Inclement Weather Policy

The University of Tennessee does not close except in the most severe weather conditions. In most cases, the Early Learning Center will comply with the University of Tennessee’s decision and when extreme weather conditions necessitate an administrative closing, the Early Learning Center will be closed. Listen to local radio and television stations for announcements. Hours of operation will coincide with the University of Tennessee’s class schedule. Therefore, we may be opening late, closing early, or be closed all day, depending on the University of Tennessee’s decision.

In cases when we are concerned about the safety for children, families, and staff we reserve the right to make a decision to close the Early Learning Center even when the University of Tennessee remains open. We will contact parents by e-mail and text alert with this information. Families should notify their children's teachers to request a notification phone call in the event that we are opening late or closed. We also encourage parents to call us to check on our open/closed status if weather conditions are questionable.

Arrival and Departure

Arrival

- The centers open at 7:30 a.m. Teachers should arrive in the centers 5-30 minutes before the children in order to prepare for the day. Parents should not enter the classroom before 7:30 a.m.
- Parents should accompany children inside the building to their classroom and deliver them to a teacher. We do not assume responsibility for a child who has not been turned over to a teacher
- Parents must sign in upon arrival

Departure

- Parents should inform the teacher when picking up a child. Also, parents should leave the classroom/playground with their child and accompany him/her out of the building at departure time
- Please do not allow children to run ahead of parents and leave the building alone. The ELC teachers do not assume responsibility for children after they leave the classroom with parents
- The Early Learning Centers do not assume responsibility or liability for any activities of children while they are with parents on the premises
- Parents must sign out upon departure

Parents should never leave another child unattended in the car while picking up/dropping off a child!

Attendance

Regular attendance is important for children to receive the maximum benefit from our programs. Children are expected to attend regularly and be present for the majority of the day. Furthermore, we strive to maintain a consistent positive relationship with your child. Group participation and attendance brings energy to our curriculum and the life of our classrooms!

In order for teachers to effectively plan for the day and to be aware of scheduling needs for each individual child, we request that parents notify the center by 9:30 a.m. when a child will be absent or arriving late. As it is our goal to design procedures and routines that support each child’s development, we will communicate with families when we observe that a particular routine or schedule is unsupportive or stressful for the child. ELC teachers will work with the child’s family to develop a plan that more effectively meets the child’s needs.
Child Release Policy

If someone other than parents arrive to pick up a child:
• We must have written permission to release a child to anyone other than parents
• Upon enrolling in the program parents are asked to complete a release form authorizing emergency persons and others to pick up their child from the program
• Any person other than parents who arrives to pick up a child must be listed on the form or parents must provide another written notice before we can release a child to anyone else
• Teachers will ask to see a photo identification of anyone we don’t know before releasing the child. Unless we can verify parents’ approval, we will not release the child to anyone else
• We will not release a child to anyone under the age of 18

Release of child to someone incapable of caring for child
Our concern always lies in the children’s safety. In the event someone arriving to pick up a child appears to us as incapable of caring for the child (ill, intoxicated, under the influence of drugs, etc.) we are obligated not to release the child. We will offer assistance, offer to call someone else, or contact another adult on the emergency contact list.

Use of Car Seats
In compliance with the law in the state of Tennessee, children under the age of 8 or who weigh less than 40 lbs. must be secured in an approved child safety device when traveling. We expect all parents to transport their children in this responsible manner.

Late Pick Up Fee Policy

The Early Learning Center opens at 7:30 a.m. and closes at 5:30 p.m. Everyone needs to be out of the building by 5:30 each night!

All ELC programs close at 5:30 p.m. and all families must exit the building by this time. Parents are asked to schedule pick-up so they may have adequate time for conversation with staff and still be able to leave the center by 5:30 p.m. When you are late, you will be asked to sign a slip indicating the time you leave the program with your child. The late fees charged will be added to your bill at the end of the month.

The late fee charges are as follows:
Departure Time
• 5:31-5:40 pm = $15.00 charge
• Additional $5.00 in 5-minute increments past 5:40 pm

Parents who receive more than three late charges within a year or who establish a pattern of lateness will meet with a Director to be counseled in an attempt to solve the late pick-up problem. If the problem cannot be resolved, parents will be asked to find a program with hours of operation more suitable to their needs.

Early Dismissal
On limited occasions before a holiday closing, the Early Learning Center will dismiss two or three hours early. Late fees will apply if children are not picked up by the announced closing time. These early dismissals are noted in the annual program calendar.
Extended Leave of Absence

The ELC cannot reimburse fees for days missed for illness, vacation, or unexpected temporary closure of the facility. If a child needs to be out of the program for an extended period of time, more than a month consecutively, parents may choose to:

1. Continue to pay fees and hold the child’s spot until they return or
2. Withdraw the child and attempt to re-enroll when the child returns. However, there is no guarantee that a spot will be available when the child wishes to re-enroll.

Babysitting Disclaimer Policy

The Early Learning Center will take every reasonable precaution for the safety and well-being of children while they are in our care. The program’s responsibility, however, does not extend to any private employment arranged between the parents of children in the program and any staff or students of the program. Any such private arrangements for care between families and students must take place outside of ELC grounds.

Linguistic Accommodation Policy

At the Early Learning Center, we recognize and appreciate the language diversity represented by families enrolled at the ELC, and build practices aimed at facilitating effective communication between program and family. When supportive, ELC staff makes accommodations to provide families with written and verbal communication in their home language to mediate the presence of a language barrier between program and family.

Diapering, Toileting, Potty Learning

Adults and children participate in many routines throughout the day. The routines, such as diapering and learning to use the toilet provide opportunities for meaningful interaction, learning opportunities, and contexts for communicating an ethic of care.

Diapering, toileting, and potty learning are clearly a regular part of daily life within programs serving very young children. These are all opportunities for learning as well as requirements of good care for children. Each of these routines is handled in a clean, safe, and developmentally appropriate manner. Please follow the specific guidelines set out in each classroom very carefully.

Teachers and parents of each individual child discuss the appropriate timing and process of diapering and toileting for the particular child. Parents supply diapers and wipes for their child until the child is toileting independently. Teachers alert parents when a child’s supply of diapers or wipes is getting low. Different classrooms have different methods for this.

Toileting: Children are typically ready for potty learning sometime between the ages of 2 and 3½, but readiness can vary greatly. When a child is showing the appropriate toileting readiness signs, teachers and parents discuss the potty learning process. This discussion may be initiated by teachers or parents. A plan is created for each child and teachers and parents communicate frequently about a child’s progress. Boys and girls share restrooms and toilet together within all the programs. This approach provides a very natural way for children to appropriately learn about physical differences in boys and girls.
Food Policy

In designing and implementing our food service program, we work within the parameters of national recommendations for child care food programs, collaborate with researchers from the university’s department of nutrition, and attempt to incorporate (some of) the food preferences and customs of our diverse population of children. We regularly review and initiate improvements in our menus and intend to continue to pursue healthy and appetizing options for children, and to facilitate healthy relationships with food from children’s earliest experiences.

- It is the ELC’s expectation that all children fully participate in the food program. We do not pressure children to eat, but feel that research and established practice has substantiated the benefits of family-style meals in childcare settings. Times around the common table are priceless in terms of developmental opportunities. Teachers also highly value these times for their opportunities to observe and assess many of children’s developmental skills.

- We ask that parents do not send foods/beverages from home with the request that teachers serve it in addition to or in lieu of the scheduled meal or snack. Due to the heightened supervision that is required at meal times, teachers cannot be distracted by attending to alternate foods that parents may have provided for their children in addition to the normal food service offerings. Alternate foods also create an unfair distraction for other children at the table.

- The ELC provides all children with a morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack. The morning snack provided a few hours prior to lunch. This snack is not designed to serve as a child’s breakfast. Therefore, if your child arrives to the program after the scheduled snack, please make sure that he or she has had suitable nutrition prior to coming to the program. Breakfast items from home may not be brought into classrooms.

- If your child has a documented need for a medical substitution or restriction of diet, such as for a food allergy, or a widely held religious dietary requirement, we will work with you to develop a written food plan. We will try to make reasonable accommodations in providing alternatives for your child – working in concert with your family, your child’s health care provider and/or representative of your religious practices.

Breastfeeding Policy

The ELC supports nursing mothers and children, fostering healthy infant feeding and parent-child bonding by offering comfortable accommodations for breastfeeding and breastmilk expression at the program. The ELC is committed to providing space, time, furniture, and communication to facilitate the continuation of breastfeeding for children enrolled at the ELC. Nursing mothers of children enrolled in the ELC may breastfeed openly in any program space, or will be assisted in securing a private space if desired.

The ELC ensures that parents know they are welcome to breastfeed at any time within operating hours. Teachers communicate with families to design breastfeeding plans that are supportive of each child and family. ELC administrators additionally support breastfeeding staff members by designing schedules and break times that support breastmilk expression and feeding during the workday. As part of our commitment to breastfeeding, the ELC took the Breastfeeding Welcomed Here pledge through the Tennessee Breastfeeding Coalition. This pledge states that the ELC will foster and honor a culture where breastfeeding is normal, accepted, and welcomed. The Tennessee Breastfeeding Hotline is available at 855-4BFMOMS (423-6667).

The ELC supports and assists with breastmilk feeding by accepting expressed breastmilk, providing proper storage facilities, and serving expressed breastmilk during feeding times. Teachers verbally communicate provisions for how to safely handle and transport breastmilk to school, and
expectations for sanitary storage containers to include freezer bags and sterilized bottles. All such containers must be labeled with the infant’s full name, and both the date and time of breastmilk expression. Teachers are trained to properly warm and serve bottle-fed breastmilk. All preparation techniques will including gently handling, mixing and warming the breastmilk, and feedings will be coordinated with the infant’s parent. Breastmilk will be stored in a refrigerator for no more than 48 hours or in a freezer at 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for no more than three months.

**Illness Policy**

The ELC utilizes multiple strategies to monitor the well-being, safety and good health of each child and classroom community. Promoting and maintaining wellness in any group setting is both a challenge and a responsibility—one that all of us must accept to ensure the best possible environments for our youngest citizens. The following are strategies, guidelines and parameters for children’s participation:

- Informal daily health checks are done as children arrive and throughout the day to determine if illness symptoms are present
- Symptoms of illness include but are not limited to fever, diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy, rash, unusual discharge
- A child is sent home due to illness when teachers believe the child’s health is a risk to him/herself or the other children
- Children should be well enough to fully participate in all daily activities of the classroom
- Children who are ill should be kept at home

To control the spread of illness, parents will be contacted to pick up the sick child promptly. Parents should make arrangements to pick up a sick child within an hour of being contacted by the program. It is parents’ responsibility to be sure all emergency contact numbers are current and someone can be quickly reached to retrieve the sick child. If a parent cannot be reached immediately, teaching staff will call the next emergency contact to arrange pick up.

Children with vomiting, diarrhea, and/or fever should not return to the ELC until the child has been symptom-free, unmedicated, for 24 hours (i.e. the fever has been truly gone for 24 hours without medicine being the factor keeping the fever down).

Children who are believed to have a communicable illness (per discussion of parent and ELC staff) may return when a healthcare provider verifies a safe return date that protects the health and safety of the ill child and the classroom of children. This written verification should be given to classroom teachers upon the child’s return to the classroom. Examples of common communicable illnesses: strep; RSV; rotavirus; Hand, Foot, & Mouth.

**Keep your child home if child is experiencing any of the following symptoms:**

- Not feeling very good and unable to participate in all the typical activities of a day at the Early Learning Center - May be unusually tired, pale, lacking appetite, confused or cranky
- Vomiting occurs
- Body or face rash, especially with fever or itching
- Lice and/or nits
- Diarrhea
- Thick mucus or pus draining from the eye
- Sore throat with fever or swollen glands
- Fever with a temperature of 101°F or higher
- Bowel movements that are loose and large enough that they are uncontained by diaper

**When your child is sick:**

- Have plans for back up child care
- Let the teacher know what is wrong with your child, even if your child stays at home
Dispensing of Medication

At times it may be necessary for your child to receive medication at the ELC. We must have a signed authorization from the child’s parent before we can administer medication, even non-prescription products. Specific instructions regarding dosage, frequency of administration, and the symptoms or conditions for which medication is indicated should either be listed on a prescription or on an ELC medication form signed by a parent. Parents also may come to the ELC to give medication themselves, should this be more convenient.

All medications, prescription and non-prescription must have the following information current and documented:

1. The parent’s written authorization to administer specific medication
2. Be in the original container
3. Not expired
4. Labeled with child’s name
5. Specific dosage and times medication is to be administered to the child
6. Parent provide instructions on the methods of administration

The ELC will keep the following documentation to maintain in the child’s file and provide a copy to parents:

1. Times medications administered
2. Noticeable side effects
3. Name of staff person administering medication to child

The parents shall sign documentation verifying that:

1. The administration information required in Section A was received
2. Unused medication was returned to the parent

Rest Periods

The State of Tennessee Department of Education regulations stipulates that a child may not be in a group care program for more than five hours without an opportunity to nap. All children in the programs have an opportunity to rest for 1 to 2 hours each day. Each child is encouraged to sleep. Infants sleep as often as necessary and according to individual schedules.

Children who do not nap or who awaken early may look at books, play quietly with small toys, or work quietly at a table. Teachers are prepared with quiet “ideas” for these children.

Firearms Policy

As of July 1, Tennessee law TCA 39-17-1309 allows generally all UT full-time employees with a valid handgun permit to carry a concealed handgun on UT property. [http://utpolice.utk.edu/services/campus-concealed-carry/](http://utpolice.utk.edu/services/campus-concealed-carry/)

Section 3(b.4.v.) of the SA0875 – Firearms Policy identifies locations that forbid handguns, including child care agencies. In compliance with the UT Firearms Policy, weapons are not permitted at Early Learning Center locations. Violation of these regulations require immediate action.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy

It is the policy of the UT Early Learning Center to report any suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. In Tennessee, state laws TCA 37-1-403 and TCA 37-1-605 require all persons to make a report when they suspect abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child. Failure to do so can result in a program losing its operating license, or in criminal charges against any persons harboring unreported suspicions of abuse or neglect.

All ELC staff members are trained in recognizing the indicators of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of children. An ELC staff member who suspects abuse, neglect or exploitation is expected to report such suspicions immediately, without attempting to determine the origin and extent of the abuse and if his/her suspicion is valid. A staff member does not have to seek the consent of a program director to report suspicions. A staff member may choose to complete the report in the presence of a program director, but does not have to receive permission before proceeding with the report.

ELC staff members are not required to inform parents if a report is made. ELC staff members will not be involved in the interviewing process conducted by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, though they may be contacted if additional information is required. Reports may be made anonymously, but ELC staff members are strongly encouraged to identify themselves. If an official from the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services wishes to interview a child on the premises of the UT Early Learning Center, he or she must provide an authorized state identification badge. If a child is to be removed from the premises, the official must provide certified documentation from juvenile court or from a legal parent or guardian of the child.

The ELC will provide personal safety curriculum on an annual basis for children in our preschool and kindergarten programs.

Parents are invited to contact the ELC if they are interested in attending an annually scheduled training session on reporting procedures and the indicators of abuse and neglect.

State of Tennessee Child Abuse Hotline: 877-237-0004
Withdrawal Procedure

When you are planning to withdraw a child from the Early Learning Center, please complete the Notice of Withdrawal form and return it to the ELC Business Office. We require 60 days’ notice in order to make arrangements to enroll another child. This notice must be in writing.

Parents will be responsible for paying two months’ tuition if 60 days’ notice is not given.

Grievance Process for Parents- Expressions of Concerns

From time to time parents may have questions, issues, concerns, or problems they want to discuss. We want to hear these so we can work together to solve problems. The grievance process for parents is designed to help resolve conflicts in an effective, respectful, and professional manner. A positive approach to solving problems combined with a civil demeanor will allow us to resolve conflicts in a climate of mutual support and cooperation. The following are suggested avenues for parents to use when expressing concerns and dealing with problems:

Discuss with the Classroom Teacher: Parents are encouraged to think carefully about the situation and define clearly the concern or problem. If the problem relates to your child and the classroom, your child’s teacher is typically the best person to talk to. Please arrange a convenient time to meet with your child’s teacher outside of the classroom to discuss the problem. It is important to clearly communicate your concern, listen to the teacher’s perspective, and discuss various solutions to the problem.

Discuss with your Program Director: You may always discuss an issue with your site’s Program Director – particularly if the issue relates to personnel or a program policy. All the assistant directors have e-mail, voice mail, and private office telephones. Please schedule a mutually agreeable time to meet and discuss your issues.

Discuss with the Executive Director: In the unlikely event parents and the Program Director cannot arrive at a satisfactory solution, parents may make arrangements to discuss their concern with the Director. If the concern relates to a policy issues, the Director will need to include the Department Head of Child and Family Studies. On a race occasion when a problem cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all persons involved and it is apparent there is not a good match between the family’s needs and the program goals and operation, the parents may be asked to withdraw their child from the program.

Annual Program Evaluation: Once a year as a regular part our program, parents are asked to formally evaluate the program through an anonymous questionnaire. The questionnaire examines all aspects of the program including personnel and allows for open-ended feedback as well.

ELC Advisory Board: This committee meets periodically to set policy for the programs and to review new research projects. When parents have a concern about a specific policy, they can attend a policy committee meeting and share their perspective.
Dismissal from the Early Learning Center

The Early Learning Center’s teaching staff eagerly view enrollment of a new child and family as 1) an opportunity for learning and relationship building and 2) a responsibility for providing high quality education and care. Most families view their child's enrollment in the ELC as a privilege, carefully uphold policies, and contribute equally at making this partnership a beneficial experience for all. Most children readily adjust to their new environment and begin to flourish cognitively, socially, and emotionally. However, there are some cases when continued enrollment is not in the best interest of the child, family, or the Early Learning Center program. The following conditions or situations would justify a child and his/her family’s dismissal from the Early Learning Center:

Child:
- Presents an on-going danger to self and/or others which is developmentally inappropriate or exceeds the capacity of the program’s resources.
- Develops a debilitating condition which prevents normal participation in daily activities or requires an inordinate amount of individualized attention from teachers.
- Never seems to adjust and thrive in the group setting despite repeated modifications and attempts made to help the child adjust.

Parent:
- Failure to pay tuition following to the Early Learning Center business office's procedures and time frame.
- Clear failure to comply with program policies, including but not limited to Department of Health immunization guidelines.
- Exhibiting threatening or humiliating treatment of staff, children, or others in the ELC setting (depending upon severity—may necessitate immediate dismissal).
- Continued inability to resolve family personal problems that interfere with the child’s ELC placement and/or parent/teacher relationships.
- Failure to uphold security procedures for the ELC facilities (e.g. sharing PINs/access cards).

It is our goal to find a good fit between family and program, and to support enrollment when a family and ELC staff agree that the fit between the ELC and the family is good. This fit will continue to be evaluated on an ongoing basis and if challenges arise, outlined above or otherwise, that indicate that the program cannot adequately meet the child’s and/or family’s needs, enrollment may be discontinued.