

ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA
EARLY LEARNING CENTER AND CHILD CARE
PARENT HANDBOOK

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Welcome & General Information

Welcome to St. Teresa of Calcutta Early Learning Center and Child Care (STC ELC). Throughout this handbook, “parent” refers to the primary individual(s) responsible for a child’s care. The terms “school,” “STC,” “STC ELC,” and “Child Care” refer to St. Teresa of Calcutta Early Learning Center and Child Care.

STC ELC is part of a multi-parish organization within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Founded in 2008, we are licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) and governed by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). We are located at 256 Swamp Pike, Schwenksville, PA 19473 and serve families throughout Montgomery, Chester, and Berks Counties.

- Hours: 7:00 AM-5:30 PM, Monday-Friday, 12 months a year.
- Website: www.stteresaeearlylearningcenter.org. Family information is updated frequently.
- Part-time enrollment may be available but is not guaranteed. Availability depends on enrollment and staffing.
- At enrollment, families must designate expected drop-off and pick-up times on the Enrollment Agreement. Please remain within 15 minutes of those estimated times because staffing is planned around enrollment schedules.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORTING: Families must notify STC ELC as soon as a child is diagnosed with a communicable disease. Failure to report a diagnosed illness may result in dismissal from the program. Examples include flu, COVID, Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease, and RSV. Reportable-disease information is available through the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Pennsylvania reportable diseases: [PA Department of Health - Reportable Diseases](#)

Mission & Philosophy

Mission

Our goal is to provide young children with a loving, nurturing, and safe environment in which they can develop emotionally, physically, intellectually, and socially. We want to love them first; education follows through exposure to lessons and planned activities. We promote a positive atmosphere where parents, teachers, staff, and children interact with mutual respect and caring.

We are committed to providing students with the opportunities and skills necessary to face the challenges of our community as people of faith and vision, with the will to succeed as productive members of society.

Our Philosophy

We believe each child is a precious gift from God with unique qualities. We help children learn compassion, respect for others, and awareness of the world around them. Religious concepts are woven into our curriculum and daily classroom activities, and children are taught about God’s love for them.

Children learn best in a play-oriented, hands-on environment where school-readiness skills develop at each child’s own developmental level. Through play, children learn to socialize, communicate thoughts and feelings, organize, problem-solve, and use their imaginations. Our activities support cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth and teach the “golden rule” - to treat others as they would like to be treated. We value play because that is where learning begins.

Programs & Curriculum

Curriculum Overview

STC ELC serves children from 6 weeks through 5 years. Program ages are estimates rather than strict placement rules; a child may move sooner or later based on development, enrollment, and classroom availability. We use theme-based instruction and Frog Street Press curricula from Infants through Pre-K Plus. Frog Street integrates character education across 10 learning domains guided by the Pennsylvania Learning Standards. More information is available through our website.

Infants

Ages approximately 6 weeks-1 year. The Infant classroom provides a nurturing environment for physical, emotional, and social development. Skills include vocal sounds and simple gestures, exploration, handling toys and objects, sitting, pulling to stand, and walking. Families provide diapers, wipes, bibs, utensils, and all food/drink needed while the child is in care.

Pre-Toddlers

Ages approximately 1-1 1/2 years. Children continue developing physical, emotional, and social skills through independent and cooperative play, simple words and gestures, object recognition, walking/running, drinking from a sippy cup, sleeping on a mat rather than in a crib, and eating solid/finger foods.

Toddlers

Ages approximately 1 1/2-2 1/2 years. The Toddler program combines care, love, and beginning education. Children practice following simple directions, recognizing named pictures, throwing and kicking a ball, engaging with peers, and beginning color, letter, and shape recognition. Children should be able to feed themselves appropriate finger foods and begin spoon-feeding themselves.

Little Learners

Ages approximately 2 1/2-3 1/2 years. Children practice turn-taking, multi-step directions, fine-motor tasks such as buttons, screws, and other moving parts, pedaling a tricycle, toilet use, and responsibility for belongings. Children should self-feed with little or no assistance, begin cleaning up after meals, use open-top cups, and practice fine-motor independence. When exiting this program, a child should be potty trained and need only minimal bathroom assistance.

Preschool

Ages approximately 3-4 1/2 years. Children must be 3 by August 31 and fully potty trained, needing no assistance. The classroom schedule is not designed for diapers or pull-ups throughout the day. Children must be able to communicate the need to use the bathroom and use it independently rather than relying only on scheduled bathroom times.

Preschool strengthens independence, multi-step direction-following, responsibility for belongings, toilet independence, and beginning academics. Frog Street provides a comprehensive, dual-language approach across 10 learning domains. A more formal religious component is introduced, including prayers and monthly Bible verses.

Pre-K

Ages approximately 4-5 years. Children must be 4 by August 31. Pre-K supports clear speech and full sentences, knowledge of name/address/phone number, writing letters and numbers, hopping/skipping/balance, and collaboration with peers. Frog Street Pre-K continues with weekly instructional plans, integrated STEAM projects, and Conscious Discipline® for social-emotional development. Children may attend First Friday Mass with Father Brandt.

Pre-K Plus

Ages approximately 4 1/2-5 years, designed for older 4-year-olds and younger 5-year-olds who miss the kindergarten cutoff or may benefit from another year of Pre-K. The class extends Pre-K skills and may include kindergarten-level skills for advanced learners. It combines advanced Frog Street content with beginning aspects of the St. Teresa K-8 kindergarten curriculum. Children attend First Friday Mass monthly with Father Brandt.

Summer Enrollment & Extended Absences

All children are enrolled for the summer months by default. Families not attending for summer must notify the Director in writing by February 1 annually.

- A non-refundable \$1000 Summer Hold Fee is required to save a child's placement for Fall when the child leaves the program for summer. The fee is due June 1. The fee reflects the need to hold the placement while other families may be turned away and operating costs continue during summer.
- The Summer Hold Fee applies to full-time and part-time students leaving for summer. It does not apply to a full-time student who simply reduces to 2-3 days per week or switches to half-days for summer.

A family that indicates they need a portion of, or all of, the months of June and August for care will be charged full tuition for those two months and a \$500 hold fee for July only. This hold fee is due on July 1.

- Summer tuition is due June 1, July 1, and August 1. Billing follows the greatest number of days per week the child attends for at least one week during that month. Example: if a child attends 5 days in part of June, reduces in July, and returns to 5 days in August, June and August are billed at the 5-day rate and July at the part-time rate.
- Families planning to dis-enroll for summer and return in Fall must complete the written "Automatic Enrollment" process distributed in January so placement can be reserved.
- Vacation credits are not offered. Regular tuition remains due on the first of each month even when a child is absent. If required fees are not paid, the child's placement may be forfeited to a family on the waiting list.

Family Communication & School Life

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Families may request a conference at any time when they have questions about a child's progress or a concern. Families of children ages 3 and older are encouraged to meet with teachers at least once each academic year. STC ELC also offers in-person conference opportunities near the beginning of the school year to help establish a learning partnership and again in May after progress reports are issued.

- Conferences generally focus solely on the child and are approximately 15 minutes long.
- Families may request a conference at any time and may decline an offered conference when they feel it is not needed.

- Teachers may request a meeting to discuss a child's learning plan, academic needs, or social/emotional needs. When a teacher determines a conference is necessary, refusal to meet may be grounds for termination of enrollment depending on the circumstances.
- Information about other children will not be shared because it violates family privacy.

Calendars & Newsletters

A monthly calendar of events is available in the lobby and on our website. Families should use www.stteresaeearlylearningcenter.org for current information. Newsletters are sent quarterly through Tadpoles to share upcoming activities, results of past events, articles, and other information; they are also posted on the website. Families are encouraged to read these communications regularly.

Holidays

A yearly holiday schedule is posted each January so families can plan for school closures. STC ELC closes for certain holidays and teacher in-service days; dates are subject to change. Regular tuition remains due for scheduled closures for both full-time and part-time enrollment.

Birthday Celebrations

Families must notify classroom teachers before sending a birthday food item so food allergies can be reviewed. Food must be store-bought, in the original container, and include the ingredient label. Invitations to private parties must be distributed discreetly to protect the feelings of children who are not invited.

Parking & Campus Safety

- The campus parking-lot speed limit is 25 mph. All traffic rules, including full stops at stop signs, must be followed.
- Parent parking is located in front of the Child Care entrance. Do not park in fire lanes, which must remain available for emergency vehicles.
- Children must be accompanied into the building and should have a hand held in the parking lot. Families enter through the Child Care front door.
- Do not leave a vehicle running and unattended while entering Child Care.

Children may never be left unattended in a vehicle while a parent drops off or picks up another child.

Enrollment, Transitions & Records

Enrollment Policy

Enrollment is open to children ages 6 weeks through 5 years and is granted without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, or disability. The Fee Agreement is not a contract guaranteeing service for any duration. STC ELC reserves the right to dismiss a parent or child at any time, with or without cause. Continued enrollment depends on the parent's and child's adherence to handbook policies, including timely payment of tuition and fees. All tuition, deposits, registration fees, trip/special event fees, and Summer Hold Fees are non-refundable.

Classroom Transitions

Transitions are based on the child's age; social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development; and availability in the current and next classroom. Most transitions occur in June and September. For classrooms younger than Preschool/Pre-K, a January or individual transition may occur based on enrollment and availability. January transitions are kept to a minimum whenever possible. Tuition does not change because of a classroom transition; it changes according to birthdate as described under Tuition Payments.

Student & Required Records

Every child must maintain a complete, current, confidential record containing all STC ELC and state-required forms. Information is shared with staff only as needed to meet the child's needs. A child without required or current records may not be permitted to attend.

- Emergency Contact Form/Application for Admission: updated at least every six months as required by DHS.
- Enrollment Agreement: updated at least every six months and when a child turns 1, 2, or 3 so tuition amounts can be updated.
- Health Appraisal: completed by a licensed physician and returned within 30 days of enrollment. A child may be suspended until the form is received. The form should be updated at each Well Child Visit and whenever a new immunization is received. An annual doctor visit is required.
- Vaccination records must remain current. When a child receives any vaccine, including an annual flu vaccine, STC ELC requires an updated immunization record.
- If a family chooses not to have the child receive the annual flu vaccination, a signed family letter is required; a sample form is available in the lobby.

- Children who are not immunized must have a medical exemption signed by a licensed physician. Religious exemptions are not accepted under the K-8 school policy through the Archdiocese.
- Required medical-needs forms, including allergy/asthma action plans when applicable, must be current for attendance.

Requests for Student Records

Parents/guardians may request a copy of their child's file at any time by submitting a written request to the Director. The Director will provide a copy of the child's academic records and observations. Records requested by a third party, such as a school district, require parent/guardian consent on the Request for Child's Records form before they are released.

Parent Access & Confidentiality

A parent may request a short visit to the classroom their child attends. State regulations do not allow individuals other than authorized teachers to care for classroom children. If a Family Court or other legal authority has established custody or visitation rights, the family must provide STC ELC with a copy of the order. Court orders will be followed unless the custodial parent requests a more liberal variation in writing.

Parents may occasionally be invited to volunteer. All required clearances must be completed before volunteering, and documentation must be provided to the Director or Assistant Director. A parent without required clearances may not volunteer in the classroom.

Visitors

Visitors, including non-custodial parents/guardians and individuals providing therapy, must schedule appointments and may enter child care areas only at the Director's discretion. Visitors are accompanied by a staff member at all times.

For child safety, photographs of school grounds, children, parents, or employees may not be posted to websites, blogs, or online social networks without appropriate permission. Photo Release forms are completed at enrollment; copies are available from the Management Office.

Attendance, Arrival, Departure & Release

Attendance

Families should notify STC ELC by 9:00 AM whenever a child will be absent. Contact may be made by phone at (610) 287-2500 ext. 3, through Tadpoles, or by emailing childcare@stteresacalcutta.com. The child must be marked absent in Tadpoles by a family member or the Director. Please also report illness so staff can monitor illness patterns. A medical note may be required following an illness-related absence.

Children arriving after 10:00 AM generally will not be accepted for the day. Late arrival can affect staffing and state-mandated ratios.

- Preschool, Pre-K, and Pre-K Plus children should arrive no later than 8:45 AM because class begins promptly at 9:00 AM. Consistent lateness or absence may result in a family meeting. Morning meeting/circle time sets the tone for the day and supports readiness for later learning.
- Half-day hours are 8:30 AM-12:30 PM. Half-day children may not be dropped off before 8:30 AM, and late-pick-up fees apply after 12:30 PM.

Arrival & Departure

Teachers sign children in electronically when they enter the classroom. A parent or authorized adult must escort the child to the designated classroom/assigned area and transfer the child directly to the supervising staff member. Children must remain under adult supervision at all times.

- Parents/guardians are asked not to use cell phones while on the premises and may be asked to put a phone away while talking or texting in the school.
- Parents are encouraged to help the child settle with the supervising staff member rather than "sneaking out." Staff will assist with transitions when needed.
- At arrival, families must follow the Medication Policy whenever medication is to be given during the day.
- Special instructions must be provided in writing - by letter or Tadpoles note - and discussed verbally with the teacher or Director. Examples include early pick-up, an alternate pick-up person, health issues from the prior night that should be monitored, and other information staff need to meet the child's needs.

Pick-Up Procedures

Once a parent enters the child's classroom at pick-up, the parent is solely responsible for supervising the child while on STC ELC premises. Children may not wander through hallways, bathrooms, classrooms, or playground areas. Please complete office/business matters before entering the classroom, briefly discuss the child's day as appropriate, and then exit the building directly. Because teachers must continue supervising the remaining children, an in-depth conversation should be scheduled for another time; a telephone conference may be arranged later in the day or during naptime when appropriate.

Families must remain on the Child Care side of the building during Child Care drop-off and pick-up. To speak with K-8 staff, use a K-8 restroom, or deliver K-8 paperwork, exit through the Child Care entrance and enter through the Education Center K-8 entrance. The Education Center Office is open 9:00 AM-4:00 PM, Monday-Friday.

Late Pick-Up & Fees

STC ELC closes at 5:30 PM. If an emergency will prevent timely pick-up, contact the Director's Office immediately at 610-287-2500 ext. 3. If no communication is received, staff will attempt to contact the parent and emergency contacts. If a child has not been picked up by 6:30 PM and the Director's Office has not been contacted, Social Services will be contacted as required. Families are responsible for keeping all contact numbers current.

- Leaving the building with your child between 5:31-5:35 PM: \$20.
- Leaving the building with your child between 5:36-5:40 PM: \$40.
- Beginning at 5:41 PM: \$1 per minute.
- Families are encouraged to arrive by 5:25 PM so they can complete pick-up and leave by 5:30 PM. The late fee is payable directly to the staff member(s) who remained with the child.
- After 3 late pick-ups in a year, the late fee increases to \$5 per minute after the third offense.
- A family with 6 or more late pick-ups in a year, or a family that fails to pay the required late fee by the end of the next business day, may be dismissed with little or no notice.

Release of Children

Families must identify at least two individuals, in addition to both parents, who are authorized to receive the child on a regular or emergency basis. Authorized individuals may be asked for photo ID until staff know them.

- A non-custodial parent may be excluded from authorized pick-up only through a court order. A copy of the order must be maintained in the child's confidential record.
- If an unauthorized individual arrives, a parent or emergency contact will be called. If no authorized adult can be reached, the child will not be released. Police may be contacted if an unauthorized person becomes uncooperative.

STC ELC will not release a child to a parent, relative, or other authorized adult who appears impaired by drugs or alcohol. A parent/emergency contact and, when appropriate, police and DHS will be contacted.

Tuition, Fees & Schedule Changes

Tuition Payments

Tuition is billed monthly through FACTS Management to the email address provided by the family and is due on the first of each month. Tuition not paid by close of business on the first will incur a \$30 late-payment fee. Auto withdrawal is the only accepted form of payment for child care tuition.

- If an outstanding balance remains on the 15th, the child may not return until payment is made. Families will be notified by email. Contact the STC ELC office in advance when payment difficulty is anticipated so alternative arrangements may be discussed.
- No credit is given for scheduled holidays, teacher in-service days, a child's illness, inclement-weather closure, pandemic, or acts of God.
- Tuition changes when a child reaches age 1, 2, and 3. The new rate takes effect the month after the birthday. Example: an August 27 birthday changes the tuition rate beginning September 1.

Registration Fee

The non-refundable registration fee is \$200 annually (\$300 for families) to reserve placement for the upcoming school year. It is charged at initial enrollment and annually in April for the upcoming Fall.

Tuition Agreement

At enrollment, the Director provides a digital Tuition Agreement stating the child's name, program, start date, tuition rate, services included, and payment schedule. Both custodial parents are required to sign. Compliance with the agreement is a condition of enrollment. The agreement is updated every six months as required by licensure and requires parent signatures at those times.

Withdrawal

A one-month written notice to the Director is required to withdraw a child or change a child's schedule for any reason. Tuition is non-refundable. Notice may be emailed to childcare@stteresacalcutta.com. If the required notice is not provided, the family will be charged for that notice period.

Additional Days/Hours

Part-time families may not switch scheduled days. Requests for an additional day must be made to the Director at least 48 hours in advance. Additional days depend on enrollment, space, and staffing and are not guaranteed. Last-minute requests are considered only when adequate space and staff are available. The Drop-In fee is \$90 per day, per child.

Health & Wellness

General Health & Exclusion

The health of all children is a priority. Group care is not appropriate for a child who is ill or unable to participate fully in the school day. Families are asked to keep children home when they show symptoms of illness. A child who arrives showing signs of ill health may not be accepted for care.

Symptoms that require exclusion include, but are not limited to:

1. Severe pain or discomfort, particularly in the joints, abdomen, or ears.
2. Vomiting once, or diarrhea (2 or more episodes in a 24-hour period, including episodes at home). STC ELC does not accept a doctor note attributing diarrhea to teething or food; a child with diarrhea will be sent home.
3. Severe coughing or sore throat.
4. Forehead temperature of 100.4°F or higher and/or fever accompanied by behavior changes or other symptoms.
5. Jaundice (yellow skin or eyes).
6. Red eyes with discharge.
7. Infected or untreated skin patches/lesions, severe itching of body/scalp, or a cut/lesion/sore that is not scabbed over or is actively bleeding/seeping fluid.
8. Difficult or rapid breathing.
9. Unexplained skin rash, or a skin rash other than diaper rash lasting more than 24 hours. An unexplained rash requires medical evaluation.
10. Swollen joints, visibly enlarged lymph nodes, or stiff neck.
11. Blood or pus from ears, skin, urine, or stool.
12. Unusual behavior such as listlessness, loss of normal appetite, or confusion.
13. Symptoms of chicken pox, COVID-19, impetigo, lice, scabies, or strep throat.

Illness During the Day & Return to Care

If a child becomes ill during the day, a parent will be notified through Tadpoles and/or by phone in an emergency. The child will rest or participate in a quiet diversion in a separate classroom area until an authorized person arrives. Families are expected to arrange pick-up within one hour; if pick-up is not expected within one hour, the emergency contact must be called.

A child sent home for illness may not return until all signs of illness have been gone for 48 hours and the child is medication-free. An exception may be made when a licensed physician provides written clearance that the child does not present a health threat, can participate fully in school activities, and has been symptom- and medication-free for at least 24 hours.

Communicable Disease Reporting

Parents and staff must notify the school within 24 hours when a child or family member develops a known or suspected communicable disease. In cases of certain communicable diseases, STC ELC must report to the Department of Health within 24 hours so control measures can be implemented. A child who is not fully immunized because of age or a medical condition may be excluded during an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable illness as directed by the state health department. Families will be notified in writing through Tadpoles when a communicable disease is reported. STC ELC follows OCDEL, CDC, Montgomery County, and DHS reporting guidance; DHS guidance is available from the Director upon request.

Doctor Note Requirements

When a medical note is required for return to group care, it must provide non-restricted permission to attend. STC ELC cannot keep a child indoors or exclude the child from active/gross-motor activities during the school day.

The note must state that the child is able to attend “group care and does not pose a risk to themselves or others by attending” and that “the illness they are being treated for is not contagious.” It must be signed and dated by a physician.

STC ELC may require a note from a medical professional after any absence due to illness or suspected illness. Notes may be faxed or handed directly to the Director at return. Do not give the note to classroom staff or leave a child without the required clearance. If exclusion symptoms occur while the child is in care, the family will be contacted and expected to arrange pick-up within one hour.

Anesthesia

After a medical procedure requiring anesthesia, families must keep the child home for at least 24 hours after the child wakes so the family can monitor recovery. For a morning procedure, the child is expected to remain home both the day of the

procedure and the following day. This applies to procedures including, but not limited to, tonsillectomy, adenoidectomy, tympanostomy tube placement, circumcision, and minor skin procedures. Families must notify the office before any procedure requiring anesthesia.

Medication, Allergies & Topical Products

Medication Procedures

Medication administration is an optional service provided as a professional courtesy and is not required by law. Teachers and management check medication logs and dispense medication unless it is emergency medication such as an epinephrine injector or inhaler, which is kept with the classroom/teacher. The person administering medication signs and dates the log.

- For a medication the child has never taken before, the first 2 doses must be given at home before the medication can be sent to school so the family can monitor for an allergic reaction.
- Families must provide medication in its original container with the prescription label, the proper measuring device, and the doctor's authorization/prescription. A parent must sign the Medication Log each day the medication is to be administered, including prescribed over-the-counter medication.
- STC ELC may administer medications prescribed 3-4 times per day when timing requires a school dose. Medication prescribed twice daily is expected to be given at home.
- Over-the-counter medicines such as Tylenol, Motrin, cough medicine, teething ointments, medicated diaper creams, and Neosporin may not be administered unless prescribed by a doctor.
- Expired medication cannot be administered. Every medication container must include the child's full first and last name. One container may be used for only one child; siblings may not share medication containers.

Emergency Medication & Allergy Policy

A child with asthma, severe allergy, or another condition requiring emergency medication must have physician instructions and a prescription documented on an individual Action Plan. All medication listed on the allergy/asthma action plan, along with required measuring devices, must be provided and kept at STC ELC while the child is in attendance.

- An authorization form must be on file for allergies requiring medication or emergency medication.
- When emergency medication is needed, it will be administered first and the parent will then be notified. If a child is having severe difficulty breathing, emergency services will be called before the parent.
- Families must sign the medication log when medication is dropped off and when medication has been dispensed.
- Families should obtain a detailed allergy/asthma action plan from the child's pediatrician with step-by-step administration instructions and must provide any training staff need to care for the child.
- Only prescription medication in original packaging with a pharmacy label will be accepted for emergency allergy/asthma care. Medication must remain unexpired.
- Emergency medications are kept out of children's reach in the classroom emergency bag near the exit. Teachers check expiration dates monthly and send reminders as expiration approaches.

Diaper Creams, Sunscreens & Powders

Over-the-counter diaper ointments, creams, sunscreens, or lotions must be labeled with the child's FULL first and FULL last name. Powders are not permitted. Medicated products are subject to the medication requirements above.

Daily Care & Classroom Items

Toys, Sharing & Show and Tell

Personal toys should remain at home except when a teacher has designated a Show and Tell opportunity. Toys from home can be difficult to share, may break, and may contain small parts that are inappropriate for group care. Classrooms are supplied with age-appropriate materials that promote cooperative play and individual growth.

- Teacher-approved Show and Tell items may include books, photographs, sea shells, special treasures, or theme-related items.
- Items associated with violence, including guns or war toys, are not permitted.

Items to Bring to School

INFANTS: Each full-time infant is provided a crib and mattress. Families should provide:

- At least 2 port-a-crib sheets (not Pack n Play size because those may be too loose). Confirm the exact size with the office.
- A sleeping bag for the cot once the child is approximately 11 months old, walking, or attempting to climb out of a crib. Cot transition may occur regardless of age for safety and transition preparation.
- 2-3 complete, seasonally appropriate changes of clothing; diapers and wipes; several bibs/burp cloths; sweater/sweatshirt and hat; socks; and shoes once pulling to stand/learning to walk.
- All food, drink, and serving utensils. Bottles must be filled at home. Refrigeration is provided. STC ELC cannot disinfect family feeding utensils, so they are sent home daily.

Families must wash crib linens at least weekly. Label food, bottles, caps, clothing, utensils, bowls, cups, and other belongings with the child's first and last name; bottle labels may need frequent replacement.

TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS: Each child is provided a low nap cot. Families should provide:

- Two complete changes of clothing, including socks and shoes. Closed-back/toe plastic shoes may be helpful during toilet training because they can be wiped clean. **ALL LABELLED with child's first AND LAST name. No initials please.**
- A labeled lunch container with two snacks and one lunch each day. **ALL LABELLED with child's first AND LAST name. No initials please.**
- Diapers/wipes and/or extra underwear while toilet training. **ALL LABELLED with child's first AND LAST name. No initials please.**
- A child-size sleeping bag and, if desired, a small favorite sleep toy or blanket. **ALL LABELLED with child's first AND LAST name. No initials please.**

All belongings must be clearly labeled. Replace clothing as seasons and sizes change. Rubber-soled, closed-toe shoes such as sneakers are recommended for active play; open-toed shoes should not be worn. Children need weather-appropriate outdoor clothing every day because outdoor play is encouraged year-round. Sleeping bags are sent home weekly for laundering.

Rest Time

Infants under 6 months rest according to their individual schedules. After 6 months, the Infant program begins moving toward a routine of one morning and one afternoon nap. Toddler and Preschool/Pre-K classes generally rest from 12:30-2:30 PM or 1:00-3:00 PM, depending on the class. Children under age 5 are required by Pennsylvania regulation to have a two-hour rest period.

A child who is outgrowing a nap will remain on the cot for the required rest period and may be offered quiet cot activities. STC ELC cannot guarantee a specific nap length or wake-up time and will not keep a tired child awake or wake a sleeping child early at a parent's request.

In Pre-K Plus, most children turn 5 by January. Beginning in January, children may choose to rest or participate in a quiet hour with review, assessment, and enrichment activities. Families who want their child to continue lying down may submit that preference in writing to the Director. A child who asks to rest and falls asleep will not be awakened early.

Food: Meals & Snacks

Families must introduce new foods at home before sending them to STC ELC so any allergic reaction can be observed at home first.

Infant families must send prepared bottles of breast milk or formula labeled with the child's name. Mothers may arrange to breastfeed at school. Families must provide and update feeding schedules as needed. Bottles are warmed in a bottle warmer, shaken, and temperature-tested. Remaining contents are discarded after a feeding, so families are encouraged to send the expected feeding amount plus one extra prefilled bottle.

- Solid foods for infants/toddlers should be sent in labeled jars or small containers. Glass is not permitted.
- All food - commercially prepared or home-cooked - should be portioned in clean, sanitized containers and labeled with the child's first and last name and the date. Food without an ice pack may be refrigerated on arrival. In older classrooms, refrigerator use should be limited mainly to milk because of class size and space.
- In warm weather, transport perishable food in an insulated cooler.
- Food that must be reheated, except infant bottles, is microwaved to a safe temperature of 165°F. Send it in a microwave-safe container and label it for reheating. No glass containers.
- Breakfast may be sent for children arriving before 8:00 AM and must be ready to serve. Children arriving after 8:00 AM should eat breakfast at home. Mid-morning snack is served between 9:00 and 10:00 AM depending on the classroom schedule.
- Lunch must be ready to serve. Choking hazards such as hot dogs, grapes, or cherry tomatoes must be cut at home into pieces approximately the size of a pinkie finger. Teachers are not able to cut food.
- Bibs, bottles, cups, bowls, spoons, and similar items must go home daily. Department of Health requirements do not allow STC ELC to wash and store these items.
- Children are encouraged to eat the balanced meal sent by the family but are not forced to finish food. Once developmentally able to self-feed, staff will not place food directly into the child's mouth.

Emergency Closings & Evacuation

STC ELC will make every reasonable effort to open on time and remain open during inclement weather. Extremely dangerous road conditions or a state of emergency may require cancellation, early closing, or delayed opening. Families should monitor Tadpoles email/text messages and www.stteresaeearlylearningcenter.org for announcements.

If the building must be evacuated, staff will maintain staff-child ratios to the best of their ability and relocate children to a nearby location according to the Emergency Plan, which is available in the lobby and on the website. Staff responsible for groups will carry emergency contact information and attendance records. Families will be contacted by telephone and/or Tadpoles. For safety, children's emergency location will NOT be posted on the website.

Guidance, Discipline, Suspension & Expulsion

Positive Guidance & Behavior Management

STC ELC believes that active engagement, smooth transitions, consistent limits, positive guidance, and redirection reduce behavior problems and help children develop self-discipline. Staff may minimize attention to minor negative behavior while emphasizing children who are making appropriate choices. When redirection is not successful, a short “break” may be used for a child who continues to disrupt others or is at risk of harming self or others. Children are taught that choices have consequences while their creativity and spirit are respected.

- Aggressive, purposeful physical behavior toward another child or staff member is unacceptable. Staff will intervene immediately to protect children and redirect behavior.
- Physical restraint is used only when necessary to protect the child or others and only for as long as needed to control the immediate safety situation.
- Children are shown positive alternatives rather than simply being told “no.” Parents are informed of significant incidents, and a conference/behavior plan may be requested.
- Corporal punishment, cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, frightening a child, verbal abuse, withholding food as punishment, and punishment for toileting accidents are prohibited. Children are not disciplined for sleep habits, food consumption, or lack of participation in scheduled activities.
- A child’s age, emotional state, and past experiences are considered in discipline decisions. Any concern about a violation of the discipline policy should be reported to the Director immediately. The policy applies to everyone on school grounds, including parents/guardians.

Suspension, Expulsion & Alternative Care

If behavior is repeatedly uncontrollable, extremely/consistently disruptive, harmful to self or others, or if the child has physical or support needs that cannot be safely met in group care, STC ELC may ask a family to remove the child for the day or several days, obtain a professional evaluation, or find alternative care.

Alternative care may be required when:

- The program/group-care setting prevents the child from participating in activities in a physically, socially, and/or emotionally comfortable way.
- The child requires care beyond what staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children, including a need for additional one-to-one staffing that would place the classroom out of ratio.
- The child consistently attempts to leave a supervised area, such as a classroom, playground, or indoor space, unsupervised and/or without permission.
- The child consistently creates a risk of harmful disease or bodily-fluid exposure, including biting, spitting, throwing food/feces, or spreading bodily fluids.
- The program or daily schedule is not a good fit for the child.
- Teachers do not have the knowledge required to meet the child’s specialized needs.
- The family does not communicate regularly about development or refuses conferences/meetings with staff.
- The child is coping with experiences that require professional mental-health support that is not readily available.

STC ELC and families are encouraged to work together to prevent expulsion by building strong relationships and discussing the child’s culture, social/emotional and behavioral strengths and concerns, learning approaches, and strategies that work at home and in care.

When continued placement jeopardizes physical safety and a child injures another child or teacher in a way that requires ice or first aid, the following progression may be used:

- First injury: parent is called to pick up the child for the day.
- Second injury: parent is asked to pick up the child for the day and consider a break from school for the week.
- Third injury: parent is asked to arrange alternative care within two weeks.
- Fourth injury: parent is asked to arrange alternative care immediately.

Suspension, expulsion, or limitation of services may be considered when a family is unwilling to participate in meetings/evaluations recommended. For example: MCIU-recommended mental-health/developmental evaluation, obtain a private evaluation, or participate in available child mental-health assistance; or when continued placement clearly fails to meet the child’s mental-health/social-emotional needs as agreed by staff and/or family. Dismissal for behavior concerns remains at the sole discretion of STC ELC staff.

Toilet Training Policy

STC ELC approaches toilet training calmly, patiently, and without shame. Children train at different times and rates. No child is forced to sit on the toilet or ridiculed for accidents. Staff use encouragement, praise, consistency, and confidence-building rather than negative tactics.

Families must consistently use underwear at home for 2 full weeks before asking STC ELC to begin underwear at school. To enter the 3-year-old Preschool program, a child must be fully potty trained with minimal/no accidents (less than 1 per day/per week at school) and be able to verbalize the need to use the bathroom outside scheduled bathroom times. If a child is not yet fully trained and going independently with little or no assistance by their scheduled transition/start date in the Preschool Classroom, we may need to temporarily suspend their enrollment to ensure we are following licensing and safety guidelines. We will make every effort to ensure that a child's spot in the program is not taken for 30 days if this were to occur, however a family may be responsible for that month's tuition even if their child is asked to stay home to potty train. We will make every reasonable effort to allow the child to remain in our program for care, but cannot guarantee that we will have availability for that child should the younger classrooms be at capacity.

Incident/Accident Reports

When a child is injured in a way that requires first aid - including a bandage, ice, or other medical attention - the family will receive an accident/"Boo Boo" report through Tadpoles or at pick up that day, and a copy will be kept in the child's school record. For a serious injury, particularly a serious injury to the neck area or above, a parent will receive a phone call at the time of the accident and/or a photograph and description of the injury.

In an emergency, the child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest hospital/emergency facility, and a parent will be contacted to meet an accompanying staff member there. Emergency contact information must remain current. A child cannot be transported for emergency care or receive emergency care at school unless the emergency-care waivers in the enrollment packet have been signed.

Inclusion, Special Needs & IFSP/IEP

Inclusion Policy Statement

STC ELC recognizes that each child grows at an individual pace. Teachers create activities that engage varied learners, encourage curiosity and exploration through the five senses, and use ongoing observations to adapt lessons to children's development. Children are accepted regardless of race, color, religion, sexual preference, age, gender, national origin, disability, or political beliefs of the child or child's parents.

Special Needs Policy

Children with special needs may be accepted under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Families are treated with dignity and respect for individual needs/differences, and families are expected to treat staff with the same dignity and respect. STC ELC maintains confidentiality regarding special needs.

Individual Education Plan Policy

Each child has the right to be respected as an individual with consideration for interests, handicaps, special needs, learning style, and pace. STC ELC partners with families whose children have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP). A current copy of the plan is required so staff can determine whether needs can be met in group care and apply relevant goals and supports. An initial conference may be required before admission.

- Classrooms are limited to approximately 20% enrollment of children with IEPs so plans can be supported to the best of the program's ability.
- STC ELC teachers are not trained special-education professionals. Families and outside professionals must provide the support, training, and information needed for the child's specific needs.
- Families should ask current outside professionals to contact STC ELC so school and outside supports can coordinate strategies.
- Teachers use IFSP/IEP notes and goals, may attend IFSP/IEP meetings when requested, and collaborate with professionals providing services. Reasonable accommodations will be made to support approved services within the facility.

Misrepresentation or omission by a family regarding a child's needs or IFSP/IEP is considered dishonest and is grounds for dismissal from the program.

Special Medical Needs Policy

STC ELC does not have a certified nurse assigned directly to Child Care. The program will make every reasonable effort to accommodate a child with special medical needs who can attend a group-care setting under written instructions from a medical professional. Families must notify STC ELC of special medical needs and provide required information/forms. Confidentiality will be maintained. Misrepresentation or omission of a child's special medical needs is grounds for dismissal.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Under the Child Protective Services Act, all STC ELC employees are mandated reporters and must report suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Employees do not need to discuss suspicions with parents before making a report and

are not required to investigate the cause of suspicious marks, behavior, or conditions. Mandated reporters may be held criminally responsible for failing to report. STC ELC takes this responsibility seriously and will make warranted reports to protect children.

Possible reasons for a report include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on a child's body.
- Severe verbal reprimands.
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, or season.
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints such as a car seat or seat belt.
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol.
- Failing to provide appropriate meals, including a drink.
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time.
- Failing to attend to the special needs of a disabled child.
- Sending a sick child to care medicated to hide symptoms that would normally require the child to remain home.
- A child exhibiting behaviors consistent with an abusive situation.

If evidence of suspected abuse or neglect is present while a child is in STC ELC care, staff are required by law to report the suspicion to DHS. STC ELC's role is to report evidence and protect children, not to determine whether abuse occurred.

Parent Code of Conduct

STC ELC expects parents and all adults associated with enrolled children to act with decency, courtesy, kindness, and respect. A positive child-care environment is a shared responsibility. A parent who violates the Parent Code of Conduct may no longer be permitted on Child Care property.

Respect

STC ELC staff are Early Childhood Education professionals trained in the academic, social-emotional, developmental, and philosophical aspects of early childhood education. Disrespectful conduct by a family member or associated adult - including improper language, insults, or degrading/negative body language toward staff - may be grounds for dismissal of the child. Adults are expected to model respectful behavior for children.

Swearing/Cursing

Offensive language is not tolerated. Adults who are frustrated or angry are expected to express those feelings using non-offensive language.

Threatening Conduct

Threats toward employees, children, parents, or other adults associated with St. Teresa of Calcutta will not be tolerated. Threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and may be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. An apology does not require STC ELC to assume the risk of a second chance. Adults are responsible for controlling their behavior at all times.

Physical/Verbal Punishment at the Center

Corporal punishment is not permitted in the Child Care center. Parents may not verbally abuse their child in a way that causes undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Parents should bring behavior concerns to the teacher or Director and may request guidance regarding appropriate discipline.

- A parent may not correct, discipline, or physically punish another parent's child.
- If a parent witnesses concerning behavior by another child, the concern must be directed to the teacher or Director rather than to the other child or parent.
- Staff will address concerns with the appropriate family but cannot share information about another child because of confidentiality/privacy requirements. The same confidentiality applies to every family.

A child will not be released to an adult who appears impaired by drugs or alcohol. STC ELC may contact the parent, emergency contact, police, and/or DHS as appropriate.

Dismissal, Partnerships & Termination

Dismissal Policy

STC ELC reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time, with or without cause, and may dismiss a child whose parent is prohibited from entering Child Care property. Any unused tuition will be refunded within two weeks of dismissal. Past-due balances must be paid within 30 days. A detailed invoice will be available in the family FACTS Management account in the child's file within one week; balances remaining after 30 days may be referred to legal counsel for collection. The Director will assist with gathering the child's belongings, and parents must leave the property calmly, respectfully, and immediately.

Smoking & Vaping

Smoking is prohibited anywhere on Child Care property for the health of children, employees, and all associates.

Parent-Child Care Partnership

STC ELC staff may not provide private caregiving/babysitting services to children enrolled in STC ELC programs outside business hours. Families should not ask STC ELC employees to babysit.

If a family solicits and hires an STC ELC employee as a caregiver/nanny within 6 months of withdrawing the child, changing the child's summer schedule, or within 6 months of the employee leaving STC ELC employment, the family will incur a \$1,000 fee in addition to the final tuition payment due with the required 30-day notice of withdrawal or schedule change.

Child Care Termination Policy

STC ELC reserves the right to deny, cancel, sever, suspend, or terminate services to any child, without notice and for any reason, provided the determination is not based in whole or in part on the race, color, religion, sexual preference, age, gender, national origin, disability, or political beliefs of the child or child's parents. Any unused tuition will be refunded minus outstanding charges.

What to Do If You Have Concerns

If you have a complaint concerning your child, an employee, or a procedure; use the following sequence:

- First, speak with your child's teacher.
- If the concern is not resolved, speak with the Director.
- If you remain dissatisfied, contact Father Brandt at 610-287-2525 ext. 102.

Thank you for partnering with STC ELC to provide a safe, loving, respectful environment for every child.