



Family Handbook

2024-25 School Year

ST. MARK
earlystART

St. Mark Center

2008 E. 12th Street

Kansas City, MO 64127

(816) 994-5400

Hours: 7:00 AM - 5:30 PM



Brand Manifesto

Here, we believe encouragement has the exponential power to generate success.

Here, we believe art creates equality.

Here, we believe that art is for everyone.

The young. The neighbor. The visitor. Everyone.

Here, we believe in the inherent value of making a mess.

Here, we believe a better future walks through our door every day-and that future deserves love, attention and the occasional fresh box of crayons.

Here, we believe in equal opportunity-and that opportunity can be given in something as complex as a multi-stage syllabus or as simple as a smile.

Here, we believe we are shaping the world as we dream it to be.

earlystART

EMBRACE WONDER



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Mission

EarlystART's mission is to provide opportunities and support to families for the promotion of the community and personal empowerment to enhance their quality of life. Our mission is to promote the wellbeing, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children in our community and our center, by providing quality early childhood education in a stimulating and developmentally appropriate environment while supporting their families.

Philosophy

Children learn best through hands-on experiences and discoveries that stimulate their curiosity and creativity. All children learn literacy concepts through multiple opportunities in their play activities. In our programs you will find all types of writing instruments in the writing area, in the house area, and in the block areas. These activities are supported through our curriculum, *Project Construct*. We also believe in the importance of exposing children to music/movement, storytelling, dance, and the visual arts. The arts encourage experiences that foster positive self-images and social competence. With the arts as an integral part of all children's experiences, the curriculum, whether it involves writing, letter recognition, numbers and languages, is experienced through storytelling, singing, dance, sculpture, and painting.

Program Goals

Our goal is to promote the social competence of every child and to empower families. It works with the whole family to create the best possible experience for the child's optimum growth and social development. It is EarlystART's goal to increase the family's skills in dealing with day-to-day tasks, as needed. To realize these goals, our organization meets the national Head Start Performance Standards which:

- 1) Promote a child's cognitive, creative, physical and social development and multi-ethnic cultural awareness.
- 2) Provide a safe, stable, and responsive program in which parents may place their child for care and early education.
- 3) Increase the family's positive approach toward their child's future health care and physical development.
- 4) Support a child's self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity, and self-discipline.
- 5) Enhance the child's mental processes, and conceptual and communication skills.
- 6) Support the family member's relationships with each other and with others in their community.
- 7) Enhance a sense of dignity and self-worth within the child and the family.

Our Curriculum

At EarlystART, our distinctive approach blends Project Construct with the Arts, sparking each child's innate curiosity. We encourage creative expression and foster each child's social competence, support learning through play, and forge strong home-school connections.

Project Construct is a play-based approach that addresses four areas of development: social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. We work to develop the whole child through teacher-led, small- and large-group activities centered on interest areas such as blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, sand and water, music and movement, cooking, computers, and outdoors.

Our teachers do all of this in our one-of-a-kind arts-infused environment that touches all aspects of learning while also engaging families in the learning process. In turn, our students become enthusiastic, independent, and inquisitive learners as they march to their own beats and do what works for them!

We utilize the Project construct framework as one of the guides for children's learning and development. Project Construct balances both teacher-directed and child-initiated learning, with an emphasis on responding to children's learning styles and building on their strengths and interests. Through active learning, young children construct knowledge that helps them make sense of their world. As children follow their intentions, they engage in creative ongoing interactions with people, materials, and ideas that promote emotional, cognitive, social, physical, and linguistic growth. Children learn from active, intentional, and meaningful play. The following areas are promoted by Project Construct:

- ▶ Social and Emotional Skills
- ▶ Physical Development (gross and fine motor)
- ▶ Language
- ▶ Cognitive
- ▶ Literacy
- ▶ Mathematics
- ▶ Science and Technology
- ▶ Social Studies
- ▶ The Arts
- ▶ English Language Acquisition
- ▶ Positive Adult-Child Interactions

Along with Project Construct, some teachers have been trained in and are beginning to use The Project Approach. The Project Approach refers to a set of teaching strategies which enable teachers to guide children through in-depth studies of real world topics. A project is defined as an in-depth investigation of a real-world topic worthy of children's attention and effort. Teachers observe children to see what they are interested in. They use this knowledge to plan discussions and investigations. When children have

knowledge, and are interested in the topic, they engage and learn incredible things.

EarlystART Arts Artist Residencies connect students and their families to art experiences provided by Kansas City visual and performing artists., family engagement opportunities and community performances and events that serve the neighborhoods surrounding our locations.

Parents are encouraged to ask the teachers about the curriculum and the activities and experiences that they plan for children. Teachers will share detailed information with you about the curriculum when meeting with you for home visits and parent/teacher conferences. Please feel free to review your child's parent board for more information about the curriculum.

Conscious Discipline is a social emotional curriculum.

Staff will use Conscious Discipline on a daily basis as a tool for classroom management and to help children learn to manage their own behaviors. Staff will also utilize "I Love You" Rituals, "Wish You Well Ritual" and "Welcome Back Ritual" with students, teachers, and guests.

We understand that children vary in their level of ability to control their own behavior. Young children are generally active, inquisitive, and eager to try new experiences. It is the responsibility of adults to guide children in this process by setting clear limits and expectations, redirecting behavior, enforcing consequences and modeling expected behavior. By establishing expectations that are age appropriate; providing a consistent and supportive environment; anticipating and eliminating potential problems, we discourage undesirable behaviors.

The following is EarlystART Guidance and Discipline Policy:

EarlystART staff will provide positive guidance strategies to respond to children in an appropriate and consistent manner. EarlystART will only use positive strategies that are consistently implemented in the classroom to help children manage their own behavior. Staff may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child. Conscious Discipline will be the main form of discipline and guidance used at EarlystART. This policy is in place to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion and any other exclusionary measures. EarlystART acknowledges and complies with federal and state civil rights laws.

All staff interacting with children will use a variety of positive behavior management techniques to prevent and minimize children's challenging behaviors. Techniques may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Planning and consistently implementing predictable routines
- b. Creating, posting, and following simple classroom rules
- c. Greeting each child and family member daily by name
- d. Consistently modeling appropriate behavior (e.g. kindness, cooperative behavior, and respect)
- e. Using proximity to ensure children are actively engaged in positive activities and experiences
- f. Scanning and moving about the room regularly to anticipate supervision needs
- g. Communicating and planning as a team for supervision of all children during all types of activities (small groups, large groups, transitions, interest areas, toileting, naps, etc.)
- h. Planning transitions with limited wait time .
- i.

Acceptable guidance techniques include, but are not limited to:

- a. Guiding children by setting clear, consistent limits for behavior. Preschool children (threes to fives) will help frame these limits by setting classroom rules that foster fairness and respect for self, others, and property, helping children understand the reason for each rule.
- b. Stating the expected behavior to children. (e.g. "Use your walking feet" instead of "Don't run".)
- c. Safety is first. If the child is acting in a way that is unsafe; redirect behavior, employ calming techniques, and/or describe appropriate behavior.
- d. Being observant and heading-off problems before they escalate. Look for warning signs that a child is having difficulty (i.e. enters classroom angry, upset, or crying; unhappy facial expression; shifting quickly between activities; raised voice; etc.). Take the child to a quiet area to see if he/she will voice what is wrong. If possible, stay with the child until he/she calms down or redirect the child to an activity that will interest him/her.
- e. Viewing a child's inappropriate behavior as an opportunity to model, teach, and help the child develop self-regulation of appropriate socialization skills.
- f. Teachers, providers, and other staff will coach children to express their feelings verbally and solve problems with others by using their words. Staff will be available to assist children whenever situations arise that require this type of intervention.
- g. Having consistent routines, which are also posted in a language the child can "read" and are followed daily. Children are told ahead of time when there are changes in the daily schedule. Children are told what is going to happen as well as expectations for their behavior.
- h. Offering a final choice if a child continues to test the limits. (e.g. "Chairs are for sitting. If you continue to climb on the chairs, you will have to leave this area.")

Staff are prohibited from using negative and punitive actions to control children's behavior. Use of the following (but not limited to) are prohibited:

Any action that inflicts bodily harm, pain, or damage to a child including, but not limited to: hitting, slapping, twisting, squeezing, grabbing, pinching, pulling, pushing, spanking, yanking, shaking, biting, any kind of rough-handling, excessive physical exercise, excessive rest, strenuous or bizarre postures.

1. Negative adult responses: yelling, belittling, name calling, ridiculing, shaming, blaming, insulting, threatening, or other forms of abusive language in relation to the child or family members
2. Any form of emotional abuse including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child
3. Compelling a child to eat or have in his/her mouth food, soap, spices, or any foreign substance as a form of punishment
4. Exposure to extreme temperatures
5. Withholding of food, access to the bathroom, or gross motor/outdoor play
6. Frightening or humiliating punishment, including threats of physical punishment
7. Abusive, sarcastic, or profane language
8. Physical restraint without prior written parental permission, an individualized plan, and documented staff training
9. Isolation or placing a child in an adjacent room, hallway, closet, darkened area, play area, or any other space where a child cannot be seen or supervised
10. Binding or tying to restrict movement (including a car seat or infant equipment)
11. Toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child

Families will not be permitted to use the above techniques with their children while on the premises.

Aggressive Behavior

Children who exhibit aggressive behaviors may not know how to express their feelings in constructive ways. A child's aggressive physical behavior may include, but not be limited to, biting, hitting, scratching, pushing, kicking, and grabbing. Verbal behavior may include, but not be limited to, swearing, threats, and name calling. Teachers will document the child's aggressive behaviors, share behavior concerns with the child's family and define and implement intervention strategies.

School Readiness Goals

EarlystART strives to ensure all children meet the following school readiness goals prior to their transition to kindergarten.

Goal 1: Approaches to Learning Children will be curious, take initiative, be creative, progress in problem-solving skills, and persist in their interactions with materials, activities, and peers and adults.

Goal 2: Social and Emotional Development Children will gain knowledge of themselves and their feelings as well as feelings of others. Children will engage in and maintain positive relationships and interactions with peers and adult.

Goal 3: Language and Literacy Children (including those with dual languages) will build expressive and receptive language skills for conversation, communication, and literacy in developmentally appropriate ways along with concepts of print, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and emergent writing.

Goal 4: Cognition, including Math and Science Children will use math and science regularly and in everyday routines to acquire skills in number sense, counting and cardinality, classification, number operations, patterning, measurement, analyzing data, spatial relationships, and identify, compare, compose and decompose shapes; explore cause and effect relationships, describe and record observations and investigations of objects (both living and nonliving), develop capacity to understand objects and events in the natural world, and analyze results and draw conclusions.

Goal 5: Physical Development and Health Children will demonstrate control of small and large muscles for movement, navigation, and balance and acquire knowledge of healthy and safe living, including personal care routines.

Goal 6: History and Social Science Children will learn about the expectations of social situations, how to participate within a group/community, conflict resolution, the relationship between people and the environment in which they live, and a sense of time and place.

Goal 7: Visual and Performing Arts Children will show interest, explore, and represent in four areas of artistic expression: visual art, music, drama, and dance.

Inclusion Program

We are an inclusion program. We accept children of all ability levels. We make every effort to ensure that transitions into the centers are productive and successful for all children, including children with disabilities. We work closely with MARC and the local education agencies to ensure that children receive the services they need to be successful. We also work closely with parents to make sure that you are an advocate for the rights of your child. Some children have special needs for which an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) may be developed. The teacher will incorporate the IEP or IFSP goals into the weekly classroom activities and experiences.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SERVICES

Health Screenings

We are a comprehensive early childhood program that provides screening for all areas of a child's growth. Our program conducts hearing, vision, height, and weight assessments, along with hemoglobin testing, blood pressure, lead and dental screenings. The results from screenings provide information to the family and the family advocates will assist the family and determine if a referral is needed.

Developmental Screening and Referral Process

Each child is screened using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) or Preschool Observation Form (PKOF). Additionally, each parent will complete the social emotional screener, the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) at the time of enrollment. These are a reliable and valid developmental screening instrument given within 45 days of enrollment. The purpose for the developmental screening is to get baseline information on your child's development for planning in the classroom. The result of the screening is shared with the family. If a parent refuses to allow their child to participate in developmental screening, written documentation of refusal

If there are any areas of concern, the teacher will meet with you to discuss next steps and to develop strategies to promote growth in the concerned area(s) for both school and home. If the team (teacher, and the EarlystART staff) decides that further screening is needed to assist the child's growth in the concerned area(s), we will have a parent meeting to discuss the areas of concern. During that meeting, you would have the option to fill out a Request for Intervention form from our partner agency. The partner agency staff contact the appropriate school district to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of your child. The family plays a vital role in the entire process and their input will always be encouraged.

Child Assessments

Assessments are formally completed three times a year on all children using DRDP digitally housed on Learning Genie. The teachers collect children's work samples, photos, and observation notes continuously to create a comprehensive portfolio.

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This information is shared with parents during parent/teacher conferences and at educational home visits.

Medical and Dental

Each child enrolled must have a physical and dental examination completed annually. If you do not have a medical or dental provider, our staff will assist you in obtaining one. Your EarlystART Family Advocate will also work with you to obtain follow-up medical or

dental care, when necessary.

If your child has a health need that must be monitored by staff, you will be required to get documentation from their physician on a form that will be given to you before your child attends the center. We will also create a Classroom-Individual Care Plan with you and the classroom teachers. This plan will be kept in the classroom to assist teachers in meeting your child's needs.

Nutrition and Child Care Food Program

Meals are prepared to meet the nutritional requirements of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program and in compliance with Head Start Performance Standards. Arrangements may be made for all infants, toddlers, and children who have any special foods or dietary needs. This plan will be individualized and agreed upon on a case by case basis.

We encourage children's independence and decision-making by practicing family-style dining. We allow children to help set the table, serve themselves, and choose the food and amount they want to eat.

Children are encouraged to take small portions of all foods but not forced. More food is available on the table for a designated time if a child wants more. During family-style dining, staff, parents, and volunteers model social skills, proper table manners, the use of utensils, and positive eating habits by sitting and eating with the children, taking small portions, and being willing to try new foods.

For any child with any allergies/ food restrictions, the parents will follow the procedures of getting documentation from their child's primary care physician stating what the child can and cannot have. We will work with the Kitchen Coordinator to ensure that the substitutes are being made for your child. Families are given a menu, along with the monthly newsletter, so that you are aware of what we are serving.

The Family Advocate will give all classrooms an Allergy/Medication List with the children's food allergies and other medical information to ensure that everyone who cares for your child is aware. The Allergy/ Medication List is updated as needed. This information is confidential and posted in the classroom with a cover sheet.

Transition between Classrooms and to Kindergarten

EarlyStart recognizes the importance of providing children with an effective transition process to maintain developmental gains they have achieved. We will provide you with information and/or workshops on school readiness and potential questions to ask as a

family of a kindergartener.

With commitments from community partners, families, and ongoing communication with the local school district, it is our goal that each child and family unit is supported and ready to enter kindergarten.

When it is time for a child to transition to a new classroom, the family will be informed in a timely manner the classrooms and meet the teachers.

Children will be transferred to his or her new classroom based on their developmental level, not just because they have turned a certain age. The family advocate will meet with the family to plan the transition process and discuss any questions and/or concerns that they may have about the process.

Continuity of care is utilized in the infant and toddler rooms. Caregivers move with their children to new rooms for their first three years.

Parent Committee Meeting and Policy Council

The Parent Committee meetings are held at the center location. An elected group of Parent Committee Officers facilitates and plans the meeting each month. All families who currently have a child(ren) enrolled at the centers are parent committee members. The meetings involve planning for center activities and specialized training for families.

At MARC Head Start, the Head Start Policy Council is made up of parents and community representatives who participate in the policy, budget-planning, and decision-making processes of the local Head Start Grantee. EarlystART has two parent representatives each fiscal year to represent the center at monthly Policy Council meetings. The Policy Council serves as a link between Head Start, parents, partners, and other stakeholders.

The Policy Council has the opportunity to initiate suggestions and ideas for program improvements and to receive information regarding action taken and recommendations.

Parents who serve on the Policy Council and other committees are elected at the Center level. If you want to know more about serving on a committee or the Policy Council please contact your Family Advocate.

Volunteer Program

Our programs rely on parents, the community, and partnerships with other agencies for a skilled and diverse volunteer pool. Volunteers provide a wide range of services and support that helps children and their families.

When volunteering in the classroom, it greatly enhances the adult-child interactions. Classroom volunteers read stories, extend children's play, and support children's involvement in various activities in learning centers.

All regularly scheduled volunteers undergo background clearances and are oriented to appropriate interactions with children. You will be asked to sign the volunteer in-kind form each time you and/or a family member spends time in the classroom assisting the teachers and/or interacting with the children. Volunteers do not work alone with children. They must be with and supervised by regularly scheduled teaching staff at all times.

Volunteers are always welcome. We are a state-licensed facility; therefore, siblings cannot be in the classrooms with those volunteers due to safety reasons. Please arrange for childcare for your children when visiting your child's classroom. If you have any questions, please feel free to give the Volunteer Coordinator a call at (816)994-5400.

Parent/Teacher Conferences and Education Home Visits

Our teachers will conduct **two** Parent/Teacher Conferences and **two** Home Visits Each school year with each child's family. Teachers will share current information related to your child's growth and development and written assessments reports.

Together, the family and teacher will establish learning goals for the child and give input into the curriculum. These meetings give families the opportunity to ask questions or express concerns about how assessment methods will meet their child's needs. Families may also discuss any concerns about the classroom, and the school at this time.

Morning Arrival

It is highly recommended that all families ensure their child(ren) are present in their classroom no later than 8:00 am daily. Parents will be required to sign in/out their child(ren) using the KinderConnect kiosk. KinderConnect serves the purpose of maintaining precise attendance records for your child, thus guaranteeing their safety. Children will be marked as tardy at 8:30 am. It is crucial that you exert every effort to ensure your child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the day of learning ahead. Please ensure your child gets adequate rest the night before. Should your child be arriving late, it is essential to notify the front desk of the delay by 8:00 am. This will enable the teachers to make necessary arrangements for their arrival. If no prior notification is given and you bring your child in late, you will be required to wait until any ongoing transitions are completed. For instance, if the class is outside on the playground, your child can join them upon their return indoors. Moreover, if you arrive after 11, we kindly request that you wait until after lunch and nap time at 2:30, as we have not adequately prepared for your child's arrival and it may disrupt the learning environment. In the event that your child consistently arrives late, your Family Advocate will arrange a meeting with you to establish an attendance improvement plan. Our objective is to ensure that all

children partake in the various experiences offered throughout each day to support their growth and development.

For some, this will be the first time your child has separated from you for any length of time. This may be a stressful time for you and your child. Even some returning students may have a little anxiety and some separation issues for a short time. Try to establish a routine of saying goodbye with your child. Making it fairly quick and not drawing it out will make it easier both for you and your child. If you are having a problem, please alert a teacher to help. Usually, if there are tears when you leave, they clear up quickly right after you depart. Please feel free to call us if you wonder how your child is adjusting. We hope to make transitions and separation as easy as possible for both of you.

If your child has a doctor's appointment before school, you will need to contact the center's receptionist, so it can be documented that your child will be late due to a health appointment. You **MUST** present a doctor's statement upon arrival. If your child has an afternoon appointment, bring them in at the regular scheduled time and pick them up in time to get them to their appointment.

All parents and children must enter and exit the building through the main entrance. Children may not be dropped off or picked up from an outside entrance. To ensure each child's safety, parents must accompany their child to the **classroom**. All centers open at 7:00am. Core program hours are 8:00am - 3:00pm and children should not be dropped off before 8:00am, if they are not enrolled in wrap-around care. Head Start and Charter room children who arrive early can wait in the front hallway with their parents until time to go to their classroom.

Attendance and Chronic Absences

Regular attendance is essential for each child's progress. Children must maintain 90% attendance per month. Parents must call the center to report why their child is absent and how long they may be out. If a child falls below the attendance percentage, the Family Advocate along with the Early Learning and Inclusion Director will meet with the parent to discuss the barriers preventing the child's attendance. If the child is found to be consistently absent, the family will be placed on an attendance plan. If the contract is violated, the child may be in jeopardy of losing their enrollment in EarlyStart.

Communication with Families

Communication with families happens both formally and informally. Information regarding center activities, program updates, progress towards learning goals, and parent meetings are shared using the following methods:

- Parent/Teacher Conferences (twice a year, minimum)
- Home Visits (twice a year, minimum)

- Newsletters (monthly)
- ProCare
- Incident/Accident reports
- Program Calendar (annually, as needed for change)
- Informational/Event Flyers (as needed)
- Parent Boards (in each classroom)
- Phone Calls (as needed)
- EarlystART Website (www.EarlystARTkc.org)
- Email News (as needed)
- Text and Voice Messaging (as needed)
- Parent Committee Meetings (monthly)
- Minutes from Parent and Policy Committee Minutes (monthly)

Families, you have access to each classroom's phone line allowing you to contact the child's teacher as needed. Please keep in mind that when teachers are in the classroom with the children, it is important that they are actively engaged with children.

Program Standards

We use the Missouri Accreditation, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards, Head Start Performance Standards, and Missouri Childcare Licensing Regulations to determine how program activities are delivered. These standards and regulations provide the focus for all monitoring activities. The following are areas that are monitored:

- Early Childhood Development and Education
- Health and Safety
- Health Services (mental health and dental health)
- Disabilities Services
- Family Services

GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Since October 1973, EarlystART has been licensed by The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. The state monitors our center periodically for compliance with safety and health regulations. Licensure rules are available upon request for your review.

At the enrollment appointment the Family Advocate will conduct a personal interview with the parent and child to exchange information and arrive at a mutual decision about admitting the child into the program. The family will sign a code of conduct and discuss a plan for ongoing communication.

Each family is required by Missouri Child Care licensing to complete the Missouri Department of Health and Human Services Food and Nutrition Assistance Child Care Enrollment Form for each child prior to attendance. Additionally, each child enrolled is required to have up to date immunizations and a physical examination.

In the event a child has allergies, food restriction or any other special circumstance the Family Advocate will guide the family to obtain an Individual Care Plan, Medical Statement to request Special Meals/or Accommodations. If a child has an Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) or Individual Educational Plan (IEP) the enrollment team, the education team, the family and possibly the child's therapists will meet to develop a plan to ensure the child's needs are properly met while in the program.

Required Immunizations for Entry

	0-2 month	3-4 months	5-6 months	7-18 months	19 months to Kindergarten Entry
DTAP/DT	N/A	1	2	3	4+
POLIO	N/A	1	2	2	3+
HIB	N/A	1	1+	2+	3+
HEPB	1	1+	2	2+	3+
PCV	N/A	1	2	3	4+
MMR	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
VAR	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 or proof of disease

Medication at Center

The following steps outline the center's medicine policy:

- I. Families must fill out a licensure Medication Authorization Form completely.
- II. Medicine will be given to the child only by staff who have been trained in how to administer medication.
- III. The parent or legal guardian must be the person who fills out the form and gives the medication to the Family Advocate or Early Learning and Inclusion Director.
- IV. All medicine must be in the original container and labeled clearly by a pharmacist with the following information.
 - a. Child's name
 - b. Name of medicine
 - c. Dosage to be given
 - d. Method of administration
 - e. Frequency of administration
 - f. Expiration Date

The above procedures also apply to over-the-counter medication (including fever-reducer). All over-the-counter oral medication will not be given without a physician's consent. A copy of the parental and physician's consents will be placed in the child's master file and a copy of the Medication Authorization form will be kept in the child's classroom. Additionally, parents will be notified if the child has an adverse reaction, or has any problems related to the medication and be asked to pick up their child from school.

* All medication cups and/or syringe must match the recommended dosage.

Please note that no medication will be given to any child if it does not meet the above criteria.

Confidentiality

All information that is shared about your child and family will be kept confidential. The only information that will be shared with outside partners is done so with your prior approval. As a partner with MARC Head Start, all our Early Head Start and Head Start children's information will be shared for monitoring purposes and to ensure that quality services are being provided to families. Also, as a partner with the KC Pre-K Cooperative, all of our charter-affiliated children's information will be shared for monitoring purposes and to ensure that quality services are being provided to families.

Discrimination Policy

EarlyStart does not discriminate in its enrollment or employment practices based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, citizenship, ancestry, disability, status as a veteran, or HIV/AIDS infection status.

Illness and Exclusion

EarlyStart staff will observe all children for communicable diseases and other signs of illness on arrival and throughout the day. Your child must not attend school if any of the following signs and/or symptoms are present:

- Severe headache and stiff neck
- More than one diarrhea stool
- Gray or white stool
- Severe coughing
- Difficulty or rapid breathing (especially if the infant is under six months)
- Yellowish skin or eyes,
- Pink Eye (tears, redness of eyelid lining, irritation, swelling or discharge of pus)
- Unusual spots and/or rash
- Sore throat
- Infected skin patch(es)
- Vomiting more than once
- Severe itching of the body and/or scalp
- Itching of the scalp due to the appearance of lice and or nits
- A fever of 100 degrees or above by mouth or 99 degrees under the arm

As licensed centers by the state of Missouri, we are not allowed to have a child participate in class activities if any of the above signs and/or symptoms are present. **Your child must be free from fever, diarrhea, and/or vomiting for 24 hours before returning to the center unless otherwise noted by a licensed physician.** If your child has a communicable disease, they must have a signed physician's release form before they can return to class. Each child's family will be notified immediately when a communicable disease occurs in the facility.

The child will be kept in the classroom away from the other children, until someone picks up the sick child from the center. If the child needs to be out of the classroom, the teacher will inform the administrative staff. The administrative staff will get the child and take him/her to the office and keep them comfortable until they are picked up.

We ask that all families, and emergency contact persons respond immediately when you are called concerning your child's illness. If you must send someone who is not on your child's emergency release form, the family must call the center to give the person's full name. They must bring a driver's license or some other legal form of picture identification, in order for the child to be released.

Nap/Rest Time

Nap/rest time will be encouraged for all children. If a child does not want to rest on their cot after thirty minutes, they will be allowed to get up to play in a quiet area until nap/rest time is over, according to the daily schedule.

EarlyStart provides a sheet and blanket for your child's cot or crib. Sheets and blankets are laundered on-site weekly.

Tooth Brushing/Oral Health

Good oral health for infants, toddlers, and preschool children serves as a precursor to adult oral health and is essential for a child's behavioral, speech, language, and overall growth and development. Our policy on tooth brushing is as follows:

- For children age two and over:
 - Once daily, after a meal, staff should assist children in brushing their teeth using a small smear of fluoride toothpaste.
- For children between one and two years of age:
 - Once daily, after a meal, staff must brush children's teeth with a soft bristled toothbrush, using a small smear of toothpaste that contains fluoride.
- For infants under the age of one:
 - Once daily, staff must wash their hands and then cover a finger with a

gauze pad or soft cloth and gently wipe the infant's gums. As a child gains teeth, brushing with a toothbrush will occur.

Emergency Drills

In each classroom and throughout the center, the facility's emergency plan for fire, tornado, intruder, earthquake, and other emergency drills are posted. Please take time to review these plans in your child's classroom. We practice fire drills monthly and one additional disaster drill of the programs choice monthly (tornado, earthquake, intruder, etc.).

In the event that a live disaster occurs our staff are trained in the above procedures in responding to emergencies. Please see the school's Early Learning and Inclusion Director for a full copy of our plan if you would like a copy.

Automobiles in the Parking lot

Please park in designated parking. It is not permissible to park in front of the building blocking the fire lane. Do not leave children in unattended cars. Please do not leave your vehicles idling in the parking lot.

Release of Child

Children will be released by the center staff to those who have been authorized for pick up on the "Child Enrollment Sheet" (must be 16+). If you are sending someone other than the individuals authorized on this sheet, you will need to call the front desk, provide the name of the person picking up and their relationship to the child. They must present picture identification to the receptionist at the time of pick up. We advise you to add everyone to the authorization list who you believe may pick up your child(ren). If staff determines that the adult picking up the child is unable to safely provide care for the child. The child will not be released to the individual.

Hall Pass

Hall pass protects students and staff from the risk of unwanted visitors or predators by instantly comparing school visitor identification data against our integrated, comprehensive database of sex offender registries throughout the United States.

Who will be required to check-in with Hall Pass?

- ✓ All visitors, volunteers and anyone who is NOT on the emergency Pick-up List of a child.
- ✓ Anyone (including parent/guardians and emergency contacts) who drop off late after 8:am.

We begin charging a late fee at 5:31pm (3:01pm if not enrolled in the wrap-around programming) regardless of circumstances. You will receive a copy of the amount you owe for your late fee at the pick-up time.

The late fee is \$8.00 for the first minute and \$1.00 for every additional 15-minute interval per child.

The parent will sign the late pick-up form and pay the appropriate fee at pick-up. If the child has not been picked-up by 6:30pm and there has been no contact with the family or individuals listed on the emergency contact form, the child will be considered **neglected**. At that time, with the approval of the Program Director, CEO or designated Administer, will contact the non-emergency number of the proper authorities for the welfare of the child.

- ✓ Anyone (including parent/guardians and emergency contacts) who picks up early before 3:00pm.

Late Child Pick-Up Policy

The center closes at 5:30 pm (3:00pm if not enrolled in wrap -around programming). We do understand that emergencies come up and you may be late picking up your children. We ask you to call us to let us know when you are going to be late and inform us of your expected time of arrival. If someone else is going to pick-up your child(ren) who is not on the pick-up list, you must identify that person in writing on the child release form. Please note that the person must have their picture identification before we are able to release the child(ren) to them for pick-up.

Missouri Child Care Subsidy Program:

All children who receive Missouri Child Care Subsidy funds must have written documentation from the State at the time of enrollment. If you do not have the proper documentation at the time of enrollment, you will be considered a private-pay family and will be responsible for all childcare fees. Your fee status will change once all proper documentation for your Child Care Assistance funds is on file at the center.

It is the responsibility of each family to maintain a current status with Missouri Child Care Subsidy and renew it before expiration. If the family allows their assistance to expire, the family will be responsible for paying the applicable private pay family rate.

Please note, depending on the State's assessment, families may have a weekly co-pay for which they are responsible along with your Child Care Assistance funds.

Fees and Collection Policy

Fees are due weekly and are collected by the front desk receptionist. Payments are to be made weekly prior to service. Invoices will be provided on Tuesday for the upcoming week and payments are due by 5:30pm on Friday. If payments are not current, childcare services could be terminated and the child may be put on the waiting list for re-enrollment. Prior to re-enrollment, the entire balance must be paid in full. Children receiving Head

Start or Pre-K Cooperative services may continue to attend during the core program hours only. However, wrap around care hours will not be an option.

Fees have been prorated to adjust for the days when the agency is closed. Fees are due every week of the year except for winter break and preservice. During the breaks, the agency may offer limited child care options for a fee.

Returned Checks

Checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$35.00 service fee, payable immediately. Following an infraction, we will no longer accept checks from your family. You will be required to pay with a money order and/or a cashier's check.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All EarlystART staff and management are mandated reporters by local and state laws and are required to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. Suspected cases of child abuse and neglect are reported to the Missouri State Hotline in Jefferson City. The toll-free number is 1-800-392-3738 for emergencies and online at <http://www.moga.mo.gov/mostatutes/stathtml/21000001151.html?me=210.115> for non-emergencies.

If an EarlystART staff member is suspected or observed abusing or neglecting a child, the staff member will be suspended immediately while an investigation is conducted by EarlystART directors to determine the plan of action. The family of the child will be notified and a report of the claim will be reported to the appropriate agencies. EarlystART will allow the proper authorities to determine the outcome of whether or not the claims are substantiated. Any persons involved in the claim will not be discussed amongst staff and names will be kept confidential. The rights of the children and the accused persons will be protected by all EarlystART staff members.

Screen Time Policy

Because we care about the health and well-being of the children in our care, we follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations on Screen Time:

- Children under two should have no screen time.
- Children age two and over should watch less than 30 minutes per week at child care, and less than two hours per day total.

Toys from Home

Please do not send or let your child bring toys to the center. They may misplace it, another child may take it, or it may get broken.

Please send toys back to the center if your child accidentally takes a center toy home without approval from the teacher.

Food and Drinks

We participate in a child and adult food program. Because of this participation, outside food is not allowed. Please do not send your child to the center with food and/or drinks.

We provide a healthy breakfast, lunch, and snack for all children daily. We encourage all children to be at school by 8:00am when breakfast is served, so they can start their day with a well-balanced breakfast.

Money From Home

Child(ren) are not to bring money to the center under any circumstances.

Parent Information Board

There is a Parent Information Board in all classrooms. On the board, you will find the daily schedule, classroom Weekly Lesson Plan and Individualization Plan, Monthly Menu, and program updates. Please take time to review the board for updates and changes. Also note the documentation that is posted in the classroom and hallways. This will let you know the work that is occurring in the classroom and the learning that is taking place.

Resources

Our school has a wide variety of resources available. Resources are available upon request; please see your Family Advocate.

Substitutes

There will be a time when the center may need to use substitute teachers to make sure we are meeting the adult/child ratio. If you have any questions regarding your child's substitute teacher, please feel free to see the Early Learning and Inclusion Director.

Change of Clothing

Each child must have a complete change of clothing in their cubby at school at all times. Providing these clothes will ensure that your child remains in clean, dry clothing all day. It is important that you label your child's clothing with their name before bringing it to the classroom. Please make sure to send clothing for the season of weather that we are currently experiencing.

Dress and Footwear

Your child should be dressed in clothing appropriate for play and weather. Children must wear sneakers or other closed-toed rubber-soled shoes. Outdoor time occurs every day unless the temperature is below freezing, an ozone-alert day, or if there is some form of precipitation. Flip-flops, open toe shoes and sandals with heels are not permitted due to safety concerns.

When the weather is cold, please dress your child warmly in a hat, a coat, gloves, long

pants, or other appropriate clothing. In warm weather, shorts and other summer type of clothing should be worn.

Note: If you need assistance with clothing or footwear, please contact your Family Advocate.

Infants and Toddlers

We will help support families if they have difficulty purchasing supplies for your infant(s), such as formula, wipes, and bottles. Please take time to discuss with your child's teacher any questions. Please feel free to talk with your child's teacher or your Family Advocate before you are in a crisis. Your Family Advocate will direct you to several community partners that provide dignity-based assistance to families. Children in infant and toddler rooms are not allowed to wear the following items in their hair at the center:

- Beads of any size
- Hairballs
- Rubber bands of any kind
- Barrettes
- Hair Clips

This is for the safety of the children. These items are potential choking hazards. If your child arrives with any of the aforementioned items in their hair, or otherwise, you will be asked to take them out. Failure to do so will result in your child not being accepted for the day and you still will be charged your regular weekly fees.

Safe Sleep

Infants under the age of 12 months will be placed on their backs for sleeping. Prior to sleep, teachers will check the infants to ensure they are comfortably clothed so they do not overheat; that all bibs, necklaces, and garments with ties or hood are removed; and that the temperature in the room is comfortable.

Infants will be directly supervised by sight and sound at all times. While supervising infant sleep, teachers will be assessing for the following:

- a. Breathing: Teachers will look for the rise and fall of the chest and stomach to observe for breathing.
- b. Temperature: Teachers will monitor that sleeping infants do not get too hot. Signs that an infant is too hot include sweating, damp hair, flushed cheeks, heat rash, and body temperature by touch, restlessness, and/or rapid breathing.
- c. Absence of head covering: A teacher must ensure that sleeping infants' heads remain uncovered during sleep and to readjust as needed.

Birthdays and Special Occasions

The curriculum used at EarlystART is based on sound early childhood principles and developmentally appropriate practices. Teachers observe and listen to the children and

develop lesson plans and projects that promote physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth based on those interests and what is developmentally appropriate for the children in the classroom. Young children can be overstimulated by the consumerism associated with major holidays (Halloween, Christmas, Easter, etc.) We are interested in facilitating an environment which offers meaningful experiences for children reflective of family traditions from all children in the classroom. There will not be an emphasis on specific holiday celebrations or activities. Conversations about the diversity of ways people celebrate are encouraged and will be included as part of planning with families to create a multicultural and anti-bias curriculum.

In order to ensure equal celebration for all children, parents are encouraged to provide treats for their child's birthday. It is recommended to coordinate with the child's teacher to determine the most suitable option that will enhance their special day.

Center Field Trips

Field trips are scheduled for the children to foster their learning and awareness of many different experiences in the community. Families are welcome to go on all our field trips to assist the staff in ensuring that our children are safe. Our goal is that all children take part in scheduled field trips; if your child needs additional assistance, we may request family assistance on the field trip. The teacher will notify the family of the request in a timely manner.

Violence Prevention

EarlystART is committed to providing a safe, violence-free workplace for our families and staff. Due to this commitment, we discourage families and staff from engaging in any physical confrontation with a violent or potentially violent individual or from behaving in a threatening or violent manner. Threats, threatening language, or any other acts of aggression or violence made toward or by any family member or employee will not be tolerated. A threat may include any verbal or physical harassment, abuse, attempts to intimidate others, menacing gestures, stalking, or any other hostile, aggressive, and/or destructive actions taken for the purposes of intimidation. This policy covers any violent or potentially violent behavior that occurs at EarlystART or at company-sponsored functions.

All EarlystART families and employees bear the responsibility of keeping our work environment free from violence or potential violence. Anyone who witnesses or is the recipient of violent behavior should promptly inform their center director, family advocate, teacher, or any other EarlystART employee. All threats will be promptly investigated. No one will be subject to retaliation, intimidation, or discipline as a result of

reporting a threat in good faith under this guideline.

Any individual engaging in violence against the company, its families, employees, or its property will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. All acts will be investigated, and the appropriate action will be taken. Any such act or threatening behavior may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, termination of services.

Weapons Policy

EarlystART prohibits the possession of weapons on its property at all times, including our parking lots. Additionally, any person on the property may not carry a weapon of any type. Weapons include, but are not limited to, handguns, rifles, automatic weapons, and knives that can be used as weapons (excluding pocket knives, utility knives, and other instruments that are used to open packages, cut string, and for other miscellaneous tasks), martial arts paraphernalia, stun guns, and tear gas. Anyone violating this policy is subject to discipline up to, and including, termination of services for the first offense.

Open Door Policy

We have an open door policy at the center. Families do not need to make an appointment unless they need to meet with their child's teacher or support staff. Families are free to visit in their child's classroom at any point during the daily schedule and we encourage them to attend field trips. Additionally, we encourage families to share their hobbies, skills, and abilities with the children. If families would like to come and share, please communicate with their child's teacher so that they can be added to the daily schedule.

Holidays

We will be closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Independence Day	Labor Day
MLK Day	Thanksgiving Break	
Memorial Day	Winter Break	
Juneteenth	Spring Break	

Written notices will be posted and you may refer to your center's calendar. If a holiday falls on a Saturday, the holiday will be observed the preceding Friday. Holidays falling on a Sunday will be observed on the following Monday.

Staff Development Days

In our Annual EarlystART Calendar, you will see specific dates when the center will be closed for Staff Professional Development Days. These closings allow teachers and other staff to receive required training and to spend time on their professional growth and development. We will also post notices around the center as a friendly reminder of the centers' closing dates as they approach.

Inclement Weather

If EarlystART is closed for inclement weather or other emergencies, the following are the sources that are available for you to use to find out this information:

- Call Blast
- Text message notification: Signing up through ProCare is required to receive messages
- (Text Agency's website: www.earlystartkc.org)
- Facebook page: United Inner City Services (facebook.com/earlystartkc)
- Follow us on Twitter: [@EarlystARTKC](https://twitter.com/EarlystARTKC)
- Follow us on Instagram: [@EarlystARTKC](https://www.instagram.com/EarlystARTKC)
- Local television stations: KMBC 9 and KSHB 41 (*weather related only*)

Please supply EarlystART with up-to-date emergency contact information, in case we need to close early due to bad weather or other emergencies.

Smoke-Free Environment

EarlystART is a smoke-free environment. We ask our staff and parents not to smoke, vape, use tobacco/marijuana products anywhere on EarlystART property. This is a request that promotes good health for all.

Families Grievance/Complaint:

Parents and teachers are encouraged to have a dialogue to discuss any concerns: The following procedures will govern the hearing and the resolution of parent complaints if it cannot be resolved with the specific center staff person:

1. Complaints are submitted in writing to the Early Learning and Inclusion Director. The concerned party will receive a response within 24 hours. If the concern is not resolved to the satisfaction of the person or entity concerned, the person or entity proceeds with step 2.
2. The concerned party shall submit a written concern to the Chief Program Officer and the complaint response from the Early Learning and Inclusion Director. The concerned party will receive a response within three (3) working days or sooner. If the concern is not resolved to the satisfaction of the person or entity complaining, the person or entity proceeds with step 3.
3. The concerned party shall submit a written concern to the Chief Executive Officer and the complaint response from the Chief Program Officer and the complaint response from the Early Learning and Inclusion Director. The complaining party will receive a response within three (3) working days or sooner.

We will make every effort to find a solution while maintaining confidentiality for all parties involved.

Please note that there will be two or more administrators who will sit in and listen to all complaints made regarding the staff, EarlystART, the program, and other areas of concern.

Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct

In order to maintain a stable, consistent, and respectful environment that is conducive to learning, EarlystART parents are expected to abide by the following guidelines:

1. When providing behavioral guidance to children at our EarlystART programs or in the facilities, parents will utilize positive methods of discipline. The use of corporal punishment (i.e., physically striking a child or inflicting physical punishment) or verbal humiliation is prohibited.
2. Parents will treat EarlystART staff and other EarlystART families and volunteers with courtesy and respect. Verbal or physical threats towards staff and/or other families are unacceptable. Cursing or swearing is not allowed at any time on the premises.
3. Disputes that arise between adults will be discussed in a calm manner and in a location away from children.
4. Parents, staff, and volunteers will not smoke on the property.
5. Concerns that are not able to be resolved with the assistance of teaching staff will be addressed in accordance with the Grievance Policy outlined in the Family Handbook.
6. In your daily conversations with each other, please remember to be respectful and ever-mindful that little ears may be listening...and eyes watching.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date:_____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date:_____

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Family Handbook and Safe Sleep Policy

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the EarlystART Family Handbook. I understand that it contains important information on policies and procedures. I realize the handbook is not intended to cover every situation which may arise, but is simply a general guide in which to refer.

I understand that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with this Handbook and that I agree to follow the provisions and other policies/rules of the center.

I acknowledge and understand that this Family Handbook supersedes and replaces any and all prior handbooks or materials previously distributed.

Please note: EarlystART policies and procedures are subject to change to reflect the needs of the program, children, and families we serve.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Room: _____

Child's Name: _____

Room: _____

Child's Name: _____

Room: _____

Child's Name: _____

Room: _____

(Please complete and give to receptionist or your Family Advocate)