

Auburn University
Harris Early Learning Center
Updated as of 8/18/2021

Family Handbook
2021-2022 School Year

Please see the most recent COVID-19 Policy for up-to-date procedures and how COVID-19 may affect the outlined procedures and policies below.

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The Harris Early Learning Center (HELCC) originated in 1995 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 education and care 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 families and childcare 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 of 1997 and again re-accredited August 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015 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. The next accreditation validation visit will be scheduled during the 2021-2022 school year. 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: <https://dhr.alabama.gov/child-care/licensing-overview/> or www.naeyc.org

Philosophy for Early Care and Education

The staff 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 families are and should be the principal influence in their children's lives. The HELCC seeks to be appropriately responsive to families. Families 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 family members. 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 families.

Among important goals of the HELC curriculum are the following:

- 1) Support the child in the development of his or her full linguistic repertoire, including the development of expressive and receptive capabilities in the child's home language(s) and English
- 2) Prepare the child to engage in meaningful literacy practices by developing the child's comprehension, meaning-making systems, concepts of print, and the ability to process graphic symbols and language in its written forms
- 3) Facilitate the development of agency by promoting the child's intellectual curiosity, observational skills, problem solving, and learning through his or her own efforts;
- 4) Help the child become an independent and critical thinker who is able to make choices and decisions;
- 5) Promote student autonomy by supporting the child to move from the need for outer authority or extrinsic motivation to the ability to regulate his or her own actions and demonstrate intrinsic motivation;

- 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) Support the child to develop a respect and celebration of diversity including, but not limited to, differing abilities, gender, race, ethnicity, language, and culture.
- 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 learning opportunities that are fun and engaging for children and encourage a passion for life-long learning

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 and 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, **family members are highly encouraged to participate in research projects** if asked, but participation is not required. Families will be informed if their child participated on a given day. Any questions or concerns families might have about the research program should be discussed with the Director of Teacher Training and Outreach.

Research projects may involve interviewing, observing, videotaping families or children or asking family members 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 families 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 families. 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 Family

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

Families' Responsibilities

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

<https://dhr.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/No-Highlighted-MS-for-CENTERS-revised.pdf>

The Center, as a nationally accredited program, 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 for information related to quality early care and education practices.

Family Engagement (See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

Families valued as an essential part of the educational process. Family members are welcomed into the classroom as observers or participants. Harris Early Learning Center aims to engage families often and intentionally, encouraging families to partner with classroom teachers to facilitate learning within in the classroom environment or engaging in activities. Family engagement is characterized by being actively partnering with the school and learning alongside your child. As family engagement is often cited as a critical factor to students' success within schools, AUHELK recognizes the importance of family partnership. We strive to honor the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of our students and foster strong collaborative relationships with families to bridge the home and school learning experience.

Families 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 at the front desk by 9 a.m. and lunch will be available for \$3.

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

Door Access/ Key Fob (See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

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 fob** to enter the Center. Fobs do not work before 7am or after 6pm with the front/side entrance available 7-9AM and 3:30-6PM. We can track who enters the building and it allows front desk staff to continue with their work without unnecessary interruption. Families will be charged \$50 to replace a lost or damaged fob.
- Only let yourself in the door. Be careful to keep out people who try to "piggyback" and come in with someone using their FOB.
- When someone other than a primary caregiver 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.

Family Seminars (See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

During the months of September through May, Brown Bag Family Seminars are offered presenting topics of interest to family members of young 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. Families are encouraged to spend their lunch hour with us as they learn about growth and development of young children. In addition, the center will provide additional opportunities and experiences for families to further their understanding of how to support their children in their development. Families are encouraged to participate in all family events, as we know this correlates with best outcomes for children. *Pre-K4 families are required to complete 12 hours of family engagement for the school year.*

Developmental Assessment (See also, Appendix C- Child Assessment Plan)

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 observations are made daily and several developmental checklists will be completed during a school year. **Information about each child will be kept confidential and families will be informed of development and learning.** At times, developmental screenings may suggest referral for further diagnostic assessment with consent from the primary caregiver, conducted by a child psychologist contracted with the Center. Children will be assessed on the premises of the Center and will not be coerced to participate. Information from such assessments provides valuable information for teachers as they prepare learning experiences to meet individual children's developmental or behavioral needs.

Birth to five is "the window of opportunity" for providing intervention and developmental support for young children. Thus, family members are highly encouraged to work with the Center in accessing varied support provided through the Center. Under circumstances where the primary caregiver(s) decline intervention, the Center has the right to discontinue services if developmental concerns or behavior is beyond the scope of a regular classroom (See, Discontinuation of Services pg. 23).

Family-Staff Communication/ Procure and Family Conferences (See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

Staff members seek opportunities to communicate frequently with families concerning child rearing practices and to share specific ideas for promoting children's healthy development and learning. Within each classroom the **Procure** will be used for sharing day-to-day happenings. Family members will be further informed about issues concerning children and families through a periodic newsletter, bulletin boards, and family 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.

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 families at least twice during the year to discuss their child's developmental progress. Conferences may also be called by teachers or families as the need arises. During formal family conferences, family members express goals for their child and give input into what they see in the child's progressing development.

Family Representative Group (Previously known as Parent Representative Group)
(See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

A group of family members will serve as representatives for each class. Family members desiring to be members of the Family Representative Group should sign up during the fall family orientation period or should inform a Director. Monthly meetings are typically held from 12-1 the third Wednesday of each month. All HELC families are encouraged to attend the meetings and participate whenever possible. The purpose of this group is to stimulate and organize family engagement in the Center, to facilitate sharing of information with staff and families, and to assist with the implementation of special activities and projects.

Application and Enrollment (See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

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, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds; differing abilities; and a balance of boys and girls whenever possible. 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 a corporate 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.** When creating classes, the center aims to balance gender, race, ethnicity, differing abilities, and home language(s). 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 families are required to provide an *Enrollment Application*, *Certificate of Immunization Record* (form from your pediatrician), and *Child's Preadmission Record* before the first day of school. (*Pre-K4 classes will have additional forms and documentation 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.) **Families are required to keep the immunizations record up to date, as the health department has the authority to send children home if immunizations are not current.** In addition, families 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, in full, on the first day of each month. You may opt to divide payments into ½ due on the 1st and ½ due on the 15th of each month. A late fee will be assessed to accounts for payments made after the 15th. 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. Online payments should be made through our website www.harriselc.org.

Delinquent Accounts/Collections

Accounts are considered delinquent after the 15th of each month and a late charge of \$50 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 should be made online at www.harriselc.org.* Families 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.

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 (See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

The Harris Early Learning Center program ends at 6 p.m. The Center is not budgeted for after-hour staffing; therefore, any family member whose child remains after this time will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$10 for the interval from 6:01 p.m. to 6:05 p.m. After 6:05, the late pick-up fee increases to \$5 per minute. For example, should you arrive at 6:10 you will be charged a late fee of \$35. 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 \$125 non-refundable enrollment fee (one per family) and \$200 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.

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 upon the First Class Pre-K Grant, the annual supply fee is waived for students enrolled in the Pre-K 4 classrooms.*

Withdrawal Policy

Family members withdrawing their child for any reason during the year should provide a 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 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. Families are welcome to review the file with the Center staff.

Sign-in/Sign-out

(See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

Family members are required by law to sign their children in upon arrival, and out prior to departure. (DHR state requirement). Families 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. **Family members, or anyone picking up your child will be required to register with our Procure childcare management system, using their fingerprint.**

The **only** people other than a child's legal guardians who are authorized to take the child from the Center are those people designated in writing on the *Child's Preadmission Record* Form. We also request that families inform the front office and the classroom teachers when someone other than primary caregiver will be picking up or delivering their child. New families 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 primary care giver or legal guardian is impaired, a Director will call someone designated on the release form.

Attendance

(See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

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 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, and November 24th-26th for Thanksgiving. In 2021, we will be closed December 20th through January 2nd, 2021 for the Christmas/New Year's holidays. The Winter Staff development day for 2021-2022 will be held on Monday, February 21st (President's Day) and Fall 2022 staff development August - TBD. Annually, the family representatives have selected a Staff Appreciation Day. The day for 2021-2022 is still to be determined. Care is not provided on these days.

Items Provided by Families (See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

Families are asked to provide a clean, seasonal and size appropriate change of clothing for their child. All children ages 2 and up are required to have a bike helmet at the Center for riding trikes. Families are asked to provide a large beach towel or cot mat to cover the napping cot. Families 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, the Alabama State Department of Human Resources does not permit any type of covering over an infant in a crib due to the risk of SIDS. Family members can provide a sleep sack with a doctor's prescription, otherwise, **infants will be placed on their backs** in their crib **uncovered**. Families are responsible for bringing diapering supplies, including **disposable** diapers, and wipes. Ointments and powder, if desired, require a prescription. Families also need to bring extra clothes and a pacifier, if desired. The teachers will notify family members 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. Families and staff will collaborate to plan 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 family member.**

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. Families 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.** Families 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 family 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. *(Infant/child CPR training is offered to ALL full-time teachers and administrative/support staff members every other year as part of our 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 family by telephone using the emergency form on file at the Harris Early Learning Center. The family member will generally be asked to come to the Center to transport the child to a physician's office or a medical facility if the family member or teacher feels that this is necessary. If a family member cannot be contacted, the person designated by the family on the emergency form will be requested to fulfill this 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 family member 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 legal guardian 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, a family member's insurance will act as the primary coverage.

Health Regulations

The *Alabama State Certificate of Immunization* 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 Certificate of Immunization on file before the first day the child attends school. The HELC will monitor expiration dates of immunizations and will remind families 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 immunization forms.* **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

(See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

Families 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 illness, family members of children directly exposed to the illness, will be alerted. A child who has a contagious illness should not return to school without a physician return note 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. Per health department recommendations, a legal guardian or their designees are expected to pick up the **child within 30 minutes** of the time they are contacted.

If your child is having surgery, they may not return to the center for at least 24-48 hours post-operation, without a release from the doctor and are able to fully participate in the program.

Illness Guidelines

Exposure to many contagious illness 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, families are expected to stay current with their child's immunizations and to strictly observe the Health Policy. Families 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, families 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. 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.
- * Stools or diarrhea that contain blood and/or mucus.
- * Vomiting 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.
- * Open sores or highly communicable rashes (Hand, Foot, and Mouth)
- * 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 and skin infections **must** be covered in order to participate in group care. If infections are contagious, the child must be cleared by a physician to return to the Center.
- * 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, without medication, for 24 hours after an illness. This would mean that a child leaving school during the day with any of the above symptoms 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. Family members 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 will be requested for any contagious illness. This measure is necessary in order to comply with state law and curtail the spread of infection. **The overall 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 legal guardian 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 a family member to 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 and on HELC website for families 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 Celebration 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 family member, 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. The center does not give cow's milk to infants younger than 12 months, serves only whole milk to children ages 12-24 months and 2% to 2 and older.

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, family members 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 families 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 private space is provided for convenience and privacy for nursing individuals. **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. Families 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 breastmilk or 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 expression/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 family, 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. Families are advised to remain in a safe location until the warning is lifted. If family members arrive at the Center during the warning, they must stay in the shelter areas. **It is against DHR recommendations and the Emergency Management Agency for the Center to permit family members 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/Heat Index

During months in which air quality or high heat index is of concern, a monitoring of alerts will be done. While it has always been thought that being outside a little while each day is best for children, outside play time will either be limited or scheduled for indoors on days of air quality concerns and high heat index alerts. Family members are highly discouraged from leaving idling vehicles in the parking lot.

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 a 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. Regular fire drills are conducted to prepare staff and children for an emergency situation.

School Cast Notification System

HELC uses the *School Cast* notification system to notify families of important information and closures. Family 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. Please make sure your contact number and e-mail address are kept current in the *School Cast* system, with the front office and classroom.

Emergency Plan

In case of loss of water, power, heat in cold weather, or air conditioning in hot weather, families 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 6th Avenue and 14th 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, families 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 are kept current in the *School Cast* system. 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, disability, or veteran status. 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

(See updated COVID-19 Policy for further specifications)

Children three years of age and older who are enrolled in the Center may participate in planned field trips and other organized activities within walking distance. 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 a legal guardian is required for a child to participate in field trips. This form informs families of the destination, date and time of the trip. *A child's family member is required to attend if the child is not potty trained.*

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 families 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 family member'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 (See Appendix D).

Student Engagement/Guidance

Student engagement is the primary vehicle in reducing behavioral issues within the classroom. The classroom environment, along with the curriculum and instructional practices, are designed to increase student engagement. An engaged and excited learner reduces opportunities to deviate from positive behavioral choices. Teachers will use positive strategies to guide children in developing self-control, agency, and autonomy to promote the child's ability to positively engage with peers and adults, as well as navigate conflict in healthy and positive ways.

Teachers are expected to develop meaningful relationships with students and to include students in conversations about how to positively interact with peers, adults, and the environment. Priority is placed on developing students' capacities for autonomy as well as the ability to problem-solve and self-regulate. Educators are expected to facilitate conversations, when possible, with students surrounding feelings, choices, and future actions, including alternative choices. Conflict is a necessary and important part of students opportunities to learn compassion, understanding, and self-regulation. Teachers will work with children to help them identify the problem, discuss feelings, and possible alternative behaviors. The goal in the resolution of all conflicts is to help the child see how choices may affect himself and others, as well as create a joint-plan for alternative behaviors moving forward. If challenging behavior persist, teachers will include family members and professionals, as needed, in order to develop an individualized plan to address the behavior and promote the child's success within the classroom.

Certain punitive measures in group care settings are prohibited by the Center. These include: 1) using any sort of physical punishment including hitting, spanking, swatting or shaking as well as coercion/forcing a child to perform an action; 2) psychological abuse including 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 or restraining a child unless necessary to protect the child and others from harm. While it is acknowledged that families 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 child) while within the Center. Teachers and Directors are eager to discuss issues of guidance and will help families to extend accepted practices to other settings.

Discontinuation of Services

If a problem or concern occurs with a child's behavior or development, the family, teachers, and directors will work together to develop a plan of intervention. Plans will vary according to the age, developmental level and 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 and ability to fully participate in the regular classroom activities. If additional services are needed, **it is expected that families will allow professionals to be included in an intervention plan** (See Developmental Assessment p. 9).

It is advised that children who are exhibiting difficult behaviors spend more one-on-one time with adult family members or significant adults in their lives and less time in group care (less than 9 hours a day).

The goal of any child engagement and guidance policy is to promote the full participation of the child within his or her classroom. This is a solutions-oriented effort to accommodate all children within the program. However, if in the sole opinion of the Harris Early Learning Center, a child's developmental needs are beyond the scope of what the Harris ELC is able to offer or if a child continues to exhibit unacceptable or inappropriate behavior after working through the developmental assessment plan, 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 and in compliance with federal and state civil rights laws. The Center will, to the extent possible, help families receive appropriate accommodations for placement of their child. 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 the other children in a class. In addition, while working with children to develop appropriate academic and 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 or others.

Harris Early Learning Center also reserves the right to discontinue services if the Family of Code of Conduct has been violated.

Supervision Policy

The care and supervision of young children is of utmost importance. Infants, toddlers and young twos will be supervised by sight and sound at all times by the teachers in the classroom. In order to do so, teachers will position themselves so that all children awake or asleep can be heard and observed. This level of supervision is also expected on the playgrounds. Mirrors, video and sound monitors are not used as aids to take the place of actual supervision by the adults caring for the children in a classroom.

While sight and sound at all times is the goal, teachers who supervise preschoolers (ages 3-5) will do so by sight and/or sound for short periods of time as necessary. Such circumstances might include a child in the restroom, participating in wet room activities or placing an item in their folder or cubby. At these times, teachers will frequently check on the child/children who are out of sight.

Infant Sleep 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 infants younger than 12 months 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.**

If infants arrive to the program asleep (ex: car seat), or fall asleep, in equipment not specifically designed for infant sleep (ex: bouncer), the infant will be removed and placed in their crib. Soft items (ex: blankets, “lovey”, “wubbanub”, etc.) will not be allowed in cribs or any sleep equipment for infants under 12 months.

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 family concerns and willing to consider various ways to meet the needs of children and families. Because communication is sometimes not easy, a family member 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 his or 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.

HELC Website

www.HarrisELC.org.

Center Administration Emails

Basic inquiries/registration: info@Harriselc.org

Dr. Mariah Weber, Director of Teacher Training and Outreach: Mariah.Weber@auburn.edu

Diana Blackwell, Director of Children's Programs: DBlackwell@Auburn.edu

Lesia Harris, Fiscal Manager: cjh0032@auburn.edu

Vickie Wiley, Human Resources Liaison: vow0001@auburn.edu

Zach Flowers, Facilities Manager: Email TBD

Appendix A
Celebration Guidelines
Developed by the Family Representative Group

The input and involvement of our families is invaluable to the children's education. Parties are a fun way for family members 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, families 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 child's immediate family members may attend or have the teacher serve the snacks during the afternoon snack time. If the family sends party favors and attend the party, the family members 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. **Families should refrain from bringing additional family members and friends to school parties.**

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 family 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.

Holiday Activities and Celebrations

HELIC 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 families, students, and staff members donate toward this effort. In each classroom, families and teachers may work together to host a holiday activity, event, or celebration which will not disrupt the class schedule. Families are asked to help with decorations, snacks and with clean up if such a party is agreed upon. Instead of individual gifts, we encourage families 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, Family Representatives often support an HELIC outreach effort during the holiday season such as "Toys for Tots", etc. In previous years, the Pre-K4

classes, in conjunction with the Auburn Early Learning Center, have participated 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 (part of the Make a Wish Foundation).

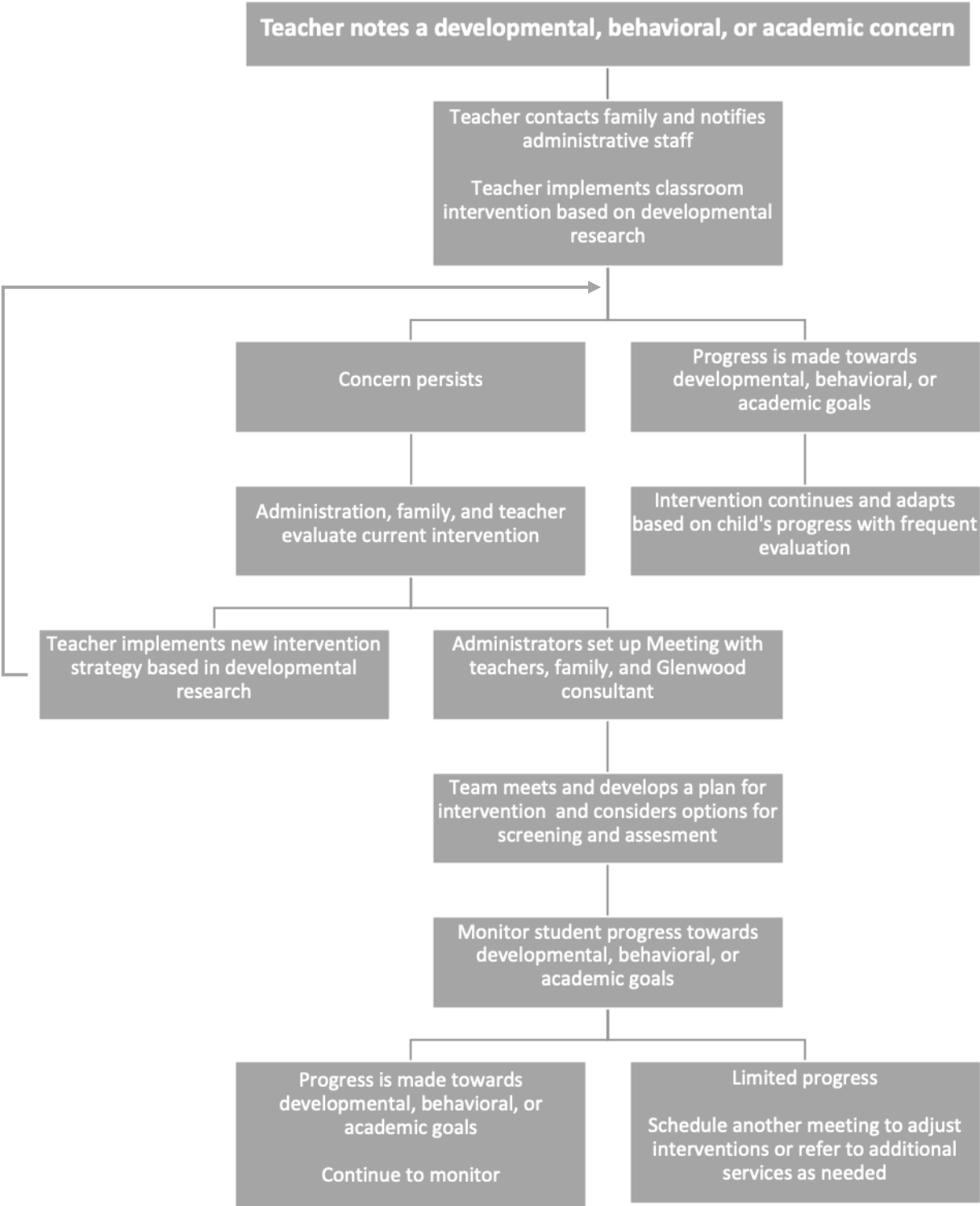
Teacher Appreciation

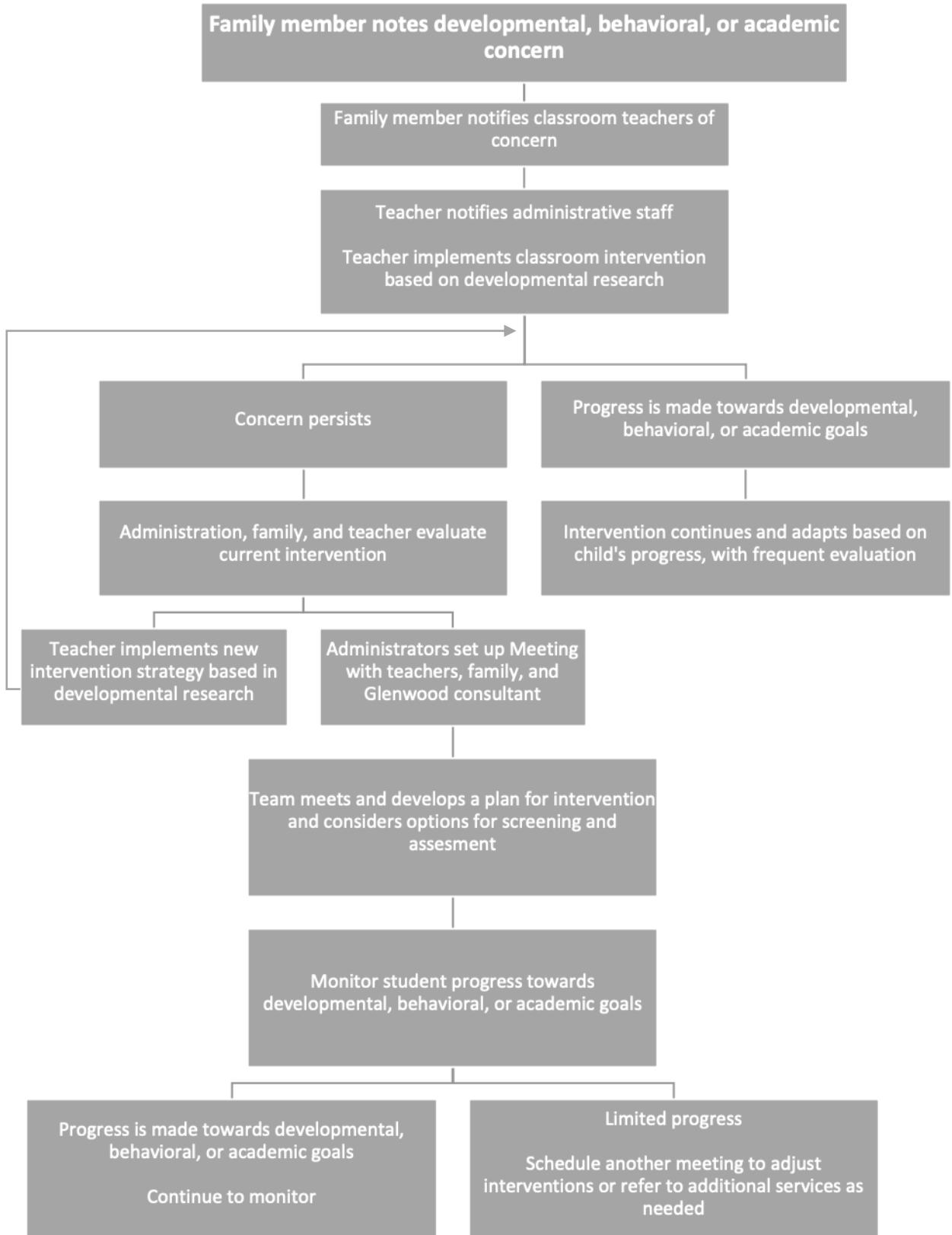
A word or note of appreciation from a family member can be a lasting source of encouragement and inspiration to your child’s teacher. Another option is to give a gift to the classroom such as, books or toys appropriate for the group. Offering a day off (TBD) for staff appreciation, celebration of a Staff Appreciation Week as well as having class sponsored snacks at the monthly staff meetings are ideas which have been used over the years for showing appreciation. The use of the Planet Fundraiser app is encourage to support center family projects in addition to donations raised in the fall (families are not asked to participate in fundraisers) which have been used to provide a monetary holiday gift for HELC employees who are not the regular classroom teaching staff (which includes; permanent substitutes, floaters, kitchen and support staff). It is the discretion of each family member individually and the family representative group as a voice for other families in their classrooms to decide how teacher/staff appreciation will be handled each year.

Other Events or Celebrations

Families should always partner with classroom teachers when planning any party or classroom activity. Family members who attend are expected to help set up, if needed, and clean up the party or activity. In addition, the class expectations should be followed at all times. Children should not be allowed to walk around with food and exhibit other behaviors, not typically acceptable during mealtimes just because there is a party, or their family members are in attendance. Family members are responsible in making sure their child follows class expectations during a celebration or field trip event. If a celebration 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 family member. HELC cannot be held responsible for the health, well-being or behavior of children during after hour activities.

**Appendix B
Developmental, Behavioral, or Academic Concerns Flow Chart**





Appendix C

Child Assessment Plan

Assessment of young children is the means by which teachers know what to plan and implement as part of their classroom teaching. The Center uses the Creative Curriculum which provides a framework for all ages enrolled in the Center as well as age/stage appropriate goals and objectives to guide teaching plans. Children are assessed on a daily basis by informal observations by the classroom teachers which can occur within both large and small group settings in addition to individually. Periodically, planned assessments such as ASQ (Ages and Stages), use of the Creative Curriculum Observational tool or skill checklists are used for a more formal verbal/written assessment by the regular classroom teachers. The results of the child assessment tools are used during semi-annual family-teacher conferences (or more, as needed), in which family members and teachers review the Creative Curriculum Family Conference Form. Families and teachers retain a signed copy of the assessment summary following each meeting.

Assessments guide both instructional planning and inform our offered family seminars. Relevant publications and information will also be available in the Center newsletters and on family information tables throughout the center. Family-teacher conferences occur twice a year (or more, as needed). When it is discerned that a more in-depth assessment of a child is necessary, varied contracted groups (noted below) are utilized for this purpose. Consent from a legal guardian is received for such assessments and screenings and follow-up therapy sessions are conducted at the Center and typically include toys and playful scenarios so that children are comfortable participating. No child will be coerced to participate if they are exhibiting resistance or stressful behaviors during the screening.

- Focus First vision screening offered each fall (all ages allowed/ targeted for 2's and up)
- Child's Play Therapy for speech, hearing, occupational therapy (ages 3-4)
- Glenwood, Inc. psychologist for assessment of varied developmental and learning needs
- Early Intervention as necessary for varied developmental concerns (ages birth-age 3)

Appendix D

HELC Child Abuse Policy

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

The safety of our children is our primary concern. We are taking positive steps to prevent child abuse from occurring by seeking quality faculty, conducting thorough background checks of all employees, inviting families or other authorized persons into our building, and using a classroom concept that allows for clear visibility. The placement of two employees in each room and the use of the Center monitoring system are additional means for keeping staff safe from false accusations as well as children safe from abuse. In addition, we have a legal obligation to report suspected child abuse. As a result of these measures, we believe that child abuse will be rare. However, if allegations of child abuse occur without immediate substantiated proof, the following steps may be initiated without delay:

- The accused employee may be placed on a leave while the incident is being investigated.
- Upon completion of the investigation, the employee will be reinstated or terminated.

In the event of a substantiated child abuse incident witnessed by a third party, (i.e., witnessed by several employees or family member(s), video, etc.), the employee may be terminated immediately.

If any employee has reason to believe that a child under his/her supervision has been subject to child abuse, this must be reported immediately to the Center Directors. Failure to report suspected child abuse may result in termination.

The Center cannot and will not attempt to override the employee's duty as a mandated reporter to report suspected abuse/neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention Policy, initiated October 25, 2001 follows. All employees are required to sign the acknowledgement form for this policy and abide by its guidelines.

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

PURPOSE: It is the purpose and intent of the Harris Early Learning Center (the "Center") to provide safe, secure environment to teach and care for the infants, toddlers and preschoolers ("children") in its program.

GOAL: Our goal is to protect children from abuse, child molestation, or any type of inappropriate behavior by employees, outside researchers and educational participants and also to protect employees, outside researchers and educational participants from false accusations.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE: As stated in the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and Nighttime Centers Regulations and Procedures prescribed by the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources: "the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 26-14-1, abuse is defined as harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare. Harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare can occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation. 'Sexual abuse' includes the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in any sexual explicit conduct or any simulation of the conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of the conduct;

or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children or incest with children as those acts are defined by Alabama law. 'Sexual exploitation' includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution and allowing, permitting, encouraging or engaging in the obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child for commercial purposes. Neglect is defined as negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, medical treatment, supervision, clothing or shelter."

The policy and procedure set forth below will apply to all people who provide supervision or have contact with children in Center facilities or Center sponsored activities.

This policy will address areas that are critical for the protection of the children, our employees and our Center: selection process, protection policy, responses, to allegations and reporting procedures.

I. Selection Process

A. Employee- anyone who is paid by the Center (either directly or through sponsoring Institutional funds) on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with children.

New employee screening steps:

1. Complete a confidential application form
2. Complete a consent to release confidential information
3. Formal interview by a director
4. Records check authorization form
5. References checked and verified
6. Letter from State of Alabama stating "meets the suitability" criteria under State statute

All records, forms and reports will become a part of the employee's confidential personnel file.

B. Outside Researchers and Educational Participants- anyone (i.e. student observer, intern, researcher) working with a sponsoring institution who has been assigned to the Center to conduct research on children is required to have the following:

- Certification available from sponsoring institution that all background checks have been completed and the researcher or educational participant has been found to meet the suitability criteria for working with children at the Center.

II. Protection Policy

Two Adults

Reasonable effort will be made to have two (2) adult workers present, or nearby, with children during Center activities. Reasonable effort will be made to assure that one adult is not left alone with a child.

The video camera observation system may be utilized to serve as the second worker under certain limited circumstances.

View Windows/Open Doors

Reasonable effort will be made to place children in rooms with unobstructed view windows or open doors for all teaching/learning activities.

Security Policies

The Center has detailed, working security procedures and that should be consistently followed. All employees shall abide by the security procedures as well as any other applicable age-specific guidelines. Questions about these security procedures should be directed to a Center director.

III. Responses to Allegations and Reporting Procedures

Abuse will not be tolerated and will be grounds for discipline. All reports will be taken seriously and appropriate action taken. Observed, suspected or reported child abuse, child molestation, or any type of inappropriate behavior should be reported immediately to a Center director. All Center employees will be trained on recognizing signs of child sexual and physical abuse. Reporting abuse is mandatory and failing to do so may result in disciplinary action. It should be understood that neglecting the obligation to report abuse could have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, anyone having reasonable cause to suspect abuse should talk with a Center director to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child. However, reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes.

**RECEIPT OF 2021-2022 FAMILY HANDBOOK
FAMILY MEMBER ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Please read the Family Handbook carefully. If you have any questions regarding any policy or procedure, bring it to the attention of a Center Director or one of our administrative personnel. It is essential that family members 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 2021-2022 Family Handbook and agree to the terms herein.

SIGNED: _____
Legal Guardian's Signature/ date

Legal Guardian's Signature/ date

Child's Name- Please Print