

Parent Handbook

Loving to learn, learning to love.



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www.glenmarelc.org



Early Learning Center

Dear ELC Families,

As the newly appointed Lead Pastor of Glen Mar UMC, I want to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Glen Mar ELC family! I am looking forward to meeting you and your children and getting to know you all over the upcoming school year. Ms. Shelby and the gifted teachers and staff of the ELC have been working hard to get everything in place for this year, and I know that they cannot wait to get started.

The primary way that I will spend time with your children at the ELC will be through the monthly “chapel time,” where we will learn about Jesus’ love, read Bible stories, and learn to pray together. Chapel time is a fantastic way for children to hear about the Christian faith and share what is on their hearts. I have always felt that while we have a responsibility to instruct children, there is so much that we can learn from them as well! Chapel time gives us space for both learning and listening.

I also wanted to let you know that you and your families are welcome here at Glen Mar Church. There is a place for you here where we seek to live out our mission of “Praising God, growing disciples, and serving the world.” Each week, we gather for a traditional style of worship at the 9:30 AM service and for a more contemporary style at 11 AM. We also offer “Sprouts” for three-year-olds to kindergarten age to learn each week during the 9:30 AM service. Or, if you'd prefer to join us online, our 9:30 service is also live-streamed on our church’s website, www.glenmarumc.org. If you are searching for a church home or are simply curious, I hope you will come to check us out.

Finally, I want you to know that you are all in my prayers as we begin this new school year. If there is anything I can do to help you, pastorally or otherwise, please let us know. Sending your children off to a particular school is a big decision, so thank you for trusting us with them. We hope you and your children have a wonderful 25/26 school year at Glen Mar Early Learning Center!

Blessings,



Rev. Christopher J. Dembeck
Lead Pastor



Early Learning Center

Dear ELC Families,

Welcome to our Early Learning Center! Whether you are a returning family or new to our community, we are so glad to have you with us. This handbook is designed to give you a comprehensive understanding of our policies, procedures, and the heart of what makes our center such a special place for children to learn and grow.

A little about me—I've been part of the ELC family since 2012, beginning my journey here as a Pre-K teacher. In 2020, I was honored to step into the role of Director, and I continue to feel privileged to lead such an inspiring and dedicated team. As a parent of two children currently enrolled at the ELC, I understand firsthand the trust you place in us every day, and I am committed to ensuring that your child feels safe, supported, and loved while in our care.

At the ELC, our motto is “**Loving to Learn, Learning to Love**”—and it’s at the heart of everything we do. We believe young children learn best through play. Our students are encouraged to explore, discover, and be curious about the world around them. This play-based approach fosters creativity and builds a strong foundation for future learning. Our goal is to nurture not only your child’s academic growth, but their emotional and social development as well.

Our experienced staff is truly the heart of our program. Each of our teachers brings a wealth of knowledge, compassion, and enthusiasm to the classroom. All staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid, and they participate in ongoing professional development through continuing education courses. Many hold 45-hour and 90-hour certifications, as well as degrees in early childhood education or related fields. Above all, our educators are passionate about what they do and are dedicated to creating a nurturing environment where children can explore, grow, and thrive.

We believe in building strong partnerships with families, and we are always here to support you and your child. Please don’t hesitate to reach out with questions, concerns, or ideas at any time.

Thank you for being part of our ELC community. We look forward to an exciting year ahead filled with learning, laughter, and discovery.

Warmly,

Shelby Flinchum

Director, Early Learning Center

The Glen Mar Early Learning Center is regulated and licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Child Care. Compliance with and knowledge of applicable Maryland statutes and regulations for licensing preschools and childcare centers is required of ELC employees. A copy of these standards is available for review in the Director's office or online at: <http://www.earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/regulations> Employees are responsible to meet and/or exceed the state requirements.

The ELC follows the guidance of the Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Policy for Glen Mar UMC, which supports the creation of a safe sanctuary for learning, nurture, and protection of children which is greater than the requirements of state licensing. This guidance includes the requirement that two adults always be present in the classroom.

The ELC is open weekdays from 7 am – 6 pm with staffing appropriate for the expected enrollment. Glen Mar ELC offers a variety of full day programs. A calendar of activities and events is provided at the start of each school year.

The ELC leadership team makes decisions about the care and education of your child(ren) based upon these three areas: knowledge of child development and how children learn, knowledge of individual needs, strengths and interests of each child, and the knowledge of the social and cultural context in which each child lives.

As children progress through the ELC, activities are planned considering attention span, activity level, and natural curiosity. A structured environment is created within each classroom providing opportunities for age-appropriate exploration and engagement for each stage of development. The curriculum emphasizes development of cognitive skills which includes language and literacy, mathematical thinking, social skills, creative art, music, physical development, fine motor development, and science. Planned activities are used to reinforce the natural learning that is part of every activity in the children's day. Children are encouraged to "learn by doing" within a safe and well-supervised environment.

Age-appropriate field trips and other special experiences are provided to expand children's knowledge of the world around them. Trained staff present all activities in a supportive, caring atmosphere. Positive habits are developed through the consistent reinforcement of routines of personal hygiene and courtesy. Positive social interaction is modeled and encouraged, communication and cognitive skills are enhanced, and emotional and spiritual development is carefully nurtured. Creativity is promoted in an environment of discovery. Our high staff-to-child

ratios build strong teacher-student relationships contributing to the development of each child's positive self-image.

Emergency Closings

Decisions regarding a delayed opening are made by 6:00 am, based on conditions at the ELC. Please check www.glenmarelc.org for information regarding delayed openings. Early closing decisions are made as early in the day as possible, based on predicted weather forecasts and anticipated road conditions. When notified of an emergency or closure during working hours, parents are encouraged to pick up their children as soon as possible. Decisions for a delayed opening or early closing will also be announced on the ELC website or communicated to parents via email or phone call. During inclement weather, parents should check email frequently throughout the day to receive any emergency messages.

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I. INTRODUCTION

MISSION STATEMENT

The Early Learning Center (ELC) mission is to provide children who attend our center (infants to 5 years) regardless of race, color, national, ethnic, or religious origins with a high-quality, licensed, affordable, and loving early preparatory experience that will help establish a firm foundation for them to thrive educationally, socially, and emotionally.

PHILOSOPHY

The ELC believes that young children learn best through exploration, discovery, and play in an environment that enhances natural curiosity and encourages a love of learning.

CURRICULUM

The current curriculum being used in the ELC is Frog Street. Frog Street focuses on play as key to unlocking a child's learning and development. Play is foundational to a child's development and is believed to be fundamental to a child's ability to make connections about the world through physical, cognitive, lingual, social, emotional, and moral development as they learn through creative expression and play. Activities are planned and structured to support each stage of development.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The ELC staff provides a nurturing, welcoming environment where attentive and loving caregivers strive to meet each child's unique emotional and developmental needs. Caregivers provide facilitated experiences daily where children can explore, play, socialize and learn with other children as they grow.

Although Glen Mar ELC is a non-denominational center, Christian values are modeled in the classroom along with opportunities to express gratitude and praise. Gratitude is expressed before snack and lunch. Religious holidays are celebrated as well as a monthly chapel where songs and stories that teach Christian values are shared. Children also learn about the diverse and multicultural aspects represented in the homes and families of our student population and community. As a non-profit organization, licensed by the state of Maryland, Glen Mar ELC welcomes children from any religious background, race, color, or creed from ages of six weeks to five years of age.

The Early Learning Center is an outreach of Glen Mar United Methodist Church. The development of the young children who attend the center is considered an extension of Glen Mar's mission, "Praising God, Growing Disciples, Serving the World". As a ministry of the Glen Mar United Methodist Church, there is a close working relationship between the pastors, the ELC Board of Directors, and the Leadership Board to provide guidance and support to the Director and the Center. As "Loving to Learn and Learning to Love" is encouraged among our children, we are grateful for the opportunity to serve the community.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To provide a safe, loving environment for young children and their families, where each child is valued and respected as unique and special.
- To employ well-trained, skilled, caring staff members who continue to grow and are passionate about working with young children to provide learning opportunities that are fun, developmentally appropriate, and actively engaging.

- To partner with families to nurture each child to grow and develop in amazing ways and prepares them for success in school and their outside life.

ELC EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

ELC employees are in accountable relationships with the children, parents, church staff, and administration of the ELC and are expected to follow all expectations and regulations of the ELC. Staff members are expected to serve as positive role models. Top priorities include regular attendance, maintaining a clean, safe classroom environment, communicating with parents, following all ELC expectations and regulations, and being prepared for each day.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

All staff at Glen Mar ELC participate in a personal interview, working interview, complete a criminal background check and fingerprinting in addition to a reference check. Hiring and retaining highly qualified candidates is a top priority. Professional development is encouraged and supported by providing continuing education, required by the state of Maryland, as well as the opportunity to continue to participate in additional hours through the Credentialing Program. Staff also are required to obtain certification in First Aid and CPR and participate in training for Emergency Preparedness and Safe Sanctuaries, which includes Child Abuse Reporting Procedures.

II. PROGRAM INFORMATION

Curriculum Overview

Curriculum in an early childhood classroom is what happens throughout the day that contributes to the growth and development of young children. It is the sum of all experiences that occur in a day. It may be memorable stories, music, art, language and literacy, science, math, and physical development activities. These subject areas are integrated into the learning activities and play throughout each day.

Frog Street is a state-approved curriculum focusing on four areas of development: social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. Within these areas of development goals and objectives are set for infants, toddlers, and children ages two through five. These developmentally appropriate goals guide the instruction of the ELC program and include small group activities, whole-group activities, and special activities such as field trips. This combination of experiences is intended to broaden children's aptitude for future school activities while encouraging imagination and creativity through exploration and play.

The ELC program also includes Bible-based stories and chapel. These are shared as an important part of the development of children because of the life-giving message of God's love for the world.

The ELC staff guide children to:

- Become aware of and have an interest in the world around them
- Develop a sense of pride in themselves, school, and church
- Make a smooth transition from home life to school life
- Interact easily with other children
- Develop self-discipline and self-control
- Grow in verbal, motor, and conceptual skills
- Observe and use simple health and safety rules

- Help others
- Developing common courtesies

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Twelve Month Programs

The ELC operates on a 12-month, full-day program schedule year-round. Children are enrolled at the time of registration. A full school year begins in late August and continues through the following August. The ELC is open Monday through Friday, from 7 am – 6 pm. Refer to the annual calendar for early closing days and days the center is closed for holidays or scheduled events such as professional development for staff. School closings are also posted on our website and in Brightwheel.

Placement and Transitions

Glen Mar ELC accepts infants at age 6 weeks. Infants are placed in the infant suite until developmental milestones indicate readiness to transition to the toddler suite. This decision is made by the teacher, parent, and director and is based on available space per licensing ratios for children under two.

Children ages two, three, and four are placed in the age-appropriate classroom based on their age as of September 1. Children remain in the assigned class with age-appropriate peers through the following August. Children transition to the next age level class in late August of each year at the start of the new school year. Exceptions may be discussed with the Director for a final placement decision and depending on space availability.

Infants

Infants from 6 weeks old may be enrolled or placed on the waiting list as space is available. An infant's capacity to learn is present from birth. Infants learn about their world primarily through social contact and the experiences they have with caregivers. Every infant is an individual with a unique temperament. All infants possess a set of skills and abilities which change with development. Although the rate, pattern, and quality of development will vary from child to child, typically infants progress through similar stages of development. Our infant program is based on the predictable sequences of typical development in the areas of motor skills, language and communication, cognition, and socialization. Reinforcement of these basic stages of development is provided by our teachers who play, talk with, and respond to them. Consistency in response makes the children's environment more predictable and comfortable. Varied experiences such as textures, different foods, shapes, and sounds, spending time outdoors, and observing nature is all offered to help stimulate your child to respond to the environment.

For infant classes, the highest staff-to-student ratio is one teacher for every three children with a maximum of six children for the infant room. When infants are sleeping, the staff is present supervising. The staff is fully qualified, loving, and patient. During much of the day, infants are held and cuddled. We do not allow children to "cry it out" but rather try to comfort and console. Nursing mothers are encouraged to continue as their schedule permits. Parents are required to bring a daily supply of formula or breast milk for infants.

Each child has his/her own crib. When infants are not asleep or eating, they participate in a variety

of activities, moving around the room and exploring and interacting with others. Children in the infant room are held, rocked, sung to, read to, and spoken to throughout the day. Age-appropriate toys are provided for each infant.

Individual infant schedules are completed in a brief meeting with the teacher to create an individual care plan. This plan, required by licensing, will include specific details of your infant's schedule to include eating, sleeping, and other routines. All Individual Care Plans are updated every three months, maintained in a binder in your child's classroom, and can be reviewed at any time. Parents may indicate special requests to the staff by a written entry on the daily record sheet. Staff will maintain entries throughout the day to include information on meals, sleeping, disposition, and activity level as well as any symptoms of illness or discomfort observed, special experiences, and achievements for celebration, such as a new word or a new movement.

Toddlers/Transitions

The transition room is designed for children to transition from the infant room as they become walkers. The staff-to-child ratio is one adult to three toddlers, with a maximum of six children in the room. A variety of toys and activities are provided to support children in this stage of development.

Toddlers

The toddler room is for children ages 18 months through age 2 years old. The ratio is one adult to three toddlers with a maximum of nine children in the room. Communication and cognitive skills are developed through play and classroom routines, with a focus on working on self-help skills including table manners, toilet training, and dressing. Social skills, such as sharing toys and positive interactions, are supported throughout the day. The positive atmosphere within the toddler room promotes a child's positive self-image and builds confidence as the children work to acquire new skills.

Two-Year Olds

Licensing requirements for two-year olds are one staff to six children with a maximum of twelve children in the classroom. The gradual change from smaller groups to slightly larger groups provide a structure to begin adjusting to larger class sizes as they grow. Communication and academic skills are developed, along with self-help skills including table manners, toilet training, and dressing. Social skills such as sharing toys and positive interactions with peers are emphasized throughout the day. Activities and positive reinforcement build each child's confidence and self-esteem.

Three-Year Olds

The staff-to-child ratio for three-year olds is one to ten with a maximum of twenty children. A more structured environment is created in the classroom to provide opportunities for exploration and engagement with a variety of planned and self-selected activities. Emphasis on the continuing development of cognitive skills is provided in the curriculum areas of language and literacy, mathematical thinking, science, social skills, physical development, creative art, and music. Children are encouraged to learn by doing things in a safe and nurturing environment.

Four-Year Olds

The staff-to-child ratio for four-year olds is one to ten with a maximum of twenty children. Our four-year-old classes recognize the child's growing independence and are structured to include activities and materials to develop pre-reading skills, language and literacy development, mathematical thinking, science, art, music, and nature studies. Planned activities reinforce the natural learning that takes place when children can explore and engage in a fun and safe environment. The children select activities from a variety of interest centers in the classroom. Learning activities alternate with indoor and outdoor play periods every day, weather permitting.

Screen Time

The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages media use by children younger than age 2 and recommends limiting older children's screen time to no more than one or two hours a day. The ELC does not allow children younger than two to partake in any screen time activities and limits the rest of the children's access to occasional, short educational purposes that can be directly related to continuing learning experiences within the classroom. An example of occasions when screen time is used is during circle time to show a narrative example of a topic being covered. After the visual is seen, it is then discussed within the group, or its information is translated directly into a learning opportunity. If a parent wishes that their child not participate in screen time, an alternative activity such as reading, manipulatives, or teacher discussion is offered.

Snacks

A monthly menu is published and posted on bulletin boards at the entry of each class. Healthy morning and afternoon snacks are provided daily. Food exceptions are not made for individual children except in the case of an allergy or a special written diet prescribed by a physician. If your child requires special food, the parent must provide the special food items and give written notification to the Director and teaching staff in your child's classroom.

Lunches

Families are required to provide a healthy lunch each day for their children. Refrigerated items should be packed in a container or plastic bag marked with the child's name and classroom. These items will be placed in the refrigerator in each classroom by the ELC staff. Ice packs are not permitted due to licensing regulations. See your classroom newsletter for specific instructions. Milk or water is provided by the ELC daily for snacks and lunch. Staff are not allowed to heat any food items for students. Warm food must be placed in a thermos in the lunch bag. Any uneaten food will be sent home so parents can be aware of what was or was not eaten for lunch.

Outdoor Play

Children will have outside activity time unless the weather is inclement and the temperature too cold or too hot for their safety. If children are not permitted outside, staff will provide alternate activities for movement and exercise inside. At all times, care is given to provide supervision, attention to safety, and age-appropriate activities. Teachers are trained to handle minor scrapes and scratches and are careful to monitor children at play. Per licensing, all children must go outside unless a request is waived with a detailed doctor's note requesting the child refrain from such activities. Sunscreen should be applied at home before coming to the ELC and will be reapplied in the afternoons. Per licensing we can only apply sunscreen one time per day.

Toilet Training

Children in the two-year-old program are not required to be toilet trained. Classrooms for children two and younger are equipped with diapering stations. Families are required to supply diapers and wipes for their children. Please label all belongings with your child's name. The staff works closely with the families of our two-year olds to support the toilet training process to ensure most children are toilet trained by age three. **Until a child is fully potty trained, the child must wear pull-ups/diapers.**

It is recommended that children entering the three-year-old program be fully potty-trained (please discuss with the administration if your child is not potty trained). Being fully potty trained is a requirement for the 4-year-old program. Special cases will be considered as needed based on developmental delay and individual needs.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

Inclement Weather Policy

The Director is responsible for monitoring the weather regularly, along with the leadership team. Information will be provided to staff and families, as applicable. Staff will be directed to follow the inside shelter guidelines for imminent danger such as thunderstorms, hurricanes, wind, tornados, or earthquakes.

Families may be informed of early closings, late openings, or closings due to weather on the Glen Mar ELC website, www.glenmarelc.org or Brightwheel.

The ELC will follow the inclement weather schedule of Glen Mar UMC, which may differ from the Howard County Public School System. Decisions regarding a delayed opening are made by 6:00 a.m. and will be posted to the website. Decisions regarding early closings are made, based on conditions at Glen Mar and weather report predictions, as early in the day as possible to ensure our staff a safe journey home. When early closings are announced, parents are asked to arrive for pick up as soon as possible for the center to close early at the indicated time.

Holidays and Closings

Please refer to Holidays and Closings listed in the following resources:

Registration Form(s)
School Year Calendar

Website
Brightwheel

Please note: Monthly tuition remains the same every month no matter if there is a closure. Tuition is not based on the number of school days within each month.

Special Events

Meet and Great – Meet and Great is held on the Friday before the new school year begins. See the school calendar for specific dates and times. This is an opportunity for families to tour the center, meet the staff, visit the classroom, and learn more about the program.

Birthdays- Birthday parties may be celebrated at the ELC. Please plan arrangements with your child's teachers. Parties are held in your child's classroom during snack time and may include cupcakes, ice cream or cookies, and/or party plates and or napkins. Please see your child's teacher for guidelines for food items.

Chapel- Each classroom is scheduled to attend monthly chapel. The pastoral team leads chapel, sharing stories with Bible characters and values, familiar songs, and prayers. Parents are invited to attend monthly chapel. See your classroom communication for specific dates and times scheduled monthly.

Field Trips & Special Activities- All off-site trips are approved by the Director, planned, and require parent permission. For safety, children may be encouraged to wear a specific-colored shirt on all field trips. Parents are invited to chaperone and share these experiences with the children. **Please Note:** Many times, there is an additional cost for Field Trips & Special Activities.

Holiday Program - The ELC presents a concert for families in December to celebrate the holiday season. Specific information, including dates and times, will be shared in advance of the celebration.

Graduation - The ELC holds an informal graduation ceremony each spring for students transitioning to kindergarten in the fall. Specific information, including dates and times, will be shared in advance of the celebration.

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable clothing that may get dirty or wet and is easy to manage with little assistance. Children encouraged to work to become independent with getting dressed. Learning to put clothes on and off, zip, snap, button, and tie are important skills for young children. Please maintain an extra complete change of seasonally appropriate clothing, including socks and underwear, placed in a Ziploc baggie, with all items **labeled with your child's name** to be always stored in your child's classroom or backpack. Soiled clothing will be placed in your child's cubby to be taken home. A clean, complete change of clothes should be returned the next school day. Closed-toed shoes, such as tennis shoes, are required for indoor and outdoor activities. **Sandals, flip flops, and water shoes are only permitted on water days during the summer.**

Items from Home

All personal items for your child, such as clothing, bottles, baby food, pacifiers, diapers, and blankets, need to be labeled with your child's name. Please also make sure to label jackets, coats, and sweatshirts so they can be returned if misplaced. Children may bring a "lovey" such as a small stuffed animal for naptime. *Naptime items should be taken home weekly to be cleaned.* **All other favorite items such as toys, coins, gum, and candy should be left at home.**

Communication

Your child's teacher will keep you up to date on activities that are happening in the classroom through an app called **Brightwheel**. Current classroom information and monthly updates can be found on the bulletin board outside of each classroom. Please read the information weekly to be informed and up to date with activities and requests. Additional center-wide information and updates will be sent out from the Director as needed. Information regarding activities and opportunities at Glen Mar Church will also be shared with ELC families. **Please keep your email**

address current as most information will be sent via email.

Communication is encouraged between parents and staff through conversation, daily sheets, and email. Please do not discuss personal information with children present or at the time of drop off/pick up when staff is responsible for the supervision of the class. Teachers are available by appointment to discuss your child's progress or other significant information. Parents may also write a note to be given to the teacher/staff member who will follow up with an email or phone call. Staff mailboxes are in the front office. Parents may also call the office and leave a message for the staff member. The Director and Pastors of Glen Mar Church are also available as a resource to ELC parents.

Daily Logs - Daily notes are provided through Brightwheel informing families of the activities your child participated in throughout the day. Parents are encouraged to add notes informing your child's teacher of any information they may need to know about your child through the Brightwheel App.

Appointments with Teachers or Administration - The relationship between parents, teachers, staff, and administration is an important aspect of working together to provide quality care for the children at the ELC. Throughout the year, as questions or concerns arise, please first discuss the issue with your child's teacher if it is regarding a classroom issue. If an additional conversation is needed, parents may email, call, or request a meeting with the Director.

Confidentiality - Glen Mar ELC respects the right of each family to privacy and confidentiality regarding all health, behavioral, developmental records, and information concerning your child. If your child is involved in an altercation, Glen Mar ELC will not share your child's identity with the parents of the other child unless required to do so by law. In addition, Glen Mar ELC requires that all families in our program respect the same confidentiality regarding other students and families regardless of circumstances.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of your child are important and a high priority for our ELC staff. We promote the health and safety of all children by providing a clean environment, safe toys that are maintained and disinfected regularly, and supervision of daily activities. Additionally, the following procedures regarding health and safety are enforced.

Hygiene - Handwashing throughout the day for staff and children, specifically after blowing noses, toileting, diapering, and before and after meals, is expected. Diapers are checked every two hours throughout the day and are changed at the first signs of soiling. All children are changed at the first sign of wet or soiled clothing. Parents are responsible for providing an ample supply of diapers, wipes, and changes of clothing (all labeled by parents for personal use for your child). ELC changing tables are disinfected after each use and teachers use the state-approved method for changing diapers, which is posted in each room. If you change your child's diaper in the classroom, please follow the state-approved method, as posted.

Accidents - In the case of a serious emergency, 911 will be called, then the parent/guardian will be contacted. In the event a child needs emergency services, proper first aid will be administered while attempting to contact the parent/guardian. The contacts listed on the child's emergency card are used to reach parents/guardians first. If parents/guardians are unable to be contacted, additional names listed on the emergency card will be called. A staff member will accompany the child to the hospital via ambulance until a parent/family member/contact on emergency form is present.

Parents/guardians will be contacted with the specific hospital location. In the event of a non-emergency accident, appropriate first aid will be provided, and parents/guardians will be notified in writing. Written reports for accidents are kept on file in the office and copies are provided to parents at pick up at the end of the day.

Incident Reports - When a minor injury occurs, such as bumps, bruises, bites, scrapes, scratches, cuts, a staff member will complete a report documenting the details of the minor injury. Parents will be given a copy of the incident report when they pick up their child, (at the end of the day). If the injury is above the shoulders, such as a head injury, the parent will be contacted by phone as soon as the incident occurs.

Allergies - A list of children with allergies or special concerns will be posted in a known area in the classroom. Parents are responsible to inform the ELC of any allergies when registering a child and to provide updates in writing should any change occur throughout the year. Parents must also keep health forms up to date and inform staff in writing of any changes in a child's health. This information is also listed on the back of all emergency cards.

Sick Policy - Children need to be in good health to get the most out of their educational experiences. Children may become sick during the day or show signs or symptoms of illness before arrival. Please notify the ELC office as soon as possible, when deciding to keep your child at home. If a child becomes ill while at the ELC, a determination will be made if a child needs to be picked up early and the parent will be contacted to pick him/her up as soon as possible to avoid exposure to other children. PLEASE NOTE: Children may not return to school until the symptoms are treated and the child is **symptom-free for 24 hours**. This greatly helps promote wellness among all the children.

Your children should stay at home and may be sent home from the ELC if he/she is showing any of the following symptoms:

- *Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher without the use of medication
- *Undiagnosed contagious rash
- *Infected skin or eyes (mucus/pus draining)
- *Thick, yellowish-green discharge puss/mucus from eyes, ears, or nose
- * Lice/scabies
- * Any condition that would prevent the child from participating in daily activities
- *Diarrhea (increase in frequency/loosening of stool) 2 or more times within 24 hours
- *Vomiting once in a 24 hours' period
- *Difficulty breathing, wheezing, or persistent cough
- *Uncharacteristic lethargy

A doctor's note may be required for your child to return to the center if any of the above symptoms are persistent or excessive. In addition, if your child starts to have a similar reported illness while at the center, you may be required to take him or her to the doctor. The child may return to the center with a doctor's note that clearly states the child is not contagious.

Understanding Quarantine Guidance - Glen Mar ELC quarantine protocols are defined and mandated by the Howard County Health Department in consultation with the MSDE – not by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention nor the Maryland Public School system. The ELC is required by the Howard County Health Department to adhere to the protocols. While we do

understand the burden a quarantine places on children and parents, the ELC is unable to deviate from the policy. In addition, the ELC must report each positive case to the Health Department.

Medication - Medication for a specific child will be clearly labeled and kept in locked boxes in the Administrative Office. Administration for medicines is managed by the office staff. Staff who have successfully completed the Medical Administration course may also administer medications. Each medication given will be recorded on the back of the required medication form. The ELC qualified staff will only give medication according to a physician's order. **Bring all medication to the office and give it directly to an office administrator to store it appropriately.**

If your child is receiving any form of prescription medication while at the ELC, a Medication Authorization Form must be completed by a doctor and signed by a parent or legal guardian and returned to the administrative office. The forms are available from the administrative office as well as from our website.

Volunteering

Parents may volunteer at the ELC and on field trips. Parents who volunteer to work with children **are required to receive the Glen Mar Church Safe Sanctuary training.** Training sessions can be arranged by contacting the administrative office and must be completed before volunteering. Volunteer opportunities are communicated by and scheduled with your child's teacher.

IV. ADMISSIONS, ATTENDANCE, AND WITHDRAWAL

Enrollment and Registration

Annual registration is held in January/February for classes to begin the following school year. Registration begins with currently enrolled families, then offered for siblings of currently enrolled students, and then registration opens to the public. Families can enroll at any time during the year, based on available openings. Enrollment remains open until all classrooms are filled. A waiting list for each classroom is maintained. Currently, enrolled families are given priority on the waiting list. Families are contacted as openings become available throughout the year. At registration, families are provided a packet of forms to be completed. Parents are responsible for keeping the child's records up to date, including phone number and address changes, by submitting changes in writing to the administrative office at the ELC. Immunization records must be kept up to date as children receive immunizations throughout the year. Registration is considered complete when all required forms are submitted to the ELC office and fees are paid. All paperwork must be completed, including medical forms, before a child can begin attending the ELC.

Infant/Toddler Registration Process - Infant positions fill very quickly. Expectant parents often register well in advance of birth. Parents may contact the office to inquire about future openings and be added to the waitlist or register based on the anticipated due date and when care will be needed.

A wait list for infant and toddler openings is maintained continuously, based on birth dates. Families are contacted as openings become available. When contacted regarding an infant opening, parents are given three business days to submit the registration form, registration fee, and required paperwork. The registration fee is non-refundable. If a family is not ready to begin when an opening is available, the options are to remain on the waiting list for the next available spot or hold the spot

by paying tuition from the date the space becomes available. In this case, parents would notify the ELC of the start date for their child.

Attendance

If your child is going to be absent for any reason, please notify the office as soon as possible, early in the morning.

Vacation – Tuition is not prorated for absences, regardless of the reason. Full tuition is due monthly based on your tuition agreement, regardless of the number of days attended in the month.

Withdrawal – Withdrawals are possible only in extenuating circumstances. Parents are required to give 30 days' written notice to the Director by filling out and turning in a Program Change Form. Tuition amounts that have already been paid will not be refunded. If a withdrawn student should return to Glen Mar ELC, he/she will be considered a new student instead of a re-enrollment requiring all fees associated with a new enrollment be paid at that time.

V. FINANCES

Tuition- is due on or before the 1st of each month. Tuition can be paid check, cash or electronic funds transfer (EFT). EFT forms are available on the website or in the office.

Tuition Late Fee - A grace period of 5 days is provided. After the fifth day of the month, a late fee is charged, (see registration form).

Late Pick Up Procedures & Fees - Please make every effort to arrive for pick up at or before the time your child's program ends. If an occasional emergency arises that makes it necessary to be late, immediately call the ELC to communicate your anticipated arrival time. Ending times are strictly enforced to manage staff. Late fees will be assessed as follows:

- Up to fifteen minutes late - \$15.00
- From 16-30 minutes late - \$30.00
- From 31-45 minutes late - \$45.00
- From 46 minutes to one hour late - \$60.00

Please come prepared to pay the late fee when you pick up your child. If that is not possible, the fee will be added to your account. After the second late pickup, the charge doubles. A pattern of repeated lateness may result in a request to locate another center that better fits your needs.

Other Closures - There is no deduction in tuition for closures beyond the Center's control including and not limited to inclement weather, power disruptions, business continuity crisis, temporary travel, or other restrictions established by government authority, etc.

VI. ACADEMICS

Assessment and Conferences - Assessment is another part of the curriculum. At the beginning of the school year, you will receive an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) to complete as a part of our assessment process. Ages and Stages is a developmental screening tool designed for use by

early educators. It relies on parents as experts, is easy to use, family-friendly, and creates the snapshot needed to catch delays and celebrate milestones. To learn more about the ASQ, visit <http://agesandstages.com/products-services/asq3/>. Throughout the school year, your child's teacher will be making observations using the approved curriculum methodology of assessing progress on a developmental continuum. These observations focus on age-appropriate goals and objectives. Conferences are held in the spring of each year for children in our two-year-old program and older. During conferences, teachers will share the results of the assessments and observations with parents.

Inclusion - Glen Mar ELC believes that every child should be given the opportunity to learn, grow and be successful in school. Our center and classrooms are equipped to support all developmental stages for young children. For children with special needs, our staff will work closely with the family and outside resources to ensure each child is successful and welcomed, regardless of the pace of learning and accommodations needed to be successful.

VII. DISCIPLINE

Discipline Policy

Consistency and clear expectations presented in positive statements are key factors for successful classroom and behavior management. Our goal is to guide children toward appropriate school behavior. Each teacher establishes classroom rules with the children, at the beginning of the year. Examples of basic rules for our children at the ELC are:

- Always use walking feet inside the building
- Use inside voices in the classroom
- Use gentle hands and words with friends
- Take care of our toys and belongings

Staff members provide guidance, modeling, redirection, and verbal praise to demonstrate and reinforce positive choices and effort towards appropriate behavior. Children are encouraged to be kind, respect property and assume personal responsibility for actions and words. The importance of self-regulation, decision making, and empowering the child to make good choices for appropriate behavior in the classroom and community are values upheld by staff. Giving children the power to make decisions about their day and choose appropriate behavior increases individual confidence and the ability to grow into independent, successful members of a classroom. Children are given options that result in a happy, peaceful, and cohesive classroom environment.

Positive discipline involves teaching expectations, character traits, and self-control. Staff members model the desired behaviors and provide guided practice for the children when opportunities are present. When children engage in inappropriate behavior, a staff member will explain the expected behavior. Parents and staff work together to discuss the goals of behavior management and strategies that best achieve the goals for a specific child. When interacting with children, staff are not permitted to use physical punishment, negative language, or speak to a child in a demeaning tone.

Staff members also guide children to develop self-control and orderly conduct in relationships with peers and adults. Inappropriate behavior towards peers or staff will be addressed by the teacher and the Director and shared with parents. To protect all children and encourage acceptable behavior at the ELC, staff will intervene immediately when a child becomes physically aggressive by removing the child from the situation.

The following methods are used to address unacceptable or aggressive behavior:

- Separate the children involved
- Comfort the injured child immediately
- Attend to any injury and complete the written notification to parents of children involved
- Use physical restraint as a last resort when necessary to ensure the safety of all children and staff. Physical restraint or seclusion should not be used except in situations where the child's behavior poses imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others and other interventions are ineffective.
- Use “think time” (for children two and older) to provide a safe place for a child to calm down and reflect, as needed.

Prohibited disciplinary practices include:

- corporal or any type of physical punishment including hitting, spanking, abrupt placement, jerking, shaking, beating, pinching, or other measures which produce physical pain
- withholding or the threat of denial of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities
- use of abusive, profane, or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling
- any form of public or private humiliation
- any form of emotional discipline including rejecting, isolating, or hostile or angry tones of voice.

Termination of Care

Glen Mar ELC reserves the right to terminate care at will and without notice but will do our best to work with the child and parent(s). If the leadership team of Glen Mar ELC determines whether a child or parents/guardians is behaving in a way that compromises the physical or emotional safety of other children, families, staff, or does not comply with policies and procedures, parents/guardians will be informed. Such behavior could result in termination of care, effective immediately. By signing this handbook, you indicate your understanding that care can be terminated at any time, without notice.

Disruptive/Unsafe Behavior

It is important to work closely with families to help children through any difficult behavior that may arise. Many of these behaviors are age-appropriate and part of development. Oftentimes, these behaviors can be extinguished or redirected with classroom modifications. When behaviors reach beyond normal limits, staff will work with families to develop a behavior modification plan that empowers both the child(ren) and the teachers to work towards success. If behaviors continue after a plan is in place, the following may occur:

- Parents will be referred to an outside resource for guidance such as The CARE Center of Howard County, Child Find, or Infant and Toddler Program. These are programs offered to families through Howard County and/or the State of Maryland and will assist parents and teachers in helping children be successful.
- If the behavior escalates or becomes unsafe for the child, other children, or staff, a parent may be requested to pick up the child for the remainder of the day. Parents are expected to pick up the child within 60 minutes of contact.
- In severe cases, the child may present needs beyond what the Glen Mar ELC is staffed and

trained to accommodate. If the ELC is not able to provide the support to meet the needs of the child, the Director will consult with the family to discuss options. Depending on specific circumstances, if the child cannot be safely cared for at the ELC, the ELC reserves the right to terminate care.

Biting Policy

Biting can be a temporary, developmental behavior for children ages 12 months through age three, as they are learning to communicate wants and needs. However, it can be frustrating and painful for all families involved. When chronic or repetitive biting occurs, staff will work with parents to develop a plan to eliminate the biting behavior. Collaboration and consistency, between parents and staff, are the key to success. If biting continues after a plan has been in place, families may be referred to seek additional support from outside resources such as The Howard County Infants and Toddlers or the Care Center. These resources may provide staff to come to the ELC to work with the child and suggest additional interventions to alleviate the behavior. If the behavior continues or presents a safety risk for other children, termination of care may be considered.

VIII. SECURITY PROCEDURES

Fire Drills - Each staff member will receive training on current fire and emergency plans for the ELC including preparing an evacuation plan, the position of the fire alarms, fire drill routine, and duties of staff members during an emergency or practice drill.

Safe Sanctuary - All ELC staff members are required to complete Safe Sanctuary Training (through Glen Mar) at least annually. Safe Sanctuary training includes requirements for providing a safe, secure space for children, Child Abuse reporting procedures, and requirements for two adults present with children.

Security Cameras - To ensure the safety and security of all children, staff, parents, and visitors, as well as the security of our facility, Glen Mar Early Learning Center is equipped with a 24-hour video surveillance system. Security cameras are installed in classrooms, hallways, outdoor play areas, and the parking lot and may conduct video surveillance of any portion of its premises at any time. The only exception being private areas of restrooms. Video cameras have been positioned around our facility to promote the safety and security of families, staff, and property. Information about your child(ren) and family is confidential. Information will not be released unless required to do so by enforcement agencies, child protection agencies, or the government.

Swipe Cards - The swipe card access system, policy, and procedures are provided to increase the overall security to enter the Early Learning Center and to augment the safety of the children enrolled here. It demonstrates the importance Glen Mar United Methodist Church and Glen Mar ELC place on the protection of the most vulnerable among us. We are aware that any deterrence system is only as effective as the cooperative efforts of families and staff. The common areas of the church are not restricted access areas.

This policy applies to swipe card access to the main interior entry doors of the Glen Mar ELC. No other entry or exits are swipe card accessible and secured in this way. Each enrolled child's parent/guardian may apply to participate in the swipe card access program which benefits all families and staff. Additionally, ELC and church staff will have authorized swipe cards to the ELC classroom wing. If you need additional information about Swipe Cards, contact the office.

Drop Off/Authorized Pick-Up Procedure – Parents are expected to park in the parking lot to the left of the entrance driveway and not in the fire access lanes. The ignition of the automobile should be turned off. In the interest of safety, always walk your children to and from the ELC. Parents/guardians are required to sign in upon arrival and sign out at departure. This is a legal document which shows when the ELC is responsible for a child. After signing your child in, walk him/her into the classroom and leave them in the care of a staff member.

At the time of enrollment, an emergency form must be completed with the names of at least three people to whom your child may be released. As changes occur, please provide the changes in writing, and submit them to the front office. To ensure compliance with custody orders, a certified copy of all custody orders must be provided to the office for the child's file. If a peace or protective order has been issued, please provide the information to the office for your child's file. The ELC is not a visitation site and will not be responsible for determining compliance with visitation schedules.

Our staff is instructed not to let any child leave the ELC with someone who is not listed on the emergency card. A picture ID will be required for anyone listed that may not be familiar to staff. Anyone picking up a child must be at least 18 years old. Parents need to inform the ELC office and teacher when someone other than the parent will be picking up a child.

If someone is picking up your child who is not listed on the emergency card, please send a written note, or call the office with the person's name, phone number, and time the child will be picked up. A picture ID will be required to verify identity. Parents may also be contacted by ELC staff to verify a written note.

IX. PARENT RESOURCES AND FORMS

Forms available on our website: **www.glenmarelc.org**

- Registration Form
- Emergency Form
- Health Inventory Forms
- Electronic Funds Transfer Form
- Medication Form
- Allergy/ Asthma Action Plans and Checklists

Forms available in the front office:

- Swipe Card Form
- Medication Form
- Website & Social Media Acceptance Form
- Handbook Acknowledgement Page (available at end of handbook)
- Parent Code of Conduct

REMINDERS TO PARENTS

- Please label all your child's belongings.
- When dropping off and picking up your child, please make sure you are parked in the parking lot left of the Glen Mar ELC entrance.
- Please notify the Director and/or Administrative Assistant(s) of any address, phone number, email or contact changes in your child's file.
- Please notify us if your child will be out due to an illness in order that we may notify other parents of symptoms to look out for.
- Every child should be signed in/out of the building. Sign-in sheets are used for attendance in case of emergency evacuation. Your child needs to be taken to the teacher and under their supervision after being signed in.
- Please be aware that your child will not be released to any person other than those listed on your release form after verbal notification to administrative staff. In case of an emergency please contact the center of any changes.
- Tuition late fee – grace period of 5 days provided. After the fifth day of the month, a late fee is charged (see registration form).
- There will be a fee charged if you are late in picking up your child. (See Parent Handbook and Late Fee sheet).
- Tuition is prorated over the course in which your child is enrolled regardless of the number of days in the month – see Registration Form.

GLEN MAR ELC PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Please print this page, sign, and return it to the ELC office.

Thank you for entrusting Glen Mar Early Learning Center with your child. The ELC is a nurturing place for young children to learn and grow. We appreciate the support from families and children to promote a climate of positivity and strong, caring relationships.

I acknowledge receipt of the Glen Mar ELC Handbook, have read and understand the Handbook and agree to abide by the rules, policies, procedures, and expectations. All policies in the Parent Handbook will be strictly enforced. The signature also indicates an understanding that Glen Mar ELC may terminate the care at any time, without notice.

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____

Print Parent Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct

We value and encourage communication between parents and our school staff and leadership. We strive to speak praise and affirmation in public and words of concern in private. We ask parents to speak directly to staff about all concerns rather than venting them in the community. This allows the continual improvement of the school while maintaining a healthy spirit of mutual support.

For all concerns pertaining to classroom instruction, classroom management, and/or your child's progress:

1. Parents are encouraged to speak directly with the teacher first. If they come to the Director, they will be sent to the teacher with follow up by the Director.
2. If the parents feel their concern was not addressed, they should go to the Director for a follow-up. Please note that social media is NOT an acceptable way of sharing your concerns.

In order to provide a safe, nurturing, and positive environment for all children, families, and staff, we ask that all parents and guardians follow this Code of Conduct. It is designed to promote respectful and cooperative relationships and ensure the well-being of everyone involved. By enrolling your child(ren) in the Glen Mar ELC, you agree to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. **Be Courteous:** Treat all staff members, children, and other parents with respect and courtesy, both verbally and in writing.
2. **Appropriate Language:** Use appropriate language at all times while on ELC premises or during ELC-related events. Refrain from using profanity, offensive language, or derogatory remarks.
3. **Conflict Resolution:** Address any concerns or issues with ELC staff in a calm and respectful manner. Schedule a meeting to discuss concerns privately and avoid confrontations in front of children.
4. **Confidentiality:** Respect the confidentiality of all children, families, and staff. For example, refrain from discussing private information with non-ELC staff in person or on social media.
5. **Professional Boundaries:** Uphold a professional relationship with staff members, ensuring interactions remain appropriate and respectful. Refrain from personal engagements that could undermine the integrity of the ELC environment.
6. **Social Media:** Exercise discretion and respect when posting about the ELC, staff, or children on social media. For example, refrain from posting any information that could be considered defamatory, offensive, or a breach of confidentiality. Refrain from taking pictures or videos of other children without the express consent of their parents.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signatures

Date: _____