licensing.

## **O. PUBLICITY**

Early Connections reserves the right to use pictures and names of children for United Way or Early Connections' publicity unless the family indicates on the General Consent Form that they do want their child to participate in publicity.

# **VI. TUITION AND FEES**

## **A. TUITION POLICY**

**There is an initial and annual non-refundable registration fee of \$40 per child or \$65 per family.**

This fee is charged upon enrollment and every August thereafter. Families that withdraw or are discharged from one of our centers and re-enroll will be asked to complete a new set of enrollment paperwork and be

charged an additional registration fee.

Tuition is charged weekly and is based on the child's age and/or attendance schedule. Some centers may also accommodate drop-in care. There is an added charge for school-age children attending on school out days. If a family needs to change their child's original schedule to another schedule offered by Early Connections, they may do so with a **one week (Monday – Friday) written notice**.

To ensure that our child care services are available to all families, Early Connections has a **scholarship program**. Scholarships may be available based on the household's gross monthly income which includes but is not limited to wages, child support, public assistance and student financial aid. Proof of income is required upon enrollment and will be updated annually and as needed. The scholarship amount will be credited to your account. **No scholarship can be awarded without proof of income.**

A discount is offered to families with two or more children enrolled with Early Connections. The discount applies only to preschool and school-age children enrolled five days per week. Multi-child discounts are not applicable for families receiving C-CCAP.

A non-refundable activity fee is charged in May. This includes all children attending part-time, full-time, or with a "drop-in" enrollment status. This fee is used to fund field trips and transportation throughout the summer. **The fee is \$20 for children enrolled in a preschool classroom and \$50 for school-age children.**

**Payment is always due in advance.** Tuition is charged each Monday for the following week and is due each Friday. A \$20.00 late fee will be assessed on Monday if payment has not been received. If full payment has not been received by Wednesday your child could be discharged from the center for non-payment. Tuition must be paid regardless of attendance. If your child is sick, on vacation or cannot attend for any reason, tuition payments are still due, and a late fee will apply if payment is not received.

## **B. COLORADO CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (C-CCAP)**

If your family is eligible for child care assistance, we require your participation in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (C-CCAP). If you choose not to participate, your fee will be based on Early Connections' tuition and scholarship program or the C-CCAP prevailing rate, whichever is higher.

If you have a current C-CCAP authorization you will need to use the CHATS system to sign your child in and out, as well as the sign in/out computer, at the center your child is attending. Families should ensure that the machine verifies that the child has been approved before leaving them at the center. **If you do not utilize the CHATS system to sign your child in or out, you will be privately billed for the days you did not use the system.** Considerations will be made for families new to C-CCAP who are still waiting for their CHATS cards.

All C-CCAP parental shares are due by the close of business on the first of the month. A \$20.00 late fee will be charged if the full payment is not received by the close of business on the 1<sup>st</sup>. If payment has not been collected by the close of business on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, your child may be discharged from the center for non-payment. Non-payment of C-CCAP parental shares are reported to the Department of Human Services. Attendance during non-authorized time will be charged to your account and your responsibility to pay in addition to your parental share. For example, these charges could include attending full-time when authorized part-time, loss of C-CCAP, or attending on non-authorized days. Payment is due on Friday of the week the charges occurs. Detailed policies can be found on the Tuition and Policy Agreement.

## **C. RETURNED CHECKS, ACH, AND CREDIT CARD DECLINE CHARGES**

Early Connections may present checks electronically. All returned checks, ACH (automatic debits) or declined credit card transactions will be charged a fee up to the maximum amount allowed by law. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or ACH transactions will result in your account being placed on "money order only" status. Early Connections does not hold checks or accept temporary checks or post-dated checks.

#### **D. COLLECTIONS**

If your child care fees are past due and your account must be sent to a third-party collection agency, you will also be charged an additional 50% of the total amount due to cover the collection costs. You will also be responsible for all court and attorney fees that may accompany the collections process. If your account has been sent to a third-party collection agency you must contact them regarding the account. Families with unpaid balances will be discharged from the center. Re-admission is at the discretion of the Early Connections Learning Centers administration.

#### **E. LATE PICK-UP**

Centers are open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Families should have their children picked up by 6:00 p.m. A late fee of \$1.00 per child per minute will be assessed if your child is picked up after 6:00 p.m. These late fees must be paid promptly. Late pickup fees that have not been paid in full by the close of business on the following Monday will be charged a \$20.00 late fee. In case of emergency, we request notification of any delay in picking up your child.

Families with children in a part-day CPP classroom should have their children dropped off when class begins and picked up by the end of class. An early drop off fee of \$1 per child per minute will be assessed if your child is left at the center before the part-day class starts, and a late fee of \$1.00 per child per minute will be assessed if your child is not picked up at the end of their class time.

#### **F. DROP-IN CARE**

Drop-in care is available at some Early Connections' locations on a space available basis. Families utilizing drop-in care must call in advance to make a reservation. Payment is due the day care is provided. Drop-ins will be charged the annual registration fee. Drop-in children ages 5 and older will be charged the \$50 annual activity fee to cover the cost of field trips and drop-in children in our preschool classrooms will be charged the \$20 annual activity fee.

#### **G. VACATION POLICY**

Each child scheduled to attend 5 days per week is granted 10 vacation days each **calendar year** in which you will pay 50% of your regular tuition. These days are prorated for children attending 2-3 days per week. Vacation days can be used if **written notice is given in advance** for days your child will not be in attendance. Vacation days only apply if the child is normally scheduled to attend on those days. Tuition must be paid prior to going on vacation. These fees are non-refundable if you choose not to return. Drop-in and families receiving C-CCAP are not eligible for vacation day credits.

#### **H. ILLNESS POLICY**

Illness credits are given to families upon written request when the child is hospitalized or absent due to a contagious disease. A written doctor's note is **required** to receive a credit for an absence. It is at Early Connections' discretion to determine the days covered by the doctor's note. Families receiving C-CCAP are not eligible for illness credits.

#### **I. SNOW DAYS**

Early Connections Learning Centers is closed if **BOTH** School District 11 **AND** School District 2 are closed before 6:00 a.m. On occasion we may be forced to close during the course of the day. If this happens families will be notified immediately to pick up their child. If the center does not open due to inclement weather on a day that your child is scheduled to attend, your account will be credited for that day. **Early Connections Learning Centers at Sand Creek is closed if School District 2 is closed.**

#### **J. HOLIDAYS**

All holidays will be included in the weekly tuition. You may use one of your vacation days if advance written notice is given. Early Connections is closed on the following holidays: New Year's Eve, New Years Day, President's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If any of these days fall on a weekend we will be closed the Friday or Monday closest to the holiday. **We are also closed the second Friday in November to offer our staff a full day of professional development.**



## **K. WITHDRAWALS**

Early Connections requires a **two-week written notice** when a child is being withdrawn from our program. A two-week tuition fee may be applied in lieu of receiving the two week notice. Early Connections reserves the right to waive these fees. Early Connections does not prorate weekly tuition upon withdrawal. If your child has not been in attendance for 5 or more consecutive days, we will treat that non-attendance as giving notice unless you contact the center administration regarding the absence and your account is current. Families who withdraw and later re-enroll will be charged a re-enrollment fee.