

# **Harris Early Learning Center**

## **Parent Handbook 2014-2015**

### **School Year**

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**[www.HarrisELC.org](http://www.HarrisELC.org)**

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## **Introduction**

The Harris Early Learning Center (HELCC) originated as a project of the Birmingham Urban Revitalization Partnership, Inc. in cooperation with Auburn University's College of Human Sciences. Effective, June 1, 2012, Auburn University assumed ownership of the facility. The Center has four principle missions. The first is to provide care and education for young children, which meets standards of best practice in the field. A second mission is to support the training and education of college and university students preparing to work with young children and families. Third, the Center will provide an environment for research into areas related to the growth and development of young children and families. Finally the Center will serve the Birmingham area, the state and the region with outreach programs for parents and child care professionals.

## **Accreditation**

The Center is accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a division of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation's largest organization of early childhood educators. This accreditation was first awarded in August, 1997 and again re-accredited August, 2000, 2005 and 2010 (for a five year period) after a process of internal self-study followed by external professional review to verify compliance with the Academy's criteria for high quality early childhood programs. Many of the procedures and standards outlined in this Handbook support the high standards required for accreditation. Further, the HELCC is in compliance with the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and Nighttime Centers as prescribed by the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources. Minimum Standards and Accreditation Criteria and Procedures are available for review at <http://dhr.alabama.gov/documents/MinimumStandards DayCare.pdf> or [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

## **Philosophy for Care and Education**

The staff contracted to teach at Harris Early Learning Center (HELCC) is committed to providing a high quality program for young children and their families. The program is designed to promote the development of the total individual by helping each child develop skills in the emotional, social, creative, cognitive and physical areas. This goal is accomplished by providing a balanced program that includes both teacher-directed and self-selected activities, quiet as well as active experiences, and the recognition that learning occurs in both formal and informal ways.

Young children are integrally connected to their homes and families, and it is understood that parents are and should be the principal influence in their children's lives. The HELCC seeks to be appropriately responsive to families. Parents and staff work together toward the goal of nurturing children in an environment where all are respected for their individual differences and provided with the building blocks for a lifelong love of learning.

## Curriculum

The HELC curriculum is based on the knowledge that young children learn through active explorations of their environment. This occurs optimally when their physical needs are well met and they feel emotionally secure. Instilling in children a sense of security and trust is of utmost importance. Staff create classroom learning environments appropriate to the developmental needs of the various age groups and provide for the needs of individual children as appropriate.

Infants and toddlers have the opportunity to use a variety of materials and participate in activities designed to stimulate cognitive, social, emotional, physical and creative development. Activities are planned according to their developmental levels and needs. All children are assigned two primary teachers who take responsibility for each child for the greater part of the day. Primary care allows for better continuity and bonding between the child, the classroom teachers, and parents. The primary teachers are responsible for the majority of the routine care, lesson implementation, daily reporting, and serve as principle point of contact regarding information concerning your child. We make every effort for other teachers who may be in the classroom to also be involved with your child and familiar with your child's needs.

Classes for preschoolers are planned on a flexible thematic basis and include hands-on activities and projects integrating traditional disciplines such as math, science, social studies, music, art, and language arts. Emphasis is placed on the process and the actual experience of an activity, rather than the final product. Weekly curriculum plans are available to parents.

Among important goals of the HELC curriculum are the following:

- 1) Help the child develop expressive and receptive facility with English as a primary or secondary language;
- 2) Help the child develop readiness to process graphic symbols and language in its written forms;
- 3) Help the child develop intellectual curiosity, skills in observing, problem solving and learning through his or her own efforts;
- 4) Help the child become an independent thinker who is able to make choices and decisions;
- 5) Help the child move from the need for outer authority to control of his or her own behavior;
- 6) Help the child develop confidence in his or her ability to achieve goals through independent effort;

- 7) Help the child develop an understanding of feelings and how feelings motivate behavior; help the child gain control over how feelings are expressed and learn acceptable ways of dealing with, and expressing strong feelings;
- 8) Help the child develop the social skills needed to be successful in interpersonal relations, to function successfully in the peer group and to learn from peers.
- 9) Help the child learn to respect and value individual, cultural, ethnic and racial diversity;
- 10) Provide information on, and experience with, the social and physical world in which the child needs to function adequately;
- 11) Develop the child's aesthetic sensibilities and horizons through artistic, academic, and intellectual experiences;
- 12) Facilitate the child's physical skills through provisions of large and fine-motor activities;
- 13) Provide a program that is fun for children.

### **Research and Instructional Program for College Students**

One of the missions of the Harris Early Learning Center is to support scientific research in the areas of child development and family relations. Scientific research contributes to the body of knowledge describing how children grow and develop and also provides valuable information for the development of effective preschool education programs.

Before any research project is conducted in the Center, all investigations must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Auburn University or that of any other participating university. This procedure ensures that only studies that do not compromise the safety and integrity of children and family members are conducted in the Center. Due to our strong commitment to Auburn University and the higher education community, **parents are highly encouraged to participate in research projects** if asked, but participation is not required. Any questions or concerns parents might have about the research program should be discussed with the Director of Teacher Training and Outreach.

Research projects may involve interviewing, observing, videotaping parents or children or asking parents or teachers to complete questionnaires. If needed, an orientation program to familiarize the child with the experimenters, the rooms, and the procedures will precede each investigation. No child is ever compelled to participate, and a family's relationship with the HELC will not be compromised by a decision not to participate.

Data from research are strictly confidential. Code numbers rather than names of children or families are used. Although data from individual children and families cannot be released, a summary of the results of each study can be sent to participating parents at its completion, if requested.

College students can learn about development and the education of young children by observing and interacting with children at the Harris Early Learning Center. Students who plan careers in which they will work directly with families or children have the opportunity to translate knowledge obtained in the classroom into planning, implementing and evaluating programs for Center children. It is the role of the HELC staff to provide students with a model program and guidance in their interactions with children and parents. Staff at the Center also serve as professional models for students by being involved in professional development, such as participating in professional organizations, attending local, regional and national meetings, and staying abreast of current literature in the area of Child Development and Early Childhood Education.

### **Role of the Parent**

Staff at the Harris Early Learning Center recognize the vital role that parents play in the school life of their children. For this reason, parents are considered an integral part of all phases of the program. The Center is a living and learning laboratory in which parents, teachers, college faculty, and children work together cooperatively for the children's greatest possible gains.

#### Parents' Responsibilities

Parents must cooperate with the Center in carrying out all governmental laws, rules and regulations affecting the operation. Any questions regarding the Center's policies and procedures should be directed toward one of the Directors. Although exempted from licensure, the Center pledges to be in compliance with the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers of the state of Alabama and parents are expected to also follow these standards as they are required by law. A copy of these state regulations may be viewed at:

<http://dhr.alabama.gov/documents/MinimumStandards DayCare.pdf>

The Center also commits to meet accreditation standards of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (a division of NAEYC.) Generally these standards relate to training of care givers, group size, adult/child ratios, quality of interactions, and describe developmentally appropriate practice. For further information regarding NAEYC, you may go to [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) for information related to quality early care and education practices.

## Parent Participation

Parents are needed and valued as an essential part of the educational process. Parents are welcomed into the classroom as observers or participants. Teachers will seek parental involvement in many ways, such as being resource persons within the classroom setting, accompanying classes on field trips, or assisting children and teachers with the various projects of the Center. We seek and value your active involvement and want to do all possible to achieve good communications between parents and care givers. Parents are free to visit the program at any time. However, be aware that children are accustomed to the normal routine of morning drop off and afternoon pick up so it can be very upsetting for some children if you visit and then leave again during the day. If that is the case, we recommend you view the class from the front lobby monitor and refrain from visiting with your child until they are older and understand you will be leaving soon. If you wish to eat lunch with your child, please make a reservation by 9 a.m. and lunch will be available for \$3.

Pre-K parents are required to participate in a total of 12 Parent Participation hours- which can include a variety of seminars, attending orientation, parent conferences, Center programs, chaperoning for field trips, or volunteering in or on behalf of the class.

## Swipe Card

The safety of your children is a major objective of HELC . As reminders, please make note of the important points listed below:

- **PLEASE USE your swipe card** to enter the front door. Cards do not work before 7am or after 6pm. We can track who enters the building and it allows front desk staff to continue with their work without unnecessary interruption. The replacement for a card is \$15.
- Only let yourself or parents you know in the door. We are careful to keep out people who try to “piggyback” and come in with someone using their card.
- When someone other than Mom or Dad will pick up children, leave a note at the front desk “AND” tell the teachers. If people picking up have not been to the Center, ask them to bring in a photo ID.
- While we realize that emergencies occur, if you allow someone to pick up your child and have not left a note at the front desk, please call and inform someone at the front desk before their arrival. Children will not be released to individuals who are not listed in your check out approval information or you have not informed us accordingly.

## Parent Seminars

During the months of September through May, Brown Bag Parent Seminars are offered presenting topics of interest to parents of preschool children. Unless otherwise noted, the seminars are typically from 12:30-1:30 pm and are advertised with flyers, in the newsletter and on the center website. Parents are encouraged to spend their lunch hour with us as they learn about growth and development of young children. In addition, the Auburn University Parent



Education class offers a Parenting Fair once each semester. Parents are encouraged to participate in all parenting events.

*Pre-K4 parents are required to complete 12 hours of Parent Participation for the school year.*

### Assessment and Parent Conferences

Families are involved in the assessment of their children by providing written and verbal information to teachers throughout the year regarding their child's interests and progress seen away from the school setting. Staff will assess children on a regular basis through various procedures, utilizing information from families. Observations will be made daily and several checklists will be completed during a school year. Information about each child will be kept confidential and parents will be informed of development and learning. Developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment are done through a contract with Glenwood Consultation with parental consent. Children will be assessed on the premises of the Center, by a teacher or authorized party (e.g. OSR personnel, Auburn researchers, or Glenwood psychologist.) Children will not be coerced into participating in assessments.

Teachers communicate verbally with family members daily at drop-off and pick-up times. These discussions must be brief because the teacher's primary responsibility must be the care and education of the children. If a greater length of time is needed than is allowed in the morning or at the end of the day, please feel free to call the Center and leave a message for the teacher to schedule a conference. Conferences will be offered to parents at least twice during the year to discuss their child's developmental progress. Conferences may also be called by teachers or parents as the need arises. During formal parent conferences, parents express goals for their child and give input into what they see in the child's progressing development.

### Parent/Staff Communications

Staff members seek opportunities to communicate frequently with parents concerning child rearing practices and to share specific ideas for promoting children's healthy development and learning. Within each classroom there will be a verbal and/or written system established for sharing day-to-day happenings. Parents will be further informed about issues concerning children and families through a periodic newsletter, bulletin boards, and parent meetings. Additional materials will also be available from teachers, the Directors, in the Center lobby and website. Please let us know of your needs so that we can do our best to assist you.

### Parent Representative Group

A group of parents will serve as parental representatives. Parents desiring to be members of the Parent Representative Group should sign up during the fall parent orientation period or should inform a Director. Monthly meetings are typically held from 12-1 the third Wednesday of each month. All HELC parents are encouraged to attend the meetings and participate whenever possible. The purpose of this group is to stimulate and organize parental involvement

in the Center, to facilitate sharing of information with staff and parents, and to assist with the implementation of special activities and projects.

### **Application and Enrollment**

Applications are accepted for the Harris Early Learning Center throughout the year. Children are admitted to the Center according to the number of spaces available for a particular sponsor and/or the number of spaces available for an age group. The child population includes children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and a balance of boys and girls. Because of the special eligibility requirements, it is impossible to compile a prioritized waiting list. A waiting pool is maintained. When an opening occurs, an attempt is made to find a child from the same sponsor and of the same age as the child who left the program. Sponsoring employers have agreed to work cooperatively to best serve everyone's needs.

Due to the multifaceted decisions that must be made to compose a number of individual classes within an age group, **teacher requests will not be accepted.** A balance whenever possible of gender and race is sought when making up classes. In addition, the personality dynamics of both teachers and children must be taken into consideration when making up class rolls.

It is typical that children remain enrolled in the classroom in which they begin the school year or where placed, in the case of enrolling after the start of the school year. There is, however, a possibility that a child could be moved to another class in his or her age group if withdrawal of children in the age group occurs. Adjustments, by moving children, might be made so that children in a classroom will be closer in development and/or birth months (predominately infant, toddler and two year classrooms only.)

In the case that not all spaces in a given age group are utilized by employees of corporate sponsors, non-sponsored families may be admitted.

### **Enrollment Policy and Procedures**

The following order of priority for enrollment of new children is set as follows:

1. Siblings of currently enrolled children of corporate sponsors.
2. Children of corporate sponsors.
3. Children of HELC staff members.
4. Siblings of currently enrolled children of community families.
5. Children of community families.

## Required Forms

All parents are required to provide an *Enrollment Application*, *Certificate of Immunization Record* (blue form from your pediatrician), and *Child's Preadmission Record* before the first day of school. (*Pre-K4 classes will have additional forms required by the State of Alabama Office of School Readiness.*) Your child will not be allowed to start school until all forms are on file. All forms must be updated yearly (and throughout the year should your emergency contact information change.) **Parents are required to keep the blue form (immunizations record) up to date, as the health department has the authority to send children home if immunizations are not current.** In addition, parents are asked to complete other forms and surveys that provide information on their child and his or her relationship with the family. This information will assist Center staff in providing the best care and education possible for your child.

## Tuition and Fees

Tuition is due on the first day of each month. You may opt to divide payments into ½ due on the 1<sup>st</sup> and ½ due on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. A late fee will be assessed to accounts for payments made after the 15<sup>th</sup>. Tuition is charged on a year-round basis taking holidays into account. Therefore, no deductions are made for absence or holidays. Because staffing and other operational costs are incurred on the basis of enrollment, this cost must be assessed even when a child is absent.

### Delinquent Accounts/Collections

Accounts are considered delinquent after the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month and a late charge of \$25 will be assessed after a 2 day grace period. If the tuition is not paid per this agreement, your child's enrollment will be discontinued. Payments can be made by check, cashier's check or money order to *HELCA/AU or Harris Early Learning Center/AU*. Parents with delinquent accounts will be notified by message or mail concerning their outstanding balance. Should accounts not be satisfied immediately, enrollment is relinquished and the account will be sent to collections. If a family withdraws with an unpaid balance, the security deposit will not be refunded and the outstanding balance will be sent to collections. There will be a \$28 fee for a check returned for non-sufficient funds. After two non-sufficient checks are received, payment must be made by money order, cashier's check or cash.

### Corporate/Community Tuition

Because the HELC is a corporate sponsored facility, families from our sponsoring companies receive priority to spaces and a discounted tuition rate due to the contributions made by their corporation. The community rate is offered to families who are using an unoccupied corporate space.

*In a few instances, a family from a corporate sponsored company may be required to pay the community rate should they accept a space over the allotted number their corporation has paid for.*

### Late Pick-up Fee

The Harris Early Learning Center program ends at 6 p.m. The Center is not budgeted for after-hour staffing; therefore, any parent whose child remains after this time will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$5 for the interval from 6:01 p.m. to 6:05 p.m. After 6:05, the late pick-up fee increases to \$3 per minute. For example, should you arrive at 6:10 you will be charged a late fee of \$20. If you are going to be detained, please notify the school immediately so that your child can be prepared for this change in scheduling and staff arrangements can be made. Late fees will be charged regardless of notification.

### Enrollment/Supply Fees

An annual \$75 non-refundable enrollment fee (one per family), start-up \$150 security deposit (per child) and \$130 annual supply fee is due one week after your child's placement in the Center is offered. If these fees are not received in this time frame, the slot will be offered to another child. A minimum of half of the first month tuition must be received in the office on or before the first day your child attends school. The \$150 security deposit will be returned at the time of your child's departure, if the Center receives a 30 day written notice of a child's withdrawal and the account is clear. This check will be processed and sent from Auburn University after the child's last day of attendance.

### Annual Fees

The enrollment fee (one per family) is to be paid each year in order to secure your child's place for the following year. The supply fee must also be paid each year your child is enrolled in the program and is due September 1 and no later than September 15 *Note: Based on the First Class Pre-K Grant, the annual supply fee is waived for students enrolled in the Pre-K 4 classrooms.*

### **Withdrawal Policy**

Parents withdrawing their child for any reason during the year should provide a 30 day written notice. Security deposits will be returned, assuming there are no outstanding debts, **only** if parents give the 30 day written notice. Tuition will continue to be assessed throughout this period. A full month's tuition will be due for any portion of a month enrolled before withdrawal. Tuition is not pro-rated.

### **Children's Files**

Files are kept on each child. These files are confidential and contain the application, information forms, emergency forms, signed parental consent forms, certificate of immunization, assessment forms, anecdotal reports, and other records that may assist the teacher in working effectively with the family. A child's file is retained for at least three years from the date of last enrollment. Parents are welcome to review the file with the Center staff.

### **Sign-in/Sign-out**

*Parents are required by law to bring their children to their classrooms, to sign them in upon arrival, and to come into the Center to sign them out prior to departure.* (DHR state requirement). Parents are required to use the computer system to sign in and out and are also asked to sign the in-out sheets in each classroom. Both systems provide vital information regarding your child's absence and presence in the event of an emergency.

The **only** people other than a child's custodial parents who are authorized to take the child from the Center are those people designated in writing on the Emergency Notification and Release Form. We also request that parents inform the front office and the classroom teachers when someone other than a parent will be picking up or delivering their child. New parents as well as adults authorized on the form will be asked to furnish picture ID upon request. Please inform those authorized to pick up your child that they should expect to have their ID checked upon arrival at the Center.

The Harris Early Learning Center staff will **not** release children to a person who is visibly impaired due to a medical condition, alcohol consumption, substance abuse, prescription drugs or other causes. In the event the parent or legal guardian is impaired, a Director will call someone designated on the release form.

### **Attendance**

The Center is open from 7 am until 6 pm Monday through Friday, unless otherwise noted due to official closing dates or emergency related conditions. This eleven hour schedule has been

set to provide a range of drop off and pick up times to accommodate varied downtown work schedules. However, **it should be noted that much over 9 hours is considered inappropriate for very young children to be cared for in group settings.** Therefore, please do not view the full 11 hour schedule as appropriate for a child on a daily basis. In addition, the classroom schedules are set up in such a way that educational activities will be well underway by 9am (after arrival and breakfast is served.) Due to the educational nature of the program, unless your child will be arriving late due to an appointment, please refrain from bringing your child in after 9am as late arrivals are disruptive to the on-going activities in the classroom. Please inform the classroom teachers if you know your child will be arriving later than 9am and unless arranged with the teachers, no child will be accepted at or after lunch or nap time.

### **Closing Days**

The Center will be closed for the following holidays or the day the holiday is observed: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans' Day, and closing at 4pm November 26 -Thanksgiving and the day after Thanksgiving. In 2014, we will be closed from 4pm, December 23 through 7am January 5, 2015 for the Christmas/New Year's holidays. Staff development days for 2014-15 will be held on Monday, February 16 (President's Day). Fall 2015 staff development August - TBA. The 2014-2015 parent representatives selected Staff Appreciation Day will be Good Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Care is not provided on these days.

### **Items Provided by Parents**

Parents are asked to provide a clean seasonal and size appropriate change of clothing for their child. A labeled toothbrush and toothbrush holder are also requested. Toothbrushes should be replaced regularly and after the child has been sick. All children ages 2 and up are required to have a bike helmet at the Center for riding trikes. Parents are asked to provide a large beach towel or cot mat to cover the napping cot. Parents are expected to launder their child's cot covering once a week, taking them home each Friday or more frequently as needed for cleanliness.

### **Infant/Toddler Needs and Toilet Training**

If you are leaving a car seat at The Center, please place it in the hallway near the front lobby or in the Infant Hallway on the **left side only** (5 car seat maximum). Strollers may be left at the front, **only if necessary**. The Center provides crib sheets for infants. However, because the Alabama State Department of Human Resources does not approve of any type of covering being placed over an infant due to the risk of SIDS, parents can provide a "Swaddle Me", "Sleep Sack" or "Snugglie" type covering or **infants will be placed on their backs** in their crib uncovered. Parents are responsible for bringing diapering supplies, including **disposable** diapers, wipes, ointments and powder. Parents also need to bring burp cloths, extra clothes and a pacifier, if desired. The teachers will notify parents when diapering supplies are running low. Teachers

check diapers at regular intervals depending on the child's age. Children are changed at these times or whenever they are soiled.

Sometime after the age of two, a child will show readiness and willingness in learning to use the toilet. Staff will begin this process assuming the child is developmentally ready. Parents and staff will work **together** in planning a successful approach to the toilet learning process. During the training period, children will not be coerced if they are not showing developmental signs of being ready and lapses in training are to be expected. However, a child who is not toilet trained will not be able to attend field trips without a parent and due to the academic nature of the program, may be excluded from the pre-k4 program without medical reasons. Although there are a variety of materials in publication concerning quick and easy toilet training, for example training a child over the weekend, these thoughts are not compatible with group care, call the teacher's attention away from the entire group, and should not be requested by parents. Please discuss toilet training activities with your teachers.

### **Clothing and Active Play**

Children's clothing should be comfortable and easy for them to manage, especially during the critical stages of toilet learning. Children need to be able to engage in messy and active indoor and outdoor play. Therefore, play clothes which can withstand hard use and can be easily laundered are important. Parents are asked to understand that reasonable efforts will be made to protect clothing but that occasional stains from paint or food may occur. Children should wear sturdy shoes with non-slip soles to help prevent falling from climbing equipment. **Open toe shoes/sandals, flip-flops and hard heeled boots are strongly discouraged as these pose tripping and falling hazards.** Parents are asked to provide a seasonal and size appropriate change of clothes that can be used in case of emergencies and to check carefully at the end of the day for items to be laundered and returned. **All articles of clothing should be clearly marked with the child's name to prevent loss.** Teachers cannot be held responsible for keeping up with multiple items which are not labeled. Additional **clothing and accessory items discouraged from being worn at the Center include: child jewelry (particularly valuable items), hair beads and barrettes.** Each of these pose dangerous choking hazards should a child put them in their mouth.

Children should be adequately dressed for the season and weather for outdoor play on each day of attendance. Children generally go outside, even on cold days for a brief time, if it is not raining. A warm jacket with a hood, or hat and mittens are needed on cold days. Physical development experiences that include both teacher-directed and free play activities are offered daily. Indoor and/or outdoor play activities are an important part of our program. Children will be expected to participate in play activities unless a written statement from the child's physician is provided.

### **Injury and Emergency Medical Care**

A minor injury to a child will be treated at the discretion of the teacher by washing and administering a band-aid. When an accident occurs, the teacher will complete an *Incident Report*

*Form.* The parent will be notified by telephone and will be given the form to read and sign at the conclusion of the school day. All teachers in each area will have first aid and CPR training, which includes clearing a blocked air passage and rescue breathing, during all operating hours. *(Infant/child CPR training is offered to ALL full time teachers and administrative/support staff members every other year as part of our bi-annual staff development training.)*

In the event of a more serious injury, the teacher will render emergency first aid, and another staff person will inform the parent by telephone using the emergency form on file at the Harris Early Learning Center. The parent will generally be asked to come to the Center to transport the child to a physician's office or a medical facility if the parent or teacher feels that this is necessary. If neither parent can be contacted, the person designated by the parent on the emergency form will be requested to fulfill this parental role.

If immediate and urgent medical treatment is required, the Center will call 911 and an ambulance if necessary. *Child Preadmission Records* authorize the Center and/or its designated employee(s) to secure and authorize any medical attention, treatment, and services as may be necessary for a child whose parents cannot be immediately contacted. Any qualified person providing such required medical attention, treatment, or services may accept such written consent as if given by the parent in person. The *Child's Preadmission Record* will be in the child's file and will be sent with the person accompanying a child to a medical facility.

In the event of an accident requiring medical attention, the parent's insurance will act as the primary coverage.

### **Health Regulations**

The *Alabama State Certificate of Immunization* (blue form) must be up to date and on file for each child. The Harris Early Learning Center requires that a medical examination be completed no more than six months prior to the date the child enters the Center. It is strongly recommended that a medical examination occur within one month of school entry to provide maximum protection for all children. The Alabama Department of Public Health requires that all children have a record of immunization on file at the Center. All enrollees must have a blue Certificate of Immunization on file before the first day the child attends school. The HELC will monitor expiration dates of immunizations and will remind parents to have children receive necessary boosters. *The Health Department monitors compliance and has the discretion to send children home if they are attending with expired blue cards.* **A child who is legally under-immunized will be excluded promptly from attendance in the Center if a vaccine-preventable disease occurs in the program.**

### **Illness**

Parents are asked to notify the Center by calling the classroom if their child is to be absent for any reason. If a child develops a contagious disease, parents of all children exposed to



the disease will be alerted. A child who has had an illness should not return to school until released by the physician and *is able to participate in the total program.*

A child showing symptoms of illness while at the Center will be separated from the other children in their class and cared for in the Sick Room until he or she can be taken home. Parents or their designees are expected to pick up the **child within one hour** of the time they are contacted.

If your child is having surgery, they may not return to the center for at least 24 hours post-operation and with a release from the doctor.

### **Illness Guidelines**

Exposure to many contagious diseases is a normal part of childhood. The most common illnesses are associated with the upper respiratory system, including ear infections, and the gastrointestinal system. Infants and toddlers are particularly vulnerable to some diseases because certain components of their general immune system are not fully developed.

In an effort to manage and prevent disease spread, parents are expected to stay current with their child's immunizations and to strictly observe the Health Policy. The parents should report instances of exposure or illness to the Center administrative staff and take appropriate action when symptoms of illness have been defined. With this in mind, parents with more than one child at the center are encouraged to drop their oldest child off first and pick them up last. This will eliminate older children from entering our infant and toddler classrooms and possibly cross contamination across age groups. If you must drop off your youngest child first, please have your older child wait at the classroom door rather than entering infant and toddler rooms.

The HELC will follow the policy of *The American Academy of Pediatrics* or updated recommendations from the *Center for Disease Control* due to widespread pandemic concerns. (See the HELC website for links to these agencies.) These national health agencies recommend that children be **excluded** from group care for the following reasons:

- \* The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.
- \* The illness results in greater care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- \* The child has any of the following conditions: fever at or above 100.4 degrees, lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or other signs of severe illness.
- \* Diarrhea that is **not contained by diapers** or toilet use or stools that contain blood and/or mucus. The Center acknowledges that this is a difficult standard to apply but adheres to the definition of diarrhea as two loose movements within an hour. Children should not return as long as symptoms persist or unless stool sample has been cultured and found negative. The presence of fever with diarrhea, of course, requires exclusion until child is free of fever for 24 hours and symptom free.

- \* Vomiting two or more times in the previous 24 hours unless the vomiting is determined to be caused by a non-communicable condition (such as reflux) and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
- \* Mouth sores associated with the inability of the child to control his or her saliva, unless the child's physician states the child is noninfectious.
- \* Rash with fever, discharge and behavior change, until the physician has determined it is not a non-communicable disease. (Ringworm must be treated for 24 hours and covered upon return to the Center.)
- \* Pink or red conjunctivitis with white or yellow discharge until checked by a physician and cleared for readmission. (Pink eye must be treated with prescription eye drops and without discharge before returning to the Center.)
- \* Infectious tuberculosis until the physician states the child can be readmitted.
- \* Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment is initiated.
- \* Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated (lesions must be covered.)
- \* Open wounds must be covered in order to participate in group care.
- \* Head lice until the morning after the first treatment.
- \* Scabies until after final treatment.
- \* Pertussis, until five days of appropriate antibiotic treatment.
- \* Chicken pox, until sixth day after onset of rash or when lesions have dried and crusted.
- \* Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- \* Hepatitis A virus, until one week after illness or jaundice, or until immune globulin has been administered to appropriate children and staff in the program as directed by the responsible health department.

**A child should remain at home if he or she is infectious and until he or she is free of fever for 24 hours after an illness, without medication.** This would mean that a child leaving school during the day with a fever of **100.4 degrees** temperature or higher would not be able to return the next morning without written permission from a physician.

If a child develops symptoms of illness while at the Center, they will be separated from their classmates and cared for in the sick room. Parents will be contacted to pick up the child as soon as possible. If the child is sent home from the Center ill, a physician's note authorizing the child's return to group care may be requested, depending upon specific situations. This measure is necessary in order to comply with state law and curtail the spread of infection. **The over all health and well being of all HELC teachers and children is of utmost importance, therefore, the Center reserves the right to refuse care due to illness.**

### **Administration of Medication**

If a child should require medication while in our care, staff can administer prescription medication **ONLY** if the following conditions are met *per the Baby Douglas Law*:

- 1) The parent completes a medication form (available at the front desk) that includes specific instructions that match the prescribed dosage and time to administer *(We can have NO open-ended medication directives, i.e. “give as needed.” The Center cannot be responsible for making medication decisions. )*
- 2) Nonprescription medications can only be administered with a doctor’s orders and **only when the dosage specifically matches the label recommendations for a child of that age.** The only exception for nonprescription medication would include diaper cream and teething gels.
- 3) The medication is in its original container which includes the child's name, name of the drug, and directions for administration.
- 4) Unless physician’s instructions indicate otherwise, medication can be given for a period of one week (5 school days).  
*In the case of a serious medical condition, the Center may request parents administer medication or medical procedures. In such cases, temporary withdrawal from the Center may be needed until the child can safely participate in a group care situation.*

Medications along with the medication form should be turned in at the front desk which will be logged and shared with the teachers. All medications will be stored in specific areas in the Center in a locked, childproof cabinet or refrigerator inaccessible to children. **Medications should not be left in children’s bags or classroom cubbies.**

Additional items that may be administered to children include insect repellent and sun screen. Forms are available at the front desk for parents to fill out for these items which are used most specifically for summertime and water play and exposure.

### **Nutrition, Food and Food Allergies**

Children should not bring food, for example, fast food breakfast items, to the Center except by prior arrangement with the child's teacher. Food items brought should be limited to special snacks or celebrations such as birthdays (please refer to the HELC Party Policy) and according to NAEYC accreditation standards may only be individual packaged items or bakery prepared so that specific ingredients are available in case of food allergy concerns.

Children will be served breakfast, a nutritious mid-day meal, and an afternoon snack, meeting guidelines of USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Teachers are directed not to hold breakfast for late arrivers due to health violations so please do not call and make this request. In addition, teachers cannot be expected to serve children an afternoon/evening meal, even if it is provided by the parent, with the exception of a late afternoon bottle for infants.

**Food or drink substitutions cannot be made for individual children except for documented medical/religious reasons.** Food allergies often occur. Therefore, a notice from the doctor will be expected when a child should not eat/drink a certain food and this information is made available to the kitchen staff and will be posted in the classroom. Items such as peanut

butter are offered to our older children and younger children as their developing eating habits will allow. However, parents of older infants and toddlers may be wary of their child being exposed to some food items before they are ready to serve them. Weekly menus are placed at the front desk and parents should review the menu to make teachers aware of items you would prefer a younger child not being served. Reasonable efforts are made to serve an alternate item.

Because breast milk is recommended as the best source of nourishment for infants, breast feeding is encouraged and supported by HELC staff. A “Mother’s Room” is provided for convenience and privacy for nursing mothers. **It is highly advised that infants receive their first feeding of the day at home before center arrival**, until they are old enough to eat table food from the Center menu. When one considers the scenario of numerous babies all arriving hungry at the same time and the stress that brings not only to teachers but also to infants who need immediate care, this is understood. Parents of infants and children not yet old enough to eat Center meals and snacks must complete the feeding instructions portion of a daily form and provide all needed formula and baby food. **According to Health Department regulations, bottles must be identified with the child's name. Stored breast milk must also include the date of storage.**

Infants will be held for bottle feeding with the only exception being when multiple children require feeding at the same time. Infants/babies will not be placed in a crib with a bottle. If not consumed, breast milk/formula will be discarded within an hour unless refrigerated and any left over will be discarded at the end of the day. If baby food is provided by the parent, all jars shall be labeled with the child's name. No previously opened jars can be accepted by the Center. All opened jars will be sent home or discarded at the end of the day.

### **Personal Belongings**

Children are requested to leave food, gum, candy, money or other valuables at home. **Please discourage your child from bringing toys or other "prized" possessions to the Center** except on special occasions planned by the teachers. Such highly valued items are often difficult to keep up with, may get broken and very hard to share.

It is understood, however, that many young children do have an object of special attachment, such as a blanket or stuffed toy, that helps to ease the transition from home to school and that they might not be ready to share. Teachers will help other children to understand and respect such feelings and once a child is settled the item will be placed in their cubby. Teachers will do their best to keep up with children’s belongings but cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of personal possessions. **Labeling of all personal belongings helps to avoid loss.**

### **Severe Weather Plan**

The Harris Early Learning Center staff, in cooperation with the Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency, has developed a plan for use in emergency weather conditions.

The Harris Early Learning Center will continue usual indoor activities during "watch" and "severe thunderstorm warning" conditions. Should a "tornado warning" go into effect; all persons will go to the cubby and storage areas inside the classrooms and remain there until the warning is lifted. Parents are advised to remain at work until the warning is lifted. If parents arrive at the Center during the warning, they must stay in the shelter areas. **It is against recommendations of the Emergency Management Agency for the Center to permit parents to pick up their child and leave the Center during a "tornado warning" condition; therefore all persons are strongly urged to remain in the Center shelter areas until the warning is lifted.**

### **Air Quality**

During months in which air quality is of concern, a daily monitoring of air quality alerts and posting of such information at the front desk will be available. While it has always been thought that being outside a little while each day is good for children, outside play time will either be limited or scheduled for indoors on days of air quality alerts.

### **Fire Safety**

A fire evacuation plan has been developed in cooperation with the City of Birmingham Fire Marshal. In case of fire, teachers will remove children from the building as quickly as possible. Each restroom and play area will be checked to ensure total clearing of the building. Emergency telephone numbers are posted near each telephone and a call will be made to report the fire as quickly as possible.

Fire extinguishers are strategically located in the hallways outside the classroom doors. The building is equipped with a fire alarm system and smoke detectors. Sprinkler systems are installed in each classroom. Monthly fire drills are conducted to prepare staff and children for an emergency situation.

### **School Cast Notification System**

HELC uses the *School Cast* notification system in order to notify parents of important information and closures. Parents contact information is entered into the system and can be notified by phone at home, work and cell, by e-mail and /or text messages.

### **Emergency Plan**

In case of loss of water, power, heat in cold weather, or air conditioning in hot weather, parents will be notified through the *School Cast* notification system that the Center will be closed and that they must pick up their children. In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation from the immediate area of the Center, necessary action will be organized by the Directors. In

such a circumstance, children will be evacuated to Alabama Power Auditorium, **adjacent to the back of the Center, at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street North.**

### **Inclement Weather**

Decisions regarding open and closing due to inclement weather conditions will rely heavily upon the Jefferson County School System due to the fact that both HELC staff and families live throughout the metro area and beyond. In the event that the weather becomes severe after children have been dropped off at the Center, parents will be notified (by phone, e-mail and/or text) using the *School Cast* notification system. Please make sure your contact number and e-mail address is kept current in the *School Cast* system, with the front office and classroom. Your child will be cared for in the event the weather has prohibited you from an immediate pick-up.

### **Equal Opportunity - Non-discrimination**

The Center strongly believes children and employees are entitled to equal opportunities and freedom from discrimination because of race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin or disability. Children and employees are entitled to work and play in an environment that is non-discriminatory and free of any harassment that interferes with an individual's work/play performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work/play atmosphere.

### **Field Trips**

Children three years of age and older who are enrolled in the Center will be transported to and from planned field trips and other organized activities in Harris Early Learning Center /AU vehicles. Such trips are expected to be educational in nature and plans must first be approved by a Center director. A written authorization form signed by the parent is required for a child to participate in field trips. This form informs parents of the destination, date and time of the trip. A child's parent is required to attend if the child is not potty trained. Should parents desire to plan a classroom function/party outside of the Center, it should take place after hours and children should be accompanied by a supervising adult or parent (see party guidelines, p.24).

### **Demand Schedule**

The Center is required by law to feed any child who is hungry and to allow a tired child to sleep. Center staff will cooperate with parents in efforts to establish regular schedules for eating and sleeping. Quiet/rest time will be a part of the daily routine. Staff will, at a parent's request, attempt to gently wake a sleeping child at a prescribed time, but will permit the child to continue sleeping if needed.

### **Reporting Requirement**

The staff of the Harris Early Learning Center is required by law to report any suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation or deprivation to local police or to the Alabama Department of Human Resources.

### **Guidance/Discipline**

The classroom environment, along with the curriculum and instructional practices, are designed to reduce or eliminate discipline problems. Teachers will use positive strategies to guide children in developing self-control and orderly conduct in relationship to peers and adults. If problems should occur, teachers will work with children to help them identify the problem behavior, discuss feelings, and choose a course of action that is in the best interest of all involved. The goal in the resolution of all conflicts is to help the child see how the behavior affects himself and others and to provide direction for positive alternative behaviors. Teachers will address challenging behavior by including parents and professionals, as needed, in order to develop an individualized plan to address the behavior.

Certain punishments in group care settings are prohibited by the Center. These include: 1) any sort of corporal punishment including hitting, spanking, swatting or shaking; 2) verbal abuse, threats or derogatory remarks; 3) withholding or forcing meals, snacks or naps; 4) punishment for lapses in toilet training; 5) isolating a child in any restricted area. While it is acknowledged that parents may use a variety of guidance techniques within the home, they are expected to respect these prohibitions with regard to all persons (including their own children) while within the Center. Teachers and Directors are eager to discuss issues of guidance and will help parents to extend accepted practices to other settings.

### **Discontinuation of Services**

If a problem occurs with a child's behavior, the parents, teachers and directors will work together to develop a plan of action to guide the child toward more appropriate and acceptable behavior. Plans will vary according to the age, developmental level and the needs of the particular child. It is expected that all parties involved will work as a team to modify and improve the child's behavior. If additional services are needed, professionals will be included in the behavioral plan. **It is advised that children who are exhibiting difficult behaviors spend more one-on-one time with parents or significant adults in their lives rather than an excessive amount of time (beyond 9-9 ½ hours a day) in group care.**

If in the sole opinion of the Harris Early Learning Center, the child continues to exhibit unacceptable or inappropriate behavior, the Harris Early Learning Center reserves the right to suspend or discontinue services for that child. Such termination of services will be effective immediately upon the determination by the Harris Early Learning Center that such action is warranted. While it is our goal to meet the individual and varied needs of each child in the Center, to the best of our ability, we cannot allow one child to continually disrupt the care and

education for all of the other children in a class. In addition, while working with children to develop appropriate social behaviors is a goal of the center (See, Curriculum pgs. 4-5) we cannot allow a child to continually behave disrespectfully or exhibit physical force towards teachers.

### **Back to Sleep / SIDS Policy and Procedures**

As required by the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources and our accrediting agency, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, all non-mobile infants will be required to be placed on their back for sleeping. **The only way an infant can be placed in any other position for sleeping will be by physician instructions ONLY.**

### **Babysitting**

The Harris Early Learning Center staff are contract, XcelHR employees, hired based upon their education and expertise within a supervised and managed environment. Center management, therefore, cannot be responsible or held liable if parents hire Center employees for privately arranged child care outside the scope of this contractual arrangement. Center staff is allowed to transport children enrolled in the Center to or from the Center **only** after parents have completed a liability release form. While parents may feel comfortable approaching their classroom teachers to babysit, **it is highly recommended that your child's actual teachers not be asked to babysit** as this often diminishes the student/teacher relationship that teachers work so hard to establish in the classroom.

### **Quality Assurance - Handling of Complaints**

The Harris Early Learning Center is committed to providing a high quality program that meets to the greatest extent possible children's and family's needs. In case of concerns, first discuss the situation with your child's teachers. While viewpoints on specific situations do vary, all staff are expected to be responsive to parent concerns and willing to consider various ways to meet the needs of children and families. Because communication is sometimes not easy, a parent may need to try again to let a teacher know what he/she would like to happen. Please listen to the teacher's suggestions and respect her professional judgment too. While teachers will try to be responsive to individual expectations, they must also consider the needs of all the children in the classroom as well. If a problem is not resolved, please discuss the situation with a Director.

### **World Wide Web Address**

The Harris Early Learning Center is "on line" with the address: [www.HarrisELC.org](http://www.HarrisELC.org).  
Electronic mail addresses are:

[robbieroberts@HarrisELC.org](mailto:robbieroberts@HarrisELC.org)

[dblackwell@HarrisELC.org](mailto:dblackwell@HarrisELC.org)

[ljharris@HarrisELC.org](mailto:ljharris@HarrisELC.org)

[vwiley@HarrisELC.org](mailto:vwiley@HarrisELC.org)

[chardy@HarrisELC.org](mailto:chardy@HarrisELC.org)



## **Party Guidelines**

### **Developed by the Parent Representative Group**

The input and involvement of our parents is invaluable to the children's education. Parties are a fun way for parents to be involved but must be restricted to prevent disruption of the children's normal daily schedules. If you would like to host a celebration of any kind at school, please make sure the teachers are aware of your intentions and follow these guidelines.

In most instances, a party would be held in the classroom during the normally scheduled afternoon snack time. While snack is always available, parents may wish to provide cupcakes, special cookies or ice cream which are usually not included in our afternoon snack and would be viewed as a "special" treat. According to NAEYC standards, such items must be individually wrapped or provided by a bakery in which ingredients are available due to food allergy concerns.

**Latex balloons are prohibited as they are a serious choking hazard to young children.**

### **Birthday Parties**

Parents may send party food and favors (appropriate for the age) for the entire class. The parents may attend or have the teacher serve the snacks during the afternoon snack time. If the parents send party favors and attend the party, the parents will be expected to help clean up after the party. This will allow the teachers to focus their attention on the supervision of the children and to continue with the regularly scheduled afternoon activities and not be burdened with an unusual amount of clean up.

Please do not bring or send party assistants to the classroom (i.e. a clown, dressed character, etc.) Party assistants disrupt the class schedule and often frighten young children. These should be reserved for your own personal parties outside the school setting.

**Please do not view your classroom party as your child's primary party.** When doing so, this creates a situation where the party becomes much bigger and includes more expectations than just a "special" snack. **Parents should refrain from bringing additional family members and friends to school parties.** It is very disruptive for friends and cousins outside of the classroom setting to be included in classroom parties, particularly since seating is usually limited to the number of children in the class.

### **Distribution of Invitations at School**

Party invitations for personal parties to be held outside of the school day may be distributed at school **ONLY** if each child in the room is invited. If you wish to invite children from other classes to a parent planned party outside of school, it is recommended that you mail these rather than use the classroom cubbies for distribution purposes. When the heartache and rejection experienced by a child who does not receive an invitation is considered, the importance of this policy is very clear. If you would like to mail invitations to a child's home, please consult the student directory for addressing information.

### **Christmas/Hanukkah**

HELCC would like to use the holiday season as a time to reach out and share with others rather than have elaborate parties in the classrooms. We request that parents, students and staff members donate toward this effort. In each classroom, parents and teachers may work together to host a holiday party which will not disrupt the class schedule. Parents are asked to help with decorations, snacks and with clean up if such a party is agreed upon. Instead of individual gifts, we encourage parents to contribute toward a classroom gift that can then be shared by the entire class. Teachers will gladly help with the creation of a “class wish list” for classroom gifts. In addition, HELCC normally participates in an outreach effort during the holiday season such as “Toys for Tots”. Our Pre-K4 classes, in conjunction with the Auburn Early Learning Center, annually participate in a “Penny Harvest Drive” to provide math/money activities for our children with the end result of collecting funds for meals to feed the homeless, housing and meals for the local Ronald McDonald House or Kids for Kid’s Wish.

### **Thanksgiving Feast (NAEYC standards related to food allergy concerns suggest that only prepackaged and catered items be used for center events.)**

Many of our age groups choose to participate in an annual family event known as Thanksgiving Feast. While participation and planning of such events is up to the discretion of the teachers, typically, these are held by age group, or 2 classes within an age group if the group is over 3 classes in size. In the past, classes have collected money to provide a catered lunch meal or arranged for the Center to provide turkey, bread and cranberry sauce and families bring store or catered side-dishes and desserts to complete the feast luncheon.

*Several guidelines have been established to follow when having a feast:*

- 1) Only 2 family members per child (there is not enough room or food for more than this)
- 2) Please do not bring a sibling from another class to a feast.
- 3) Each family is expected to bring at least one item enough to feed 6-8 adults or more.
- 4) Food should be store bought or catered, pre-cooked and in a disposable container.
- 5) Parents are requested to stay and help with the clean up of the area at the end of the feast as teachers will have to return to the classroom with the children.

### **Teacher Appreciation**

A word or note of appreciation from a parent can be a lasting source of encouragement and inspiration to your child’s teacher. Another option is to give a gift to the classroom as a whole such as books or toys appropriate for the group. Offering a day off (Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015) for staff appreciation, as well as having class sponsored snacks at the monthly staff meetings are ideas which have been used over the years for showing appreciation. Additionally, the profit from the sale of coupon books in the fall has been used to provide a holiday gift for HELCC employees who are not part the regular classroom teaching staff. It is the discretion of each parent individually and the parent representative group as a voice for other parents in their classrooms to decide how teacher/staff appreciation will be handled each year.

**Other Holidays, Events or Parties**

Parents should always partner with classroom teachers when planning any party or classroom activity. Parents who attend are expected to help set up, if needed, and clean up the party or activity. In addition, the class rules should be followed at all times. Children should not be allowed to walk around with food and exhibit other behaviors, not typically acceptable during meal times just because there is a party or their parents are in attendance. Parents' help in making sure their child follows class rules during a party or field trip event is expected and appreciated. If a party is planned for off-site, it will need to take place after school hours and all children present will need to be accompanied by a supervising adult or parent. HELC cannot be held responsible for the health, well-being or behavior of children during after hour activities.

**RECEIPT OF 2014-2015 PARENT HANDBOOK  
PARENTAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT**



Please read the Parent Handbook carefully! If you have any questions regarding any policy or procedure, bring it to the attention of a Center Director or administrative personnel. It is essential that parents work together with the Center staff to honor our commitment to offer a safe, healthy, happy, and beneficial environment for the children we serve.

By signing this acknowledgment you verify that you have received a copy of the 2014-2015

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother's or Legal Guardian's Signature/ date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Father's or Legal Guardian's Signature/ date

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Child's Name- Please Print**