



St. Mary's
Early Childhood Center

Parent Handbook

Open Monday through Friday from 7:15 A.M. to 5:30 P.M.

216 Belmont Road | stmarysecc@stmarysgfnd.com | (701) 775-7067

www.stmarys@gfnd.com

Revised January 2026

Welcome! St. Mary's Early Childhood Center (ECC) is a licensed, non-profit childcare facility located on the lower level of St. Mary's Church.

Philosophy & Curriculum

St. Mary's ECC strives to provide children a safe, comfortable and stimulating learning environment in a Christian setting. Each child in our care can learn and grow in five domains: Social, Emotional, Physical, Cognitive, and Communicative. St. Mary's ECC values each child as a unique individual; we encourage the children to recognize their full potential. We work with the parents for the enhancement of the whole child, both at the center and at home.

The curriculum is designed to correlate with developmental stages of the ages served. Each classroom's daily schedule provides time for structured learning activities, arts and crafts, visual and auditory development, language and music development, fine and gross motor skills, self-selected activities and other opportunities as various units of study are presented. Play-based learning opportunities are presented to create meaningful experiences for children to explore units of study at their own developmental readiness.

You're Always Invited!

Parents are encouraged to come and participate **ANYTIME!** Unless a formal consultation with the supervisor or teacher is desired, no appointment is necessary. Drop-in and see how your child is doing. Have lunch with their class. Volunteer to read a story. Parents and guardians also provide innovative ideas that greatly enhance our program and are sincerely appreciated. We may, from time to time, invite parents in as guests!

Table of Contents

Center Philosophy & Curriculum.....	2	Emergency Preparedness Policy.....	13
Licensing and Services.....	4	Illness and Medication.....	14-15
Enrollment Procedures.....	5	Transportation and Personal Items.....	16
Tuition.....	6	Dress for Play.....	16
Billing Policies.....	7	Field Trips & Summer.....	17
Arrival and Departure Procedures.....	8	Aquatic Policy.....	18
Late Pick-Up Policy.....	9	Birthdays	18
Communication.....	9	Policy on Equal Opportunity.....	19
Weather-related Closures.....	9	Rights & Responsibilities.....	19
Vacation.....	10	Statement on Abuse and Neglect.....	19
Holidays.....	10	Mandated Reporting.....	20
Meals.....	11	Conflicts and Grievances.....	20
Nap Time and Guidance/Discipline....	12		

Licensing:

The ECC and its staff meet the requirements set forth by the North Dakota Department of Health & Human Services to be certified as a Licensed Child Care Center. The Child Care Center license is posted and copies of statutes and regulations are available for review upon request. This includes following all state requirements:

- 0 - 17mo.	1:4	max 10
- 18 - 35 mo.	1:5	max 15
- 3 years	1:7	max 20
- 4 years	1:10	max 25
- 5 years	1:12	max 30
- 6-12 years	1:20	max 40

Services

Full-time and part-time care options provide flexibility to meet each family's child care needs. Along with providing enrichment opportunities; a safe and nurturing environment is provided for children requiring an extended day away from the family.

Full-Time Care: Your child is welcome to attend any time between 7:15 a.m.— 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Part-Time Care: This care option is available for children ages 2+. On a regular schedule; your child(ren) may attend two or three days per week on either a M/W/F or T/TH schedule. To ensure adequate staffing these dates must be scheduled in advance. Extra hours and days may not replace an originally scheduled day, without preapproval. (i.e. switch a Tuesday with a Wednesday).

School-age Care (Ages 5-12): Our School-age program provides structured and supervised care after school, during elementary school in-service days and minor holidays. If you are aware of a day-off or half-day from school, it is recommended that you contact us for care a couple of weeks in advance. Space at times may be limited, so we are unable to guarantee spots for a large number of extra school-agers. Priority will be given to those with siblings enrolled in the center.

Enrollment Procedures

North Dakota's Department of Human Services and St. Mary's ECC require the enrollment packet be completed to its entirety and returned prior to the first day of care:

1. Complete the Enrollment Package:

- Weekly Schedule and Tuition Agreement (2 pages)
- Child Information Sheet (ND HHS)
- Service Contract
- Parent's Statement on Health of Child (ND HHS)
- Notify Now Contact Form (unscheduled closings, weather delays, etc.)
- Field Trip (ample notice will be provided prior to field trip)
- Infant Safe Sleep (if applicable)
- Photo Permission Release
- Product Permission Form
- Procare Autopayment Processing (2 pages)
- Water Activity

2. Provide Copy of Current Immunization Records

3. Provide Copy of Birth Certificate

4. \$50 non-refundable **Registration Fee** (per child)

5. First week's tuition

Tuition

Classroom	Full-Time Care	Part-Time Care
Infants (6 w/o-18 m/o)	\$338/week	N/A
Younger Toddlers (18 m/o-24m/o)	\$275/week	\$60/day
Older Toddlers (24 m/o to 36 m/o)	\$275/week	\$60/day
Pre-K (36 m/o to 48 m/o)	\$242/week	\$55/day
Pre-K 2 (48 m/o to 60 m/o)	\$242/week	\$55/day
School-Age Before/After School (Kindergarten +)	\$77/week	N/A
School-Age Summer (Kindergarten +)	\$202/week	\$45/day

Discounts:

- **Military Discount:** We offer a 10% discount that will be applied towards your child's tuition.
- **Current Parishioner Discount:** We offer a 10% discount that will be applied towards your child's tuition.

Billing Policies

Please keep in mind that your tuition reserves your child's space and may not always reflect the actual hours your child is in care. All payments are due in advance of care. Payments must be made on or before the first day of the week that care is provided. A \$5/day fee will be applied for all late payments; this does include weekends.

In the event that payment for the current week is not paid by that Thursday your child(ren) will automatically be withdrawn from the program. Past due tuition and all associated late fees will be automatically deducted from your banking account. The Procare Automated Payment form (included in the enrollment packet) must be kept on file for this purpose.

- Payments will be automatically withdrawn from your account every Monday.
- NSF checks will be assessed a \$35.00 service charge.
- Notice of withdrawal from care must be made in writing 2 weeks in advance.
- Withdrawal without notice will be liable for payment of the final 2 weeks of care.

Child Care Assistance Programs:

CCAP is welcomed at the ECC. Parents or guardians will be responsible for the weekly tuition fees which are due on Mondays of the current week. Tuition reimbursement through State Assistance programs will be made directly to the parents. Please talk to your ND case worker to arrange payment to your personal account. Any payments sent directly to St. Mary's ECC will be applied to your account, possibly resulting in a temporary credit. For tax purposes, end of year statements will be mailed to the address/email address on file.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

Arrival: All children must be accompanied by an adult into St. Mary's ECC and dropped off **in their classroom**. Please do not leave your child unattended at any time. Upon arrival, please help your child remove outwear. These along with any personal items need to be placed in their assigned cubby before accompanying them to their classroom.

- Lunch boxes should be placed in or above your child's cubby.
- **Children must be signed in and out using the computer system, Procare.**
This is an accountability measure and may also be used for billing purposes.
 - If your Procare account is not working or if you have not received a Procare registration code, please notify the Director.
- If the child(ren) have not arrived within 1 hour of their scheduled arrival time the director or child's teacher will first contact the parent/guardian via procare and/or phone regarding the child's projected arrival time and wellbeing. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached the listed emergency designee.
- If the child(ren) will not be attending or is going to be more than 10 minutes late, you must notify the program. The director/staff member will call the parent/guardian or emergency designee if the parent/guardian cannot be reached.

Departure: Please check your child's cubby daily and take home any art work or notes that have been placed there throughout the day.

Your child will **only** be released to a parent/guardian or other adult (18) listed on the child's authorized release form. Please notify staff **in writing** if any one else will be picking up your child. Unfamiliar adults will be asked to provide a picture ID upon pick-up.

Late Pick-Up Policy

After 5:30pm; in the event that a child is picked up late there will be a late fee charged in 15 minute increments of \$15. We will make attempts to reach a parent or an authorized pick-up person. **At 6:30 p.m. Social Services and/or local law enforcement will be contacted and appropriate action taken unless previous arrangements have been made.**

Communication:

We know it is important to remain up-to-date on your child's learning journey, which is why we are excited to offer you access to Procare Solution's parent engagement app. The mobile app allows you to stay up to date on your child's daily activities, milestones, you can also receive pictures and much more! We will announce upcoming events and time-sensative information through this app as well.

To get started: You will receive an email from procare with a 10-digit code and instructions on how to download, log into the app, and more.

Weather-Related Closing/Delays

Typically the ECC follows the same winter storm schedule as the Grand Forks Public School system. St. Mary's ECC will post weather related closures/delays on our Facebook page, WDAZ or Valley News Live. Closings and delays will also be sent in mass texts and e-mails through the **Notify Now** system. **It is very important to complete a new Notify Now form anytime your contact information changes.**

Tuition fees will not be reimbursed for closures/delays due to inclement weather or other conditions out of our control.

Vacation Policy

Full-time children are allowed 2 weeks of unpaid care every 12 months, beginning January 1st of any given year. These vacation days must be scheduled two weeks in advance and must be taken in increments of 1 full week. *Full-time is defined as attending five (5) full days per week.* Families must attend our program for six months before being eligible for vacation days.

Holidays and Other Celebrations

Weeks including a holiday and staff-in closures will be billed as usual. Credit and/or extra days will not be given.

St. Mary's ECC will is closed on the following Holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving and the day after
- Christmas Eve (Adjusted closing time)
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve (Adjusted closing time)

St. Mary's ECC is closed for the following Staff in-service days:

- 3rd Friday in August (Staff In-Service)
- Presidents Day

**These list are subject to change*

Other Celebrations: We appreciate diversity and family traditions. Therefore, we will observe some traditional western holidays including Valentine's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Because we are a church sponsored program, this will include programming relevant to Christian values and beliefs. You will be notified in advance of any celebrations should you choose to exclude your child from care during these events. If there are any other special traditions or celebrations unique to your family, we would love for you to share them with us!

Meals

A.M. Snack: 8:45/9:00 A.M.

Lunch: 12:00 P.M.

P.M. Snack: 2:45/3:00 P.M.

- St Mary's ECC will provide two snacks (one morning and afternoon snack). As we do not provide lunch; we ask that you pack your child a nutritious lunch daily brought from home. We ask that you include items from at least 3 food groups.
- We do have microwaves available, however, there is difficulty involved in preparing 10-18 separate meals. We suggest using a thermos and/or reusable ice packs to maintain food at the proper temperature.
- Milk is provided by the ECC.
- We do say grace before each meal.

Please inform staff if your child has any special dietary restrictions or allergies. Certain restrictions may require a note from a physician or a special allergy plan.

Nap and Rest Periods

All children are required to rest for half an hour. Quiet activities of the teacher's choosing are available following that rest period. Naptime is available as needed/requested from 12:30-2:30. All children that nap may bring a labeled blanket or other (quiet) comfort items. These items should be taken home at the end of each week to be laundered and returned the following week. St. Mary's ECC is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

It is our goal to help avoid conflict whenever possible. We accomplish this by:

- setting clear boundaries and expectations
- providing children with choices and redirection
- modeling as well as providing direct instruction in using manners and being kind to one another

However, we understand that children will still present challenging behaviors at times. In such events, we will work with parents to develop the most appropriate and effective methods of guidance for each child. However, any form of corporal punishment will not be implemented. Some guidance techniques that we may use include:

- natural consequences (i.e., if you make a mess, you will not move on to something new until that mess is cleaned up)
- redirection to appropriate activities
- loss of privileges
- temporary removal from group

Written documentation of behavior may be provided to parents. We will make efforts to work with families to correct undesirable behavior by hosting conferences and

creating a behavior plan. However, in order to create a safe environment for all of our children, we reserve the right to terminate care without notice for consistent behavior that is harmful to others, self, property or for behavior that requires an excess amount of one-on-one attention to manage.

Emergency Preparedness Policy

The ECC participates in a monthly disaster/emergency/fire drill, Our emergency procedures (SFN 517) is posted on the parent board and throughout the building for parental view.

Minor Burns: In the event of a child receiving a minor burn St. Mary's ECC staff will remove any and all jewelry or clothing from the burn area, cool the burn by running the area under cold water for 5 minutes, dry, and apply ointment (written parent approval is required). The parent will be notified as soon as possible, and provide a copy of the incident/injury report.

Severe Burns: In the event of a serious burn, similar steps will be taken with the addition of covering the child in a wet blanket (if there are no signs of hypothermia and/or signs of unresponsiveness). Parents will be notified as soon as possible and provide a copy of the incident/injury report. If the parent has authorized ECC staff to transport the child to the nearest medical facility, staff will do so or will stay with the child until emergency responders and/or parents arrive.

Poison: Prevention will always be the ECCs main goal by keeping all hazardous materials, locked away and/or out of children's reach. In the event of poisoning, Poison control will be contacted for guidance and along with 911 (dependent on severity). Parents will be notified as soon as possible and provide a copy of the incident/injury report. If the parent has authorized ECC staff to transport the child to the nearest medical facility, staff will do so or will stay with the child until emergency responders and/or parents arrive.

Illness and Medication Policies

An emergency medical release form is required for each child in case of accident or serious illness. If requested by parents, this form allows us to transport the child to the nearest medical facility. Please inform staff if any edits or updates need to be made to your emergency form. You will be asked to review your child's form annually and update if needed.

Illnesses: Please do not bring your child to school if you suspect they are not feeling well. The following is a list of conditions that necessitate exclusion from care:

- Temperature of 101.0 degrees, or a temperature at or above 100.4 for an Infants under 2 months old.
- Diarrhea (twice in a day), any that cannot be contained by a diaper, or that caused accidents in toilet trained children.
- Vomiting
- Teary, crusty, or red eyes
- Unexplained rash or itching of the skin
- If it is found that your child has lice; the child can remain in care and **does not** require exclusion but should be treated as soon as possible.

If a child becomes sick while in our care; you will be contacted by telephone and arrangements **must be made to pick up your child at once**. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the emergency person listed on your child's release form will be contacted. Students who are sent home ill must be **fever, vomit or diarrhea free for at least 24 hours** before they may return. Thank you for helping us maintain a clean and healthy facility!

- Please notify us if your child contracts a communicable disease such as strep throat or pinkeye, so that other parents may be informed.

- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability or persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs for the child.
- These guidelines are taken from Child Care Aware of North Dakota. For more information, please visit their website at www.ndchildcare.org.
- Tuition fees will not be reimbursed for absence due to illness. Credit and/or extra days will not be given.

Medication: Prescription medication can only be administered with the guidance of a doctor's note and a Medical Authorization form filled out by the parent or guardian. Medication must be in the original, labeled container, to be placed by staff in the designated area. Medication will only be administered as listed on the original container. If there is a change needed in dosage, please provide updated documentation from a physician. Please also provide the items necessary to administer the medication (measuring spoon, syringe, dropper, ect.).

Illness, Incident and Injury Reports: Any illness or injury received while in our care will be documented on an incident report. Please be sure to review and sign this before staff can file it.

Product Permission Form: Each family will be provided a Product Permission form in their enrollment packet to be filled out and returned to the ECC. This form authorizes the application of bug repellent, chapstick, hand sanitizer, lotion, and sunscreen as needed. You will be notified of the ECC's provided brand, but you are welcome to supply your child with an alternate brand if you choose. You are responsible for supplying chap stick or lotion, as needed. Products that you supply should be clearly labeled with the child's name and will be placed out of reach of children to be administered under supervision of staff. *Please do not allow your child to store these products in their lockers or carry them in their pockets.*

Transportation:

St. Mary's Early Childhood Center does not provide vehicular transportation. St. Mary's Early Childhood Center staff will only provide transportation in the event of an emergency with parent consent provided on the children's parent transportation consent form.

- Children will never be left in a vehicle unattended.
- The driver will be eighteen years of age or older and will comply with all relevant federal, state, and local laws, including child restraint system laws.
- When transportation is provided; children will be protected by adequate staff member supervision, safety precautions, and liability insurance.

Personal Belongings

Each child will be assigned a labeled cubby to store personal belongings. St. Mary's ECC provides a plethora of fun, educational, and developmentally appropriate toys. Please do not bring personal toys unless it is a scheduled show and tell day. A quiet stuffed animal is allowed if needed for naptime. **Please mark with permanent marker all of your child's personal belongings.** St. Mary's ECC is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Dress for Play

Art activities and outdoor play can be hard on clothes. Please dress your child in comfortable outfits made for play. Please anticipate your child getting messy! Extra clothes to keep on hand are a must! **Shoes should be comfortable and must have a back heel strap. NO FLIP FLOPS please.**

During the winter months, we follow a weather chart from Child Care Aware when making the determination of whether to go outside to play or remain indoors. Common sense will prevail when making a decision. Please send your child ready to play every

day with snow pants, boots, gloves, jacket, and hat. While we can use neck guards; scarves are strangling hazards and will not be put on the children while in our care.

**During summer a hat is highly recommended to protect the face and scalp during the warmer months.*

Field Trips & Summer

Field Trips: In order to provide a rich variety of learning experiences for the children, local field trips are scheduled periodically. We have visited nearby businesses, hospitals, and community sites – places where kids can get safe, hands-on contact with their quickly expanding world.

Summer Program: During Summer months care is provided for both infants and children (infants to 12 years old). We keep the summer program exciting by planning weekly themed activities, swimming, and field trips to many locations around the community. For younger children, this may include walks around the neighborhood or to area playgrounds. Please review the Field Trip permission form, permission is required for each individual field trip. This does not include neighborhood walks. If there is a charge it will be on the Field Trip Permission Form and funds must be turned in along with the permission slip. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions please let us know.

Aquatic Policy

As per licensing requirements, written parental permission and a description of a child's swimming ability is required before child(ren) participate in any aquatic activity. Permission forms will be distributed annually at the beginning of summer to ensure the ECC has the most recent information. The following types of water activities are provided at our child care program: wading pools, water tables, field trips to Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Public Pools, and splash parks. We do have fresh water wading pools and water tables at St. Mary's. These are emptied, cleaned, and disinfected daily.

Teachers/caregivers are not considered to be lifeguards, nor are lifeguards considered to be teachers/caregivers and will not be counted in the child: staff ratio at a public pool. Classroom child-to-staff ratios will be used during swimming/water play, and will be maintained at all times. St. Mary's staff are certified in pediatric first aid and CPR and will remain present with children in sight at all times during the children's water activities. In case of an emergency a cell-phone and a first aid kit will be kept readily accessible at all times.

Children in diapers are required to wear diapers designed for swimming/water activities. **Parents are required to provide these.** If a child in diapers does not have a swim diaper, they will not be able to participate in water activities. Children who have open sores will also be prohibited from participating.

Birthdays and Other Celebrations

Please check with staff to get an accurate count of children if you wish to bring a treat to celebrate a birthday. If you wish to bring birthday invitations for your child's friends, it is asked that you either bring enough for the whole class or do not bring them to daycare to pass out. Those not wanting to involve the whole class can make outside arrangements.

Policy on Equal Opportunity

It is the policy of St. Mary's ECC that there shall be no discrimination against persons because of race, religion, age, color, sex, disability, or national origin, and that equal opportunity and access to services shall be available to all, as our program allows.

Rights & Responsibilities

Parents have the right to direct how their child will be raised and have the responsibility to provide care, education, financial support, safety, and basic needs: food, medical, and shelter for their child. Access to their child's information, participation in decision making, and non-discrimination are also within a parent's rights. Parent responsibilities include providing accurate health information, to partner with staff to support the child's development, and to review and understand program policies.

Center staff have the right to fair pay, respect, professional growth, safe and healthy working conditions. Staff responsibilities include adhering to regulations, ensuring the children's development, safety and wellbeing, parent communication, and child advocacy.

Mandated Reporting: Statement on Abuse and Neglect

As a mandated reporter, child care providers are required to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect as required by North Dakota Century Code section 50-25.1-03. To report suspected child abuse and neglect, call the **statewide toll-free Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Line 1-833-958-3500, between 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday. If a child is in immediate danger CALL 911.**

Conflict Policy

We understand that conflicts with staff, children or services may arise, however we will work together with parents or guardians to resolve any conflicts. We reserve the right to decline services upon any inability to resolve conflicts. St. Mary's may choose to end childcare either with or without notice for the following reasons: failure to pay tuition, an ongoing inability to settle conflicts between the parent and the center, or disrespect of the staff, children, or other parents while in the facility.

Grievance Policy

If you have any concerns or complaints about the program, please address them with the director as soon as possible. If you have a serious complaint that you feel is not being addressed, please email dhsec@nd.gov or contact the Early Childhood main line at: 701-328-2115 or 1-800-997-8516.