



CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER  
PARENT  
HANDBOOK

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## **MISSION**

The Child Development Center (Mason CDC) is a self-sustaining auxiliary business enterprise of George Mason University (Mason). The Mason CDC was established to support Mason faculty, staff, and students by providing a quality, on-site childcare and play-based early childhood education program.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

The Mason CDC provides a positive and nurturing learning environment that encourages the overall development of each individual child while supporting each family's culture, language, ethnicity, and structure.

Our play-based program emphasizes the principles of Emergent Curriculum and the Developmental-Interactionist Approach. Developed and studied at the Bank Street College of Education, the guiding principles of this educational framework are as follows:

- Work with children is based on one's deep knowledge of child development, and especially the interdependence of social-emotional, physical, and intellectual growth.
- Our understanding of children occurs through daily observation and documentation achieved through teacher-child interactions, reflection of children's work, and collaboration with family members and colleagues.
- A well-prepared physical environment is intentionally created for children's active participation in their own learning
- The social-emotional development of children is supported with respect and kindness. While the overall program emphasizes a sense of community, it values each individual as a unique part of that community.

Our program's curriculum, activities, and schedule grow out of the characteristics of each classroom's diverse population and the children's readiness and interests, as well as the teacher's own strengths and interests. Our emergent philosophy emphasizes "following the child" through observation and meaningful interactions whereby activities develop out of the interests of the children and a scaffolding, or "stacking" of skills supports the ongoing development of each child.

During early childhood, the support and development of the whole child is essential to success in both school and life. Our holistic approach nurtures the healthy growth of children in each area of development through family partnerships and activities which provide children the opportunity to learn skills for self-regulation and to

develop awareness of their own body and emotions. A nutritious, whole-food menu is provided as part of the daily program.

## **ENROLLMENT AND TRANSITIONS**

The Mason CDC prioritizes enrollment to primarily serve faculty, staff, and students of George Mason University, offering a full-day early childhood education program for children 2-5 years of age. We are also open for community enrollments. We operate from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday on a year-round basis. Mason CDC closings correspond with the administrative calendar of George Mason University and closure announcements received through the *Mason Alert* system. Additionally, the Mason CDC is closed for a three-day period each summer as well as Columbus Day, which are used for professional development activities.

### **Waitlist Procedures and Fee**

Families wishing to enroll in our program must first secure a space on our waitlist. To secure a space on the waitlist please complete an initial registration form, which can be found on our website: <https://cdc.gmu.edu>. Once you have completed your form, please submit the form to CDC Administration either via fax, email, mail, or in person, along with a NON-REFUNDABLE per child waitlist fee of \$75. We date-stamp registration forms as they are received to maintain order of application.

Once your form and payment are reviewed, you will be placed on the waitlist in accordance with the priority system noted below, and we will contact you to confirm receipt of your registration. Once registered for the waitlist, your child will remain on the list until space is available, or you notify us that you are no longer interested in enrolling your child in our program. Families receive a maximum of two offers. Should you decline both offers, you will be removed from the waitlist and no longer considered for enrollment. You may contact us at any time to obtain a status update on availability at the center; however, the accuracy of our projections on availability increases as we near your desired start. For questions and updates, please email us at [cdc@gmu.edu](mailto:cdc@gmu.edu).

### **Enrollment Priorities and Procedures**

The Mason CDC observes the following enrollment priority system:

- Children of currently enrolled families
- Mason faculty, staff, and students desiring full-time enrollment
- Mason vendors desiring full-time enrollment
- Community families desiring full-time enrollment

**Please note: If you are enrolled as a Mason-affiliated family and your employment at Mason ends or your student status expires your enrollment will be changed to a non-Mason status. A new, non-Mason tuition rate will be applied beginning on the first day of the month following the month that employment ends or student status expires. All families are responsible for informing Mason CDC of a change in Mason-affiliated status within 30 days of the above-defined date of the change of status. The Mason CDC periodically verifies G-numbers. Should the Mason CDC learn of a change in your affiliation with Mason, your enrollment status will be changed, tuition rate adjusted retroactively to the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month following change to Mason affiliation, and a \$100 penalty will be applied.**

If any of your family's information (e.g., home or work phone numbers, address, Mason affiliation) changes please contact the Mason CDC. Changes to schedules (including withdrawals) require 30 days' notice. Changes to schedules will be made subject to availability.

Offers to enroll are primarily extended in the Spring for Summer/Fall enrollment each school year. Occasionally, space becomes available mid-year. When space is available, families will be contacted in accordance with our priority guidelines listed above, as well as based on desired start date and date on which the registration form and non-refundable family waitlist fee are received.

When a space is offered, a family has 10 business days to accept the offered space and submit a deposit of one month's tuition along with a family registration fee of \$100. 50% of your tuition deposit will be applied to your child's first month, the balance of which will be due within 5 days of your child's first day of enrollment. The remainder of your deposit will be credited toward your child's last month's tuition, providing your tuition payments are neither late nor delinquent and that you have followed appropriate procedures for withdrawing your child from the program. CDC Administration reserves the right to retain the tuition deposit to address late or delinquent accounts or if withdrawal procedures are not followed.

Once a space is offered and accepted, families will receive an enrollment packet via email. The enrollment packet must be submitted at least 1 week prior to enrollment in order to allow for processing. Children may not begin at the Mason CDC until the enrollment packet has been completed and approved.

## **Transitions**

Transitions of currently enrolled children mainly take place annually in late August/early September. Every spring, families complete a re-registration process whereby all relevant enrollment information is updated as needed and continued

space for the following school year is secured with payment of a \$100 Annual Registration fee.

Transitions of children are based on age and developmental readiness. Most children progress to the next age group of our program during annual transitions in August/September if their birthday falls prior to December 31 of that school year. Children enrolled in our Twos program may transition to Preschool at 2.5 years of age if they are fully toilet trained and developmentally ready. Exceptions do occur through partnership with a child's parents, teachers, and CDC Administration. Any concerns will be discussed with families prior to any child remaining for an additional year in any age group.

To support the transition of newly enrolling children, we recommend the following:

- A minimum of one scheduled visit for parent and child in child's new classroom.
- Meeting between parent and child's new teacher. Sharing of questions, concerns, allergies, etc. is strongly encouraged prior to starting the program to ensure the best support for your child.

### **INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION FROM THE PROGRAM**

The Mason CDC reserves the right to require separation of a family from our program. Examples of why the Mason CDC would reach such a decision include, but are not limited to, those listed below:

- Long-term pattern of unresolved behavior that is harmful to other children or staff, such as repeated biting.
- Tuition that is 2 months in arrears or other financial delinquency.
- Behavior by any parent that is considered threatening to another family or any member of the CDC staff.
- Health-related issues that could pose a threat to the CDC community.

The Mason CDC will make reasonable efforts to address underlying issues so as to avoid separation and to provide advanced, written notice of separation when it must occur. In the interest of the safety and well-being of children, parents, CDC employees, and the greater Mason community, CDC Administration reserves the right to make separation decisions at its sole discretion and to make any such decisions effective immediately without notice.

## **WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM**

Parents may withdraw a child from the program at any time, upon giving the Mason CDC thirty (30) days written notice. Tuition will continue to be charged and related late fees assessed if a child does not attend classes but is not formally withdrawn from the Mason CDC.

Parents who withdraw their child from the program will be charged tuition until the end date specified on the thirty (30) day written notice.

Withdrawal from the program is considered permanent, requiring re-application to the Mason CDC for readmission. This places the student at the bottom of the Mason CDC admissions waitlist. Parents who withdraw their child will not be guaranteed a space in the future, unless the parent continues to pay tuition.

## **TUITION, FINES AND COLLECTION POLICIES**

### **Tuition**

All tuition payments must be made using either Touchnet, our online credit card payment system, your personal bank's BillPay, or Payroll Deduction. Monthly statements are sent to all families via email. Tuition details and fees are available on the Mason CDC website. Tuition is due on the first of each month.

Tuition is subject to change at the discretion of CDC Administration and University leadership. Should you desire a change in your child's current schedule, the Mason CDC requires 30 day's written notice. The Mason CDC does NOT provide credit for absences due to illness, vacations, or extensive travel abroad.

### **Fines**

A \$100 late fee will be charged to your account when tuition is not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. This fee will be charged on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the month in which it is due. An additional \$250 late fee will be charged to your account on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the next two consecutive months if payment has still not been received. A \$50 fee will be charged to your account in the event a check is returned due to insufficient funds.

### **Collection Policies**

Tuition or fees that are not paid within 30 days of the due date will be considered delinquent and will result in suspension of a child's enrollment until all fees and tuition are paid. Tuition or fees that are not paid within 60 days of the due date will be considered past due, at which time re-registration will be required for an opportunity of readmission. The Mason CDC reserves the right to refer such past due accounts to a collection agency.

## **COMMUNICATION**

We value and facilitate frequent communication between parents and teachers and consider this exchange an important contribution to the planning and implementation of the program.

### **Confidentiality**

The Mason CDC observes written policies of both the Virginia Department of Social Services (VA DSS), and George Mason University for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children's records. Disclosure of children's records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality requires parental consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect). Active children's files are maintained in a locked file cabinet in the CDC's administrative offices. Teachers have access to these with permission from the Director or Assistant Director; files are read on site and are never removed from the CDC. Files of children who have graduated or withdrawn from the CDC are archived in compliance with University policy as well as Virginia Department of Social Services standards.

We carefully maintain confidentiality and respect each family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. Exceptions to this policy occur only when we have reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk and it is permissible to share confidential information with agencies as well as with individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child's interest.

### **Classroom Contact**

All questions and concerns regarding your child should be directed first to your child's Lead or Assistant Teacher. If you are unable to reach the teacher or have additional concerns, contact the Director or Assistant Director at 703-993-5960.

### **Conferences**

Parent-Teacher Conferences will be scheduled twice a year, typically in the Fall/Winter and Spring, to discuss your child's developmental progress. Additional conferences may be scheduled with your child's teacher as needed at any time throughout the school year.

### **Daily Reports**

A daily report is completed for each child prior to their departure each day. Here teachers highlight the basic activities of the day such as mealtime, toileting/diapering, rest, and details related to the curriculum. The report's purpose is

to give you a snapshot of your child's day and support conversation with you about school each day.

### **Newsletters**

Teachers share classroom and center-wide information and upcoming event details through a monthly, electronic newsletter or email communication.

### **Inclement Weather Advisories**

The Mason CDC will follow the University's administrative schedule on closings. Upon enrollment, all families are required to register for Mason Alerts at [www.ready.gmu.edu](http://www.ready.gmu.edu). In addition, all families will provide preferred contact information for CDC Alert notifications upon enrollment. You may also call 703-993-1000 (general GMU information line) for details. If GMU closes early due to weather or power loss, parents are required to pick-up children within 60 minutes of notification, or no later than University closure. All families are required to designate an individual authorized to pick-up their child in the event they cannot get to the CDC.

### **Photo Release**

Photographs and videos of the children are taken occasionally to benefit the program and for use by the program. Enrollment in the Mason CDC grants permission for the Mason CDC and the University to photograph or video tape your child and to use your child's likeness and those images to promote the program. Children's names and identifying information will never be shared as part of these promotions. The Mason CDC will not sell any student's likeness without prior permission from the student's family. Parents must submit a letter to the CDC declining permission to photograph or video tape their children.

### **BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

Our approach to behavior management is based on respect for each individual child. We recognize that young children often times have big emotions for which they do not yet have the skills to express themselves appropriately. Through a supportive, inquiry-based approach we focus on understanding the feelings behind any inappropriate/harmful action and seek to provide children with more effective means of expressing themselves. We have a responsibility to each child to implement positive behavioral guidance through empathy and modelling. Teacher-child interactions that potentially harm, humiliate, disrespect, punish, or intimidate are prohibited.

Essential to every early childhood classroom are a variety of behavior management systems, such as Center Choice Boards, Classroom Rules, Classroom Jobs, etc. Such systems, when implemented effectively and consistently, support children's ability to make choices and regulate behaviors independently under the supervision of their teachers. Focusing on behavior management from a proactive rather than reactive perspective better promotes each child's unique, positive self-image. Through our proactive methods of behavior management, we support the development of a child's problem solving skills, self-regulation, emotional intelligence, and long-term success and well-being. Teachers collaborate actively with parents to best support each child's overall development.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Illness Prevention**

In accordance with VA DSS and Child Care Licensing Regulations, children will be excluded from the program when exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

- Temperature over 101 degrees
- Recurrent vomiting or diarrhea
- A communicable disease

In the event that a child is sent home due to illness, s/he is required to remain home the entire next day and until symptom free for a minimum of 24 hours. Parents must pick-up sick children within 1 hour from Mason CDC notification. Families MUST notify the Mason CDC within 24 hours after the child or any member of the household developing any reportable communicable disease as defined by the State Board of Health, except for life threatening diseases which must be reported immediately. Please inform the Mason CDC immediately if there are any other infectious diseases present in your home, and whenever possible refrain from bringing sick siblings into the Center in order to help prevent the spread of infection. Children who are not able to participate fully in the regular daily program should not be sent to school. Children must be well enough to participate with the group and to go outside during recess.

**Administering fever-reducing medications to your child in order for them to attend school is prohibited by VA DSS.**

Please notify CDC Administration and adhere to the following guidelines when your child is diagnosed with any of the following communicable illnesses:

- **Chicken Pox:** Exclude from school for minimum of 5 days after eruptions appear or until all scabs are dried.
- **Strep Throat and Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye):** Exclude from the school for minimum of 24 hours to allow for at least 2 doses of antibiotic
- **Influenza and Diarrhea Illnesses:** Exclude from school for minimum of 24 hours following resolution of fever/diarrhea.
- **Coxsackies (Hand, Foot and Mouth Syndrome):** Exclude from school until blisters appear dry and not oozing. Must be minimum of 24 hours since the last blister appeared. Requires a note from the doctor confirming child is free of contagion while blisters persist.
- **Hepatitis, impetigo, mononucleosis, scabies, bronchitis, pneumonia and pertussis (whooping cough):** Doctor's note required confirming child is free of contagion and able to resume normal activities at school.

Medication Authorization (MAT) trained staff of the Mason CDC are authorized to administer medication to children on behalf of a parent when absolutely necessary. Whenever possible, medications should be administered at home. In the event that a child requires medication, parents must request required authorization forms from a member of CDC Administration and complete and submit the form before medication can be administered.

VA DSS regulations permit MAT trained CDC staff to administer medication to children when the following requirements are met:

- The medication is in the original container, labeled with the child's name and the prescription label or direction label is attached.
- The authorization form is consistent with the manufacturer's instructions for age, duration and dosage.
- The authorization form on file is complete, dated, signed, and includes a duration of administration not to exceed 10 days. Any medication authorization requiring longer than 10 days is considered long-term and requires a physician's signature. The administration of long-term medications requires parents to submit an updated authorization form annually.
- Parents are responsible for administering the first day's dosage of any new medication at home.
- When an authorization form for medication expires, parents must pick up the medication within 14 days or renew the authorization. Medications not

picked up by the parent within 14 days will be discarded by the Mason CDC.

- All medications are stored in a locked cabinet in the Mason CDC clinic, with the exception of Epi-Pens and items required for diabetes management which are kept near the child, in a back-pack or classroom cabinet at all times.

### **Diaper Cream/Topical Over the Counter (OTC) Ointments/Insect Repellent and Sunscreen**

Parents who wish the Mason CDC to apply diaper cream and other topical OTC ointment including insect repellent and sunscreen must complete and sign an authorization form as required by VADSS. The product shall be in the original container and labeled with the child's first and last name. All products must be labeled with purchase month and year.

Any known adverse reactions to previous use of the product must be disclosed on the authorization form. Forms must be updated annually. In the event that the sunscreen, insect repellent, or other product does not have an expiration date, we recognize that these products are designed to last up to 3 years.

### **Minor Injuries**

In the event that your child experiences a minor injury (scrape, bruise, or bump, etc.) while in attendance at the Mason CDC, a trained staff member will administer First Aid consisting of cleaning the area and applying ice and bandage if necessary. CDC Administration and Lead and Assistant Teachers are certified in First Aid and CPR.

When a child experiences a serious injury or allergic reaction, the Mason CDC will call 911 first, and notify parents next. For emergency purposes, parents must keep the Mason CDC informed of changes in work and home phone numbers and addresses. Should a child require transport by an ambulance, a teacher will accompany him/her or follow the ambulance to the hospital. A CDC staff person will remain with the child until his/her parent(s) have reached the hospital. Parents must complete – and have notarized – forms provided by Fairfax Hospital Association to avoid any delay of necessary treatment.

All incidents resulting in injury to a child will be recorded on an Incident Report Form. Parents are required to review and sign the form when they pick-up of their child and will receive a copy for their records. When children sustain injury on the face or head, or are bitten by another child, parents will receive a phone call from the child's teacher or member of CDC Administration prior to receiving the Incident Report.

## **Nutrition**

The Mason CDC provides daily breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack in partnership with Mason's authorized food vendor. Breakfast is served daily from 7:30 – 8:30a.m. Families that arrive after breakfast has ended may provide their child an optional morning snack that will be served between 9:00/9:30 a.m. Food provided from home should be nutritious and low in sugar. The Mason CDC emphasizes that sugary treats are limited to celebrations and special occasions.

Food served at the Mason CDC is prepared and delivered fresh each day with an emphasis on whole foods that are locally-sourced whenever possible. We offer both regular and vegetarian menus, and accommodate most dietary needs. If the current meal program is unable to meet a child's dietary needs, parents may provide a nut-free alternative from home.

## **Allergy Policy and Procedures**

It is the responsibility of all staff, in partnership with families, to ensure the safety of children with allergies at all times. Allergy and Food Preference Lists are kept by Administration, updated as needed, and shared with all classrooms and kitchen staff. Parents are required to share knowledge of food and other allergies at the time of enrollment. Information must be recorded on a VA DSS required form, which will be provided to parents by CDC Administration. Classrooms are provided placemats of RED and BLUE, each labeled with child's picture, name, and allergy/preference information if applicable. Children with food allergies or parent preferences will be given a RED mat. Mats are placed on the table PRIOR to any food being served. Children requiring or preferring milk other than cow's milk must have a personal cup provided by parents which is then labeled by the classroom teachers with red tape along with the child's first and last name. These cups will be cleaned and stored in the Mason CDC kitchen. Mats are wiped down by a member of staff with standard bleach and water solution after each use.

In the event that we suspect a child has experienced an allergic reaction, teachers will notify CDC Administration immediately and follow the protocol for that particular child included on the Allergy List. Only MAT trained personnel may administer medication if needed. There is always a MAT trained staff member present during CDC hours of operation.

## **Visits**

The Mason CDC maintains an open-door policy, welcoming parents, family members, and caregivers to visit throughout the day. Parents and legal guardians are provided a key fob for entry upon enrollment, which must be returned upon withdrawal from the program. Guests are permitted either with escort by authorized family member, or

in the case of volunteers/interns, with prior approval of CDC Administration. All guests are required to sign-in at the front table. We strive to nurture a community environment that embraces all cultures and family structures. We encourage families to share their traditions and expertise with the greater CDC community or their child's class and believe that parent partnerships are the foundation to supporting each child's development.

While visiting the Mason CDC, we ask that all individuals respect the routines and policies of the center to ensure the health and safety of all children and staff.

### **Partnership with the University**

As a Mason early learning center, we support the growth of developing educators enrolled at the University. Through partnerships with the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), Mason students have an opportunity to complete field work and observations at the Mason CDC if space permits. All candidates are interviewed by CDC Administration, and complete federal and local background screenings if completing fieldwork of 15 hours or more in the classroom. Mason students complete field experience opportunities throughout the academic year. In the event that a Mason student has a case study assignment requiring a more in-depth interaction with a specific child, parental permission will be obtained in advance. For questions or concerns please speak with CDC Administration.

### **Release of Children**

Only a child's parents/guardians or adults previously approved by parent/guardian will be permitted to take a child from the Mason CDC. Parents may update initial information provided at the time of enrollment when necessary. All adults picking up children will be asked to provide photo identification and pick-up authorization will be confirmed by a CDC Administrator prior to release of a child.

In the event that a family experiences a change in marital status and/or custodial rights, appropriate legal documents must be provided to CDC Director/Assistant Director. Personal information pertaining to children and families is protected by University confidentiality policies and kept secure in a locked cabinet in the offices of the Director/Assistant Director. Should any unfamiliar, or suspected, unauthorized individual request release of a child, CDC staff will implement the following guidelines:

- Require review of photo identification
- Confirm individual's pick-up authorization status in family database and/or child's file. If there is a certified copy of a court order or separation agreement showing that the unauthorized person does not have custody,

we will advise the person and not release the child.

- Notify the child's other parent or other authorized person as soon as possible.
- Notify GMU security if necessary at 703-993-2810.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

Bi-annual Shelter in Place drills and monthly fire drills are conducted in partnership with Mason Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) Department.

In the event of an emergency evacuation or lock-down situation, the Child Development Center will follow procedures developed in collaboration with Mason EHS. Families will be provided with Mason CDC specific information and directions via the CDC Alert system. When such procedures are under periodic review and development, the Mason CDC will follow the larger Mason emergency response plan. For security reasons, the details of the emergency response plan are not made available to the public, however more information may be found at <https://ehs.gmu.edu/emergencymanagement>

### **PROGRAM DETAILS**

#### **Teaching Staff**

Mason CDC Staff consists of the following teaching positions:

- Lead Teacher
- Assistant Teacher
- Teaching Assistant

All positions require a variety of eligibility requirements ranging from previous experience to an educational degree/certification. All CDC Staff meet or exceed VA DSS teaching requirements. All staff must continue their professional growth through completion of 16 hours of annual in-service. Prior to employment, all staff complete state and federal background checks, including fingerprints and search of the Child Protection Registry.

Daily staff schedules are staggered to help maintain teacher to child ratios recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Teacher qualifications are responsive to those described in the Standards of Excellence developed by NAEYC.

The Lead Teacher for each classroom has at minimum an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field with an additional 12 credits of coursework in education, or a Child Development Associate's certificate (CDA) and at least five years' experience working with young children.

Assistant Teachers meet their professional requirements with either an Associate's degree or equivalent, several years of experience and training, or a CDA.

Teaching Assistants are made up of Mason student and non-student part-time employees. They typically have experience working with children, and either hold a degree in a related field or are working towards a degree in related field.

*All Lead Teachers and Assistant Teachers are trained in First Aid/CPR .*

Although Lead Teachers and Assistant Teachers support the same class throughout the year with little exception, Teacher Assistants (part-time employees) may move throughout the program in the event of staff absences to ensure we maintain our classroom ratios. Consistency of care is a priority for our program and we make every effort to maintain the location of all staff.

### **Arrival**

Children must be escorted by a parent/guardian/caregiver to join their class each day upon arrival. Upon joining the class, the parent/guardian/caregiver must ensure one of the CDC staff acknowledges the arrival prior to leaving their child. Parents are responsible for signing in their child and must leave a contact number for the day.

### **Departure**

We encourage parents to empty their child's file folder and check their child's cubby daily. Children are signed out with signature and the time at which they are picked-up is documented. Parents must ensure a staff member knows they are taking their child prior to leaving for the day.

### **Late Pick-Up**

The CDC closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. All children are expected to be out of the building at that time to allow for final daily cleaning procedures to occur PRIOR to the end of a teacher's work day. All child updates will need to be scheduled if time

does not allow at the end of the day. Please leave enough time for toileting and other routines prior to 6 p.m. to avoid a late fee charged to your account. If an unforeseen issue prevents an on-time arrival, parents must call their child's classroom or the center's main number **(703)993-5960** as early as possible. At 6:00 p.m. a CDC Administrator will contact family members to ensure they are on the way if information has not previously been received.

If a child is not picked up by 6:00 p.m., a \$25.00 late fee will be charged to the family's account. Beginning at 6:15 p.m., an additional \$15 per child will be charged to the account for every 15 minute increment (or fraction thereof) during which the child is not picked up. Payment of these fees is subject to the collection policies noted above. In the event that we are unable to reach a parent, emergency contacts will be called. Should we be unable to contact anyone authorized to pick-up a child by 6:30 p.m., Mason Police will be notified for assistance.

### **Absence**

If your child will be absent due to illness, kindly notify the center via phone/email at (703) 993-5960 or [cdc@gmu.edu](mailto:cdc@gmu.edu). Should you schedule time away from the Mason CDC for your child, please inform your child's teacher or a member of the CDC Administration.

### **Children with Exceptional Needs**

The Mason CDC is an inclusive environment and we strive to partner with families and related service providers to meet the needs of all children. To determine if the CDC program will be able to best support the development of each child, prior to enrollment a classroom visit may be required. Parents of children with IFSPs or IEPs prior to enrollment will upon receiving an offer of enrollment, provide a copy of the document to CDC Administration as part of the enrollment packet.

If a parent or teacher believes that a child may benefit from support of a specialist to help reach developmental milestones, the Director or Assistant Director should be notified. The Mason CDC can provide families with information for Child Find, a free service provided through Fairfax County Public Schools Department of Special Services, Early Childhood Identification and Services (ECID&S) program. Child Find screenings are free to children ages 20 months to 5 years old who are Fairfax County or Fairfax City residents.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips are an important part of the child's experience at the Mason CDC. Our trips are age-appropriate in length and focus and relate to areas of the children's

curriculum and their interests. We frequently explore the Mason campus by walking outside, enjoying the special programs offered, and meeting with members of the community. If transportation is required for a field trip, a permission slip must be signed in order for each child to attend. Some field trips require an additional fee. On occasion parents will be invited to serve as chaperones.

### **Clothing for Children**

Children should be dressed for play at school. Children are encouraged to learn through their senses. Young children acquire new information best through active, hands-on play, which at times gets messy. Please take that into consideration when helping children dress for school. Extra clothes and underwear should be kept in a backpack in each child's cubby, regardless of the child's age since spills or accidents can happen to anyone.

Children play and explore outside every day for a minimum of 2 hours, weather permitting. Daily, inclement weather and air-quality alerts are closely monitored prior to children going outdoors. Make sure each child is dressed appropriately for the weather. Layers that can be added or removed are recommended. Children should arrive at the Mason CDC with sunscreen applied when appropriate. Children are not permitted to wear flip flops or Crocs to school due to their lack of proper support and potential for injury. All clothing should be labeled with the child's name.

It is important for all children to explore outdoors daily. However, we recognize seasonal allergies can challenge some children. Should your child experience any discomfort from seasonal allergies please contact CDC Administration and seek advice from your pediatrician on how to best manage your child's symptoms.

### **Nap Time**

State licensing requires that all children in full-day programs be provided with a designated rest period for at least one hour but no more than two hours. Staff will play quiet music and gently rub children's backs to help them relax. After the first 30 minutes, children not sleeping may engage in quiet activities.

### **Birthdays and Other Holidays**

Birthdays are very important for young children and we would love to help celebrate this very special occasion. We request the celebration be kept simple. We suggest a special healthy snack to be shared during the afternoon snack time. Prior to sending in any birthday treats, please check with your child's teacher to determine if allergies are present for any of the children in the classroom. All treats MUST be nut-free.

We understand that birthday parties are often planned for Mason CDC children outside of school as well. Whenever possible, we encourage parents to consider inviting all children in the class. Should you wish to send electronic invitations, your child's classroom teacher will be able to share the emails of all parents who have provided consent for us to do so.

We recognize that holidays are an important part of family life, and we value the integration of broad cultural and linguistic diversity representing all Mason CDC children and families in our curriculum. We emphasize holiday experiences around family traditions. We are honored to have families come into the classrooms to share special traditions with children, keeping in mind that the Mason CDC is a secular institution. If you wish to share an activity, story, recipe, etc., please speak with your child's teacher.

### **Lost and Found**

Lost items are displayed in the front hallway. Please remember to label all coats, hats, mittens etc. Unclaimed items will be used as extras for the Mason CDC or given to charity at the end of each semester.

### **Schedules**

Schedules of daily routines are posted in each classroom. Each day consists of a balance of indoor and outdoor activities, large and small motor exploration, as well as active and quiet experiences. While children will engage in structured large and small group times throughout the day, our program recognizes that children also learn from child-initiated, independent exploration, which is emphasized each day as well.

### **Your Child's 1st Day**

We encourage and recommend each parent to visit the Mason CDC with their child prior to enrollment. These introductory visits are scheduled through the Director/Assistant Director and allow your child to see the classroom and meet classmates and teachers. In addition, these visits allow teachers a chance to begin forming a bond with your child, which is an essential part of a successful transition. During the visit, you will be able to ask the teachers questions and through observations, begin to become familiar with our routines and program. For liability reasons, a parent or caregiver **MUST** remain on site for the duration of the visit.

On your child's first day(s) at the Mason CDC, allow enough time when you arrive to settle him/her into an activity before you leave. At times, children experience greater difficulty when a parent prolongs their stay, therefore it may be beneficial to leave more promptly. Teachers can assist in making this decision. Saying good-bye is essential to maintaining the trust you have established with your young child.

Although it can cause tears, good-byes and reassurance of a return can help children understand and adjust to the separation process. It is not unusual for the first week to pass without tears, only to have drop-offs become more difficult later on. If this happens, don't be discouraged. Continue to remind your child that you will return later in the day, give your hugs and kisses, and then leave. Many children benefit from a parent-specific goodbye routine which can be followed each day. Teachers will comfort your child and assist him/her in focusing on an activity. You are welcome to call the classroom or an administrator to check on your child's progress at any time.

## **Parking**

The Mason CDC parking lot is reserved for short-term use by our families during peak drop-off and pick-up times, not to exceed 1 hour. Those needing to park longer than required for drop-off and pick-up must receive an authorized pass from the CDC Administrative Offices.

During CDC events, CDC Administration will collaborate with Mason Parking and Transportation, and when possible, provide families a pass for General Parking in the Rappahannock Parking Deck to support overflow from our lot. At those times, we ask all parents with regular parking already established on campus to utilize those spaces during the event. Those needing to park longer than required for drop-off and pick-up must receive an authorized pass from the CDC Administrative Offices.

## **School Supplies**

Parents should provide their children with the following supplies:

- Two to three full sets of extra clothing. Check your child's extra clothing frequently to ensure correct size and seasonal appropriateness. Replenish items when necessary.
- Reusable water bottle with permanently attached lid, labeled clearly with your child's full name.
- A crib sheet, light weight blanket, and special "lovey" (if desired) for rest time. A pillowcase is also requested to store nap items when not in use.
- Blankets and sheets will be sent home once a week for washing. Pillows are not permitted.
- Sunscreen and insect repellent (if desired) clearly labeled with your child's name and corresponding authorization form.
- Diapers and wipes if necessary.

**The George Mason Child Development Center is a NAEYC accredited center and a licensed facility by VA DSS.**