



# Family Handbook 2025-2026

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## **Our Mission**

St. Anne Early Learning Center strives to provide quality Catholic childcare for children. We believe in providing programs that truly enhance the emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and intellectual growth of young children. We are able to do this through the efforts of our staff who are dedicated to upholding our high standards and who, most importantly, love children.

## **Our Philosophy**

We strive to provide foundational Catholic child care focused on education of the highest quality in the Gainesville area. We implement an age-appropriate curriculum with the efforts of our qualified teaching staff while promoting learning experiences that develop life-long learners.

St. Anne Early Learning Center is operated as a ministry of the Diocese of St. Augustine.

**Most REV. Erik Pohlmeier**  
Eleventh Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine

**Deacon Scott J. Conway**  
Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of St. Augustine

**Mrs. Audra Smith**  
Director of Early Learning

**Mrs. Maria Ramos**  
Director of St. Anne Early Learning Center

## *A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR*

We are delighted to welcome you to our learning center. You and your family are encouraged to visit the center prior to the first day of enrollment to give your child an opportunity to meet teachers, become better acquainted with the learning environment, and to ensure a smooth transition.

This handbook describes our program, policies and the myriad of practical details that go into making each school day a success. Please review it and sign and return the last page. You are welcome to keep this handbook for reference since it will answer many of your questions.

On behalf of our staff, thanks again for allowing us to become a part of your family and entrusting us with your child's care and education.

Sincerely,  
Maria Ramos  
Director

## **Section 1- Parent and Guardians' Rights and Responsibilities**

We believe that parents have rights and that their concerns are important.

- Parents have the right to know that their child will be physically and emotionally safe at school.
- All children will be treated fairly regardless of race, creed, national origin, economic status, gender, or age.
- In addition, you will be treated with courtesy by members of the staff.
- Parents have the right to participate in two parent-teacher conferences a year to discuss your child's school progress and welfare.

- All parents and guardians have a right to visit the school and classroom.
- Parents are welcome to approach staff members with concerns.
- Parents have the right to information regarding the academic program and the right to inspect their child's record and respond to any statement.
- Parents have the right to be informed of and to appeal school policies.

*Parents responsibilities are to*

- Be involved in your child's education and learning;
- Set goals with the teachers and share in decisions about your child's care;
- Share information about the child and home that may affect behavior;
- Discuss problems and concerns with the teachers;
- Follow the child care program's policies and reread the contract and parent manual regularly;
- Keep your child home when sick;
- Read to your child and spend time talking and playing together.

## **Section 2 – Classroom Practices, Curriculum, and Policies**

**Dress Code:** We request that children arrive at the center in comfortable, easy to launder clothing. While we make every effort to protect clothes, children can experience accidental spills during planned activities.

- In case of accidents, we request every child keep two changes of clothes, shoes and socks at the center.
- For safety reasons, we do not allow open-toe shoes, flip flops, or sandals either in the classroom or during outdoor activities.
- To ensure the safety of all children and staff, we require that children's nails be kept trimmed and clean to prevent accidental scratches and injuries.

**Labeling Children's Personal Items:** Parents and guardians are asked to label their child's personal items with their child's first and last name. This includes sheets, clothes and cups.

**Food:** Upon enrollment and registration, families will be asked if they will be opting in or out of our food program. Our food program consists of a morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack that are provided for the children that chose this option.

Families that opt in the food program will be provided with the above and milk for lunch time. Taking into consideration any food restrictions and/or allergies. Meals from home will not be accepted if the child is participating in the food program.

Families that choose to opt out of the program are responsible for supplying nutritious snacks and lunches with milk for their child each day. Place snacks in a Ziploc bag

labeled “am snack” and “pm snack” with your child’s first and last name. Ensure your child has a nutritious breakfast prior to drop off. If your child will be eating breakfast at the center, meals will be provided during the established meal times. Children will be asked to sit for meal times. Include foods from each food group in lunches, and exclude food which needs to be heated, glass containers, soda, and candy. We do not accept any peanut butter, sunflower, cashews, walnuts, etc. Meals from the program will not be provided if the families choose this option.

Meals will be provided during the following times:

- Morning snack 7:30am-8:30a.m
- Lunch 11:00-a.m-11:30 a.m
- Afternoon snack 2:30p.m- 3:30 p.m

**Toys from Home:** We encourage children and families to not bring toys from home. If your child is adjusting to the new environment, a small token that reminds them of you and home are allowed. Periodically, we allow children to bring toys to share, and your child’s teacher will inform you about “Show and Tell” days.

**Curriculum:** Teachers implement a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate curriculum and plan specific activities that promote exploration, discovery, and school readiness. Emphasis is placed on foundational literacy skills, language development, scientific and mathematical reasoning, creativity collaboration and social emotional development.. The curriculum is engaging and play based. Interactive games, books, art, and music enhance the acquisition of new skills. Catholic values and prayer are integrated throughout the day.

**Screening and Assessments:** Parental consent forms for screening are included in the registration packet. Screening is a process to determine whether or not a child has any developmental concerns that may require further evaluation and follow-up. Screenings conducted at the center may include vision, hearing, speech/language, nutrition, dental, and overall development. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire will be used throughout the year.

- Parents will be informed in writing about your child’s development
- At home activities may be recommended based on the result.
- If further evaluation or services are needed, parents will be referred to the appropriate agencies or to their personal pediatrician.
- Additional screenings and parent conferences will be utilized to follow-up on screenings that resulted in referrals to outside agencies.

### **Screening Procedure:**

- Teachers will obtain a copy of the consent form prior to administering screenings. This copy will be kept in the child’s portfolio.
- The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) will be used throughout the year for all

age groups. Parental input may also be used to complete the ASQ. The scored ASQ will be kept in the child's portfolio.

- Parents will be informed in writing of the screening results either through a letter sent home by the center's director or through written documentation of a teacher conference where results were shared.
- In order to prevent the misidentification of children:
  - Children's first and last name and date of birth will be on each ASQ screening.
  - Documents within the portfolio will also include children's first and last name and date of assessment.
- Summary sheets of all children screened will be given to the director. Children in need of follow up will be highlighted on the summary sheets.
  - The director will review the screening tool for each child identified as in need of follow up.
  - The director will re-score the instrument to ensure accuracy of scoring.
  - The director will review the results with the parent and may rescore the instrument based on parental input.

### **Assessment Procedure:**

- Within 30 days of the start in the classroom, teaching staff will do an initial assessment for each child using an approved developmental checklist or assessment instrument.
- Based on parent information, screenings, and initial observations, goals will be made for each child.
- The ongoing assessment of each child will be recorded and updated throughout the academic year. When outcomes are achieved, new goals will be established.
- Assessment results will be shared with parents during Parent-Teacher Conferences at least twice during the school year. Optional letters with results may also be shared.
- Children at every age level will be assessed using on-going child observations and portfolio assessments to develop individualized learning goals.
- Daily, teaching staff conduct teacher-directed, small group learning centers and large groups that focus on individualized goals.

**Student Portfolios:** Each child has a portfolio which includes sampling of their progress. Depending on the age of the child, these samples may include Ages and Stages Questionnaires, literacy and numeracy assessments, art work, dictation, writing samples, pictures, anecdotal notes, photos, etc. Portfolios for infants and toddlers may also include copies of daily notes, growth charts, and other developmental checklists. Portfolios are shared with parents during scheduled parent conferences. At the time of a child's transition to the next class, the teacher will pass the portfolio to the upcoming teacher. When a child transitions to kindergarten, the teacher sends the portfolio home.

**Take Home Activities:** Although teachers do not assign homework, they may periodically send home suggested activities to enhance learning.



**Teacher Conferences:** All parents and guardians are invited to attend scheduled conferences to review their child's progress and to collaboratively set goals. Conferences are scheduled two times a year for infants, toddlers, and preschool children. Other conferences may be scheduled by a parent or teacher as needed.

**Transitioning from Class to Class:** If it becomes necessary during the year to move a child up to the next class, the center will strive to make as smooth a transition as possible. The child will transition slowly over the course of a few days, and parents will be informed in person and in writing with a minimum of three weeks.. Once a year, during the month of August, there will be a center-wide transition. Each child will move up to the next classroom.

**Transitioning to Pre-Kindergarten 3 and 4's/VPK:** Students transitioning from our 2-year-old program into our Pre-Kindergarten 3 Program must be 3 years old on or before September 1 of the school calendar year and fully potty trained. Students entering our VPK Program must be 4 years old on or before September 1 of the school calendar year and fully potty trained.

### **Section 3 - Attendance, Absences, and Pick-up Policy**

#### **Arrival:**

- We ask that children be dropped off before 9:00 a.m. If a doctor's appointment is scheduled, then families have until 10:00a.m for drop off with a doctor's note.
- Parents will be allowed two unexcused late arrivals a month. A signature acknowledging the drop off will be required. On the third non-excused arrival, you will be placed in the do not accept list for the remainder of the month.
- Parents are required to check in/out their child upon arrival and departure through the Brightwheel app.
- Please bring your child(ren) directly to their classroom.
- Parents who wish to speak to a teacher are kindly requested to schedule a conference.

**Attendance:** Arrival for the school day for the toddler – VPK program is at 8:15 a.m. Children should be signed in and settled for the day by 9:00 a.m.

**Attendance Policy for VPK:** Children must arrive in the VPK classroom no later than 8:30 a.m. and participate in VPK activities until 11:30 a.m. Children who arrive late or leave early will be counted as absent on the VPK attendance form.

Parents must call the center if a child is going to be late or absent.

- If a child is absent for five consecutive unexcused instructional days, she/he will be dismissed from the VPK program.
- Absences and tardiness may be excused under "extraordinary circumstances" if appropriate documentation is provided.

These include:

- Hospitalization of the child.
- Illness of the student, parent, or guardian that requires the ill person to remain at home.
- Death of a member of the student, parent, or guardian's immediate family.
- Court ordered visitation.
- Parent or guardian's military deployment.

A child may not miss more than 26 days per year for illness. A child may not miss more than 35 days per year regardless of circumstances. Parents must complete and sign an attendance verification form each month. These forms will be distributed on the last instructional day of each month and must be signed and returned to the office the same day.

- Children who do not meet attendance requirements will lose VPK funding. The child may be allowed to remain in the classroom but will be required to pay full tuition.

**Vacation:** Families can take one week's vacation each school calendar year (July 1st through June 30) after completing one full calendar year. Tuition will be charged at 1/2 the normal rate for that week. Written notice is required at least one week prior to the planned vacation.

**Special Requests:** Special requests must be submitted in writing and may include, but are not limited to, health issues, family situations, alternative pick up person, early pick up time, or any other issues the center should be aware of to best meet the needs of a child.

**Absences:** Parents are requested to notify the center if a child will not be in attendance that day and the nature of the absence. This notification assists the center in tracking illnesses and supporting children.

**Illnesses:** Parents are requested to notify the Director if their child has a communicable disease so families in the classroom/center may be notified. Only information about the communicable disease will be shared, and the center will follow the center's Confidentiality Policy and Procedures.

The center conducts a health check on each child upon arrival to the classroom. A child will be sent home if staff deem the child is too ill to attend or is contagious.

**Termination/Withdrawal:** The center reserves the right to terminate childcare services at any time, with or without cause. Childcare services may be terminated for willful destruction of property, if the child poses a threat to the safety and welfare of other children in care, physical or verbal abuse by the parent toward the center's staff, insufficient funds, and refusal to follow center policies.

One month written notice is required from parents who withdraw their child from the center. Parents are responsible for any fees if proper notification is not provided. Any

past due balances are due on the last day of enrollment. Balances remaining after 30 days will be referred to the center's collection agency.

In the event that a child is absent for two consecutive weeks, without proper notification to the office, the child will be considered withdrawn from the program and the reserved classroom space will be filled. All tuition and any related charges are due and payable during this two-week period.

To re-enroll, normal registration and supply fees will apply, and the child will be considered for enrollment upon space availability.

**Pick-up Policy:** Parents or authorized adults (18+) are responsible for supervision of the child once the child has been signed out of the center and must walk their child to the car. Parents are requested to handle any center business (payment, conferences with director, etc) prior to checking the child out of the center.

**Late Pick-up Fees:** A late fee of \$5.00 and an additional fee of \$5.00 per minute will be assessed for children who are not picked up by closing time at 5:30 p.m. (or 12:05 p.m., and 2:35 p.m. for VPK half day or Lunch Bunch students.) Services can be terminated if this continues to be an issue. If a child is not picked up by 5:30 p.m., and every attempt to reach an authorized adult has failed, the center will be forced to contact the sheriff's office to report child abandonment.

**Authorized Pick-up/Emergency Pick-up:** Only authorized people listed on the Authorized Persons for Pick Up Form are permitted to have access to a child and remove a child from the center. The following procedures apply:

- Parents are required to complete the Authorized Persons for Pick up and Emergency Form at time of enrollment. Only people listed on this form will be permitted to remove the child from the center.
- Persons on the authorized list who are unfamiliar to staff will be required to show proof of identification with a picture I.D.
- Individuals must be at least 18 years of age in order to sign a child in or out of the center.
- Changes/updates to the Pick-Up List must be made on the original Department of Children and Families form located in the office.
- In an emergency, the center will contact the parents first. If the center is unable to reach the parents, the staff will call the people listed on the form until someone is reached. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that an authorized person is available to pick up the child on time.
- If a parent or authorized adult appears to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, the staff will attempt to contact the other parent or authorized adult on the pick up list. The center does not have the right to deny the parent access to their child, but the staff will contact the police immediately if the center is not able to contact the other parent or authorized adult to pick up the child.

## Section 4- Open Door Policy

The center maintains an open door policy and enrolled children's parents and guardians are granted access to the center without prior notice. In situations where there is custody or domestic issues the following will apply:

- The center must be provided with the most recent certified copy of a court order and any amendments to the order (i.e. custody, restraining, or a protection orders.)
- The center will follow court orders.
- If there isn't a copy of a court order or a copy has not been provided to the center, then both parents will have equal access to their child. By law, the center may not deny a parent access to a child without a court order.

For parents looking to volunteer or spend long periods of time in the classroom, clearance by the Diocese of St. Augustine will be required. This includes background screening and attendance to a Diocese sponsored course.

## Section 5- Parent/Guardian Participation

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in their child's classroom. Parents may be invited to share information about their job, hobby, or culture; and read to children, etc. All volunteers are required to sign in at the front desk before proceeding to the classroom.

The Discipline Policy (see 5.15 & 5.16), Standards of Conduct (see 5.17), and Visitor Policies (see section 6) apply to volunteers.

Siblings of children in the program may not attend when a parent is volunteering in a classroom.

**Parent Surveys:** We are interested in feedback. Anonymous parent surveys are distributed at least once per year. Responses enable the center to better serve children and families.

## Section 6: Visitor Policy

All volunteers and visitors are required to check-in at the front desk, obtain permission for visitation, and a visitor's pass. Volunteers will be limited to parents. Visitation by a non-enrolled child unaccompanied by his/her parent(s) or legal guardian is prohibited unless prior approval has been granted by the center's director.

Because staff, children, and parents should at all times feel that the school and work environment is safe, all visitors shall comply with the center's policies while on the campus and conduct themselves in a manner that is not disruptive, threatening, or abusive.

- Any parent volunteer, or visitor who is disruptive, threatening or abusive will be asked to relocate to a location in the facility where children are not present and where the matter can be discussed and resolved in a professional manner.

- Limit their time for up to 1.5 hrs. a week in the child's classroom. (excludes special activities or events)
- Parent volunteers will assist the teachers in the classroom. From reading stories and engaging with all the children present in the class to cutting and getting materials prepared for the classroom
- All parents volunteer looking to spend longer periods of time in the classroom must complete the Volunteer Guidance Packet. For further information, please refer to the front office.
- If the person refuses to relocate or continues to act in an inappropriate manner, the person will be asked to leave the premises. If the person refuses to leave, staff will notify appropriate law enforcement personnel. Should the person subsequently return to the property and again act in a manner that is disruptive, threatening or abusive, or if the initial incident is so extreme that the teachers are concerned about the person returning to the facility, the person will be informed in writing that he/she may be prohibited from returning to the center.
- Any person who believes that he/she was wrongfully asked to not return to the property must first leave as requested, but may subsequently appeal the decision in writing to the center's director.
- A final decision will be made and the person will be notified in writing if they may return to the property and under what conditions, if any.
- Notwithstanding the above, center personnel shall always have the authority to notify appropriate law enforcement should any person or property violate criminal statutes.
- Only individuals with legal authority to do so shall be allowed to question a child on the property without the consent of the child's parents or legal guardian.

## Section 7– Health & Safety

### Child Health Services:

The center is required by the Department of Children and Families to have on file for each child a physical and an immunization record. **You have ten (10) days after enrollment to bring in the original forms:** Physical Examination – Form 3040 and Immunization – Form 680.

**Child Health Emergencies:** In the case of accidents and incidents, staff will contact parents/guardians and complete an incident report in which staff and parents/guardians sign. It is very important that you make sure that your child's teacher is aware of changes in phone numbers or emergency contacts. Please keep this information up to date. A signature on the registration form giving the center permission to have your child transported to the hospital and be seen by a physician is required before entrance

**Child Accident Procedures:** We take all precautions to insure the safety of your child while under our care. In the event that a child is hurt at our center, the following

procedures will be followed:

- An accident report will be filled out by the child's teacher and depending on the type of injury, the parent may be called.
- The parent will be asked to review the accident form and provide a signature. A copy will be given to the parent.

**Medication Administration:** All medication administered by the center staff must be authorized by the child's parent or guardian by first completing an Administration of Medicine form.

- Only medicine that has been prescribed by a doctor may be administered at the center. All medicine must be in the original container.
- If non-prescription medication is to be given, a note from the physician, stating the name of the medication and the dosage instructions must be attached.
- Staff will inform parents/guardians immediately of any noticed side effects or changes in behavior.
- Medication will be stored in a locked secure area inaccessible to children.
- Medication cannot be added to food or drinks sent to the center.
- *NO MEDICATION MAY BE PLACED IN THE CHILD'S CUBBY/BOOKBAG OR LEFT UNATTENDED IN THE CLASSROOM.*

Parents are strongly encouraged to give all medications at home. If this is the case, please notify your child's teacher so that any behavioral changes and/or allergic reactions may be noted.

**Conditions of Short-term Exclusions:** A child will be placed on short-term exclusion, which may include non admittance, when the illness and/or injury is contagious and/or poses a significant health and/or safety risk to other children and staff.

**Notification of Illness:** Parents/guardians are encouraged to inform staff if their child becomes ill from a communicable disease and of any other health/safety concerns. If a child appears to have a communicable disease, teaching staff should isolate the child away from the other children and immediately contact the child's parent/guardian. Children will not be allowed to return to the center until all symptoms have ceased. Depending upon the condition, children may not be allowed to return to the center without a physicians' authorization.

**Parents/Guardians will be asked to immediately pick up their children if the following signs, symptoms, or conditions are present:**

- Fever AND sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability, or confusion. Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100<sup>0</sup> F or higher.
- Diarrhea - runny, watery, or bloody stools
- Vomiting
- Severe coughing - child gets red or blue in the face or makes a high pitched whooping sound after coughing

- Eye discharge - thick mucus or pus draining from the eye, or pink eye
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Ear discharge
- Untreated infected skin patch(es)
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool and yellowish skin or eyes
- Head lice (including nits)
- Conditions that commonly require parameters from a physician detailing when a child may return include, but are not limited to, chicken pox, strep throat, scabies, impetigo, meningitis, and Hepatitis A
- Child is irritable, continuously crying, or requires more attention than staff can provide without jeopardizing the health and safety of the other children
- Any other unusual signs, symptoms, or conditions

\*The child must be symptom-free without the aid of medication a minimum 24 hours before returning to the ELC. In extreme cases the ELC reserves the right to increase the policy to 48 hrs. to minimize the continued spreading of illness or diseases.\*

**Dietary Restrictions and Allergies:** Please discuss any special dietary needs for your child with the director. Parents of children with severe allergies should contact the director for further guidance.

Modest accommodations will be made for children with food allergies and cultural requests.

**Confidentiality of Records:** The Center maintains the policy that all records of children and families are confidential.

## **Section 8– Tuition and Fees**

*\*Tuition rates are based on classroom placement, not chronological age. Classroom assignments are determined by multiple factors including the child's developmental readiness, space availability, and Florida Catholic Conference standards.*

**Tuition:** Current tuition rates are posted on the website, in the back of this handbook, and at the front desk. Fees are based on reserved time. There will be no reduction in the basic rate, which remains the same regardless of attendance, holidays, emergency closings, teacher training, and vacations.

**Multiple Child Discounts:** The center offers a discount of 10% for families with more than one child enrolled in our center. This applies to full-time, year-round enrollment only.

**Registration Fees:** A \$175.00 non-refundable registration fee is payable at the time of enrollment and is billed annually.

**Supply Fees:** The center requires parents of nonVPK and VPK wrap-around students

to provide the student's supplies. Additionally, a supply list specific to the teacher will be provided. Both lists will be provided before your child's first day.

**Checks and Returned Check Fees:** Checks are accepted as long as they are drawn on a local bank and the date on the check is the same date the check is written. Postdated checks will not be accepted. In the event your check is refused for payment or returned, there will be a Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) fee assessed in the amount of \$40. Once a check is returned for NSF, checks will no longer be accepted as a form of payment at the center. In addition, child care will be suspended until all fees are paid in full.

**Late Payment Policy:** Weekly tuition is due on Friday of the week before. If your tuition is not paid in full on Tuesday, a late fee of \$15 will be added to your child's account. If fees continue to go unpaid that week, your child will be placed on a DO NOT ACCEPT list Friday afternoon.

Monthly tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month and is considered late if not paid by the 3<sup>rd</sup> business day of every month.. If your tuition is not paid in full, a late fee of \$25 will be added to your invoice. Every week that the tuition remains unpaid, a \$10.00 fee will be applied to your account. If fees continue to go unpaid, your child will be placed on a DO NOT ACCEPT list.

**Holidays:** The following are paid holidays recognized by the Center. Tuition does not change for weeks that include holidays. New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Dr. Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. A holiday schedule is posted in all classrooms and at the front door.

**Emergency Closing and Inclement Weather:** If the threat of a natural disaster such as hurricane, tornado, flooding, etc. is imminent, we will follow the Diocese of St. Augustine Superintendent's policy for closure. Once the storm passes and is out of the area, we will assess the center for damage and re-open as soon as possible.

The following steps must be confirmed before opening the center:

- The center must have power and any physical damage must be repaired.
- There must be available staff in the center to provide appropriate and required staff-to-child ratio.

Parents are responsible for child care tuition even in the event that the center is closed due to natural disaster.

## Section 9

**Behavior Management:** Behavior management is the guidance of children's behavior with the goal of helping them make good decisions, exercise self-control, and develop interpersonal skills. The management technique to be used in any particular situation will be based upon consideration of the situation and the individual child.

**Standards of Conduct:** The center has guidelines of acceptable conduct that all



parents, volunteers and visitors must abide by while on premises. It is expected that all parties will follow these guidelines and sign this form. We strive to provide a safe learning environment for all children. Volunteering in the classroom is strongly encouraged and "Standards of Conduct" must be adhered to at all times.

- Respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family. Refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability.
- Follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members.
- Supervise children at all times. Children will not be left alone or unsupervised while under the center's care.
- Use positive methods of child guidance. Any use of corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse is prohibited. Methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as a punishment or reward, time out or the denial of basic needs are prohibited.
- Refrain from the use of any threatening physical contact or verbal abuse towards individuals connected with the program, other parents or volunteers.
- Refrain from smoking on the premises and during all center or parent activities. The center adheres to a "Smoke Free Environment."
- Refrain from illegal activities while on the premises or in attendance at center activities. The center prohibits theft, firearms, alcohol, explosives and illegal substances on the premises and during all center or parent activities.
- Refrain from harassment. Any cause of disharmony of any kind will not be tolerated.

## Section 10

**Child Abuse and Neglect:** The Center is obligated to report suspected child abuse and neglect (sexual, physical, emotional). Under Florida Law, cases of possible child abuse and neglect are reported immediately to the Department of Children and Families. The abuse hotline is 1-800-96-ABUSE.

## Section 11

**Behavior Management:** Behavior management is the guidance of children's behavior with the goal of helping them make good decisions, exercise self-control, and develop interpersonal skills. The management technique to be used in any particular situation will be based upon consideration of the situation and the individual child.

Below are strategies used at the center that parents are encouraged to practice at home.

1. Plan ahead to prevent behavior problems. Anticipate problems that may occur and provide intervention or directions in advance. (Ex: Limit number of children in centers. Have activities prepared so children do not have to wait.)
2. Establish clear and simple rules that are age-appropriate. Consistent reminders help reinforce limits. Rules should be stated in a positive way. (Ex: If a child is running, say, "Please use your walking feet. Running feet

- are for outside", instead of "Don't run!")
3. Be a model for the desired behavior. Treat all children with respect and politeness. (Ex: The teacher has a leaky paint container in her hand. She needs to get to the sink. She asks the children who are in line at the sink if she could please use the sink out of turn, rather than simply cutting in front of the children. They agree, and she remembers to thank them.)
  4. Help children to learn problem-solving skills. Give them the language they need to communicate feelings and needs to others appropriately. Work with them to come up with solutions to conflicts.
  5. Give hugs and caring. The key to discipline is establishing a nurturing relationship with each child. Children need to know they are accepted and loved no matter how they behave.
  6. Reinforce positive behavior. Remember to focus on the specific behavior you wish to see repeated. (Ex: "Jessie, you have worked so hard to put all the blocks neatly on the shelf. Fantastic job!")
  7. Overlook small annoyances. Sometimes when a behavior is overlooked, not reinforced by attention, it disappears. Unless the behavior is aggressive and someone is in danger of getting hurt, the teacher/caregiver might be wise to let the children work out the problem on their own.
  8. Offer positive alternatives to negative behavior. If a child's behavior is unacceptable, suggest alternative choices. (Ex: If a child is throwing blocks, the teacher intervenes by telling the child that blocks are for building. If the child wishes to throw something, he/she can throw a bean bag, or a ball.)
  9. Re-direct or divert the child. Substitute an appropriate activity for the unacceptable one. Some behaviors that are inappropriate are temporary, or situation specific. In these cases it is best to alter the environment by redirecting the child to another activity. (Ex: Two children who are good friends have begun to get irritated with each other. Intervene before things get out of hand by engaging them in a new activity.)
  10. Help children see behavioral consequences. Since young children are self centered, it is hard for them to see beyond their own needs. Help them to move from thinking only of themselves, to thinking of others by analyzing the consequences of their actions. Discuss their behavior in a non-judgmental way and encourage them to think about its impact on people, objects and events.
  11. Provide renewal time. When a child is too upset to talk or listen, it may be necessary to remove the child from the situation for a period of no more than 2 minutes. The teachers stay with the child to discuss what happened and to help the child regain composure.

### **Discipline Guidelines:**

1. There will NOT be any identified space, or chair, reserved for "time out". Children are not to be isolated indefinitely due to behavior problems. Time out may be used only if stipulated in an individual child's behavior plan by

- a licensed mental health consultant.
- 2. The use of physical force with children is prohibited. This includes pulling by the arm, grabbing children by the arm/shoulders/neck, hitting, pushing, shoving, etc.
- 3. Children will not be threatened with physical punishment, or with a phone call to parents.
- 4. There will be no name-calling, belittling, or comparison to other children.
- 5. Children will not be denied food, water or any other basic need as a means of discipline.
- 6. Children will not be denied rest as a means of discipline.

In the event that a child is exhibiting extreme challenging behavior, follow the Behavior Intervention Procedures:

- Provide renewal time.
- When a child is too upset to talk or listen, it may be necessary to remove the child from the situation for no more than 2 minutes. The teacher is to stay with the child in the classroom to discuss what happened and to help the child regain composure.
- If necessary, the child may be removed from the classroom if two staff members are available to remain with the child at all times.
- If the child is unable to regain control within 30 minutes, the parents or authorized persons may be contacted to pick up the child.

## Section 12 – Receipt of Parent Handbook



*(This page remains on file in the center.)*

I have received a copy of the St Anne Handbook and agree to abide by the policies.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Director's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_