

# **Susanna Wesley Early Education Ministry Parent Handbook**



**SWEEM is a ministry of  
First United Methodist Church  
120 Greene Street  
Huntsville, AL 35801  
256-534-6866**

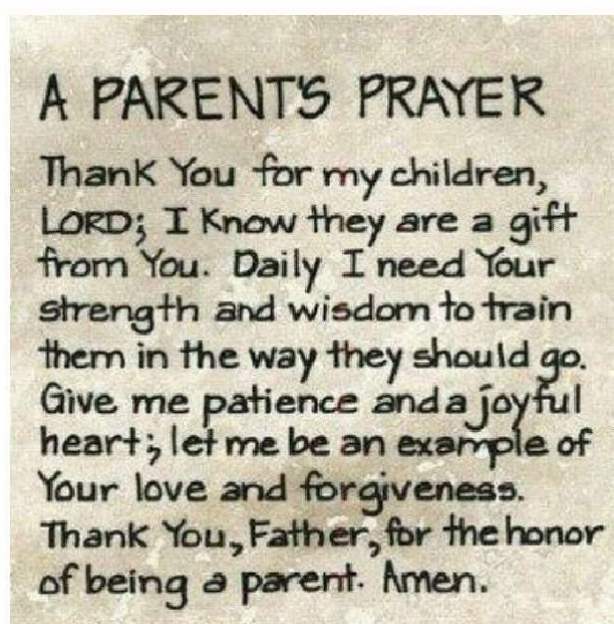
## A Welcome Message from Our Director

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Susanna Wesley Early Education Ministry, SWEEM! We are both honored and blessed you have chosen our childcare program for your most precious blessings, your child/children. Here at SWEEM we recognize parents as their child's first and most important teacher and we are here to be a partner with you while at SWEEM. We will give your child/children the opportunity to grow and develop socially, emotionally, academically and spiritually and will guide them on their early childhood education journey. Your children will be in the care of highly trained and dedicated staff every day and will make SWEEM their home away from home.

In this handbook, you will find policies and procedures for families that govern our ministry. Please read the handbook carefully and come to us with any questions you may have. If at any time during the school year we need to revise this handbook, we will communicate those revisions to you right away.

In closing, we share a prayer for parents.



May God Bless You and Your Family,

Terri Layton, M. Ed.  
SWEEM Director

# **SUSANNA WESLEY EARLY EDUCATION MINISTRY PARENT HANDBOOK**

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## WELCOME!

Over a period of many years, the congregation of First United Methodist Church had seen the need and heard the call of God to provide quality, affordable preschool and childcare for parents and children who live and work in the downtown area. In 1968, our preschool opened its doors and has served children continuously since that time.

In 2001, the vision became reality. Each year as we open the doors to our Susanna Wesley Early Education Ministry, we hope and pray that our ministry will reflect the love of God and will touch your family in life-giving ways.

We are licensed by the State of Alabama Department of Human Resources and are pledged to meet or exceed those standards.

We are blessed with a dedicated, committed, well trained and caring director and staff. We invite you to visit our preschool. Our director will welcome your questions concerning any aspect of our ministry. In the assurance of God's promises and the gift of God's grace, we offer our services to you.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide a safe, loving, Christian ministry for the development of the whole child. This licensed preschool program will assist parents in raising courageous, cooperative, and responsible children with high self-esteem.

## PHILOSOPHY

Christian values motivate and guide the operation of this ministry. Christian ethics and morals are taught, Bible stories from both the Old and New Testaments are told, and events of the Christian calendar are emphasized. We believe in the infinite worth of each child. Therefore, skills are developed through age-appropriate mental, physical, socio-emotional, and spiritual activities. The qualities of courage, cooperation, and responsibility are fostered by the Christian principles of unconditional love, respect, equality, and forgiveness. High self-esteem is both the foundation and the by-product of these qualities.

**Courage** is defined as "the confidence to take a risk for a known purpose." Courage enables children to try, fail, and try again, learning from the challenges life presents. With too little courage, the child gives up easily or does not try at all. It is at the heart of developing the gifts God has given each child.

**Cooperation** is two or more people working together toward a common goal. Helping a child learn that life is an inter-dependent experience is key to success. The child who has learned how to cooperate with others is far more likely to do well in everything.

**Responsibility** is the process of making choices and accepting the consequences. The most effective and satisfied children have learned how to accept responsibility for whatever happens because of their choices. If the consequence is positive, they have a good model for future choices. If the consequence is not satisfying, then they have learned how to choose better next time and avoid the consequence. This is the way children learn and mature.

The development of **high self-esteem** involves everything we do. Self-esteem is simply the opinion we have of ourselves. A child will develop a high self-esteem when given opportunities to succeed. High self-esteem gives courage to tackle life's problem through positive behavior. Children with high self-esteem will be able to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities of life. The truth of individual self-worth comes from the Judeo-Christian belief that God made us (human beings) in "the image of God." We are unique creatures of infinite worth.

## **OUR STUDENTS**

This ministry serves children of First United Methodist Church members as well as children from the community at large. It is our hope that we will be of service to parents who work in the downtown area. Any child 6 weeks through 6 years is eligible to participate in the Ministry programs.

Activities planned for a 3-year-old class assume that a child be potty-trained before entering that class. Children not potty-trained by the beginning of the Fall Program may be asked to attend the 2-year-old program, IF any positions are available. If no positions are available, the child will be required to stay home until potty training is achieved. Paying the monthly tuition as usual can reserve the child's position in the classroom.

The director shall review and approve or deny all applications for enrollment. No child may be denied enrollment because of race, color, or national origin. We accept children from all religious backgrounds. Eligibility for children with special needs shall be evaluated on a case-by case basis in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The director shall determine availability of enrollment.

## **ADMISSIONS**

Admission priorities are: (1) Children of SWEEM Staff, (2) Children already in program, (3) Siblings of children in the program, (4) Church members on waiting list, (5) non-church members on waiting list, (6) Community at large.

## **REGISTRATION**

The following forms must be in our office before a child may attend the program:

1. Pre-admission enrollment record (DHR-CDC-739)
2. A physician's authorization, along with the authorization form (DHR-CDC-1949) for administering medication, if needed
3. Immunization form as prescribed by the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH-F-IMM-50). SWEEM follows the guidelines of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics regarding immunizations. We will not accept families unwilling to adhere to these immunization schedules.
4. Emergency card
5. Signature page of SWEEM Parent Handbook
6. SWEEM COVID-19 Policies and Procedures Waiver

Separate and secure files are maintained on each child and kept in strict confidence.

A registration fee is required for each child enrolled and is not prorated or refundable. A more detailed explanation of fee policy is found in the COST section of this handbook.

Each year, in early spring, we will facilitate the process of enrollment for our summer program as well as the upcoming school year. These will be two separate processes with two separate forms. If you enroll your child for the summer program, but they are NOT returning for the upcoming school year, their last day of attendance at SWEEM is the date of the last day for the summer program. Children not returning for the school year may not attend the interim week.

Half day students who attend the school year program and will also attend the summer program may NOT attend during the interim week between the end of the school year and the beginning of the summer program.

## TERMINATION

Two weeks written notice is requested for withdrawal of a child.

If, for any reason, the Susanna Wesley Early Education Ministry is unable to work with a child or his/her parents, we reserve the right to ask that the child be withdrawn.

Parents may read a copy of the Child Care Licensing and Performance Standards for Day Care Centers from the Department of Human Resources by visiting [dhr.alabama.gov](http://dhr.alabama.gov). In addition, hard copies of the Performance Standards are available in the SWEEM office.

## HOW WE DO THINGS

### SCHEDULE

Both half-day and full-day programs are available for infants (approximately 6 weeks of age) through pre-school, until the children reach first grade. The half-day program typically follows the Huntsville City School schedule except that the starting date is usually a few days later and the finish date is a few days earlier. The full day program operates five days each week throughout the year except for holidays (**New Year's Eve Day; New Year's Day; M. L. King Jr. Day; President's Day; Good Friday; Memorial Day; July 4<sup>th</sup>; Labor Day; Veterans Day; Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after; and three days at Christmas**) and excluding weekends. The Center will be closed for staff training for one day in the spring and one day in August prior to SWEEM starting. SWEEM will also be closed one full week in June for First United Methodist's Vacation Bible School.

Children are separated into age levels for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Children are accepted on a specific schedule basis. There is no after-school, holiday, or summer vacation care program for school-age children.

## HOURS

An approved adult shall sign children in and out of the center upon arrival and departure.

Full-day children may arrive at the center no earlier than 7:30 a.m. and must be picked up no later than 5:30 p.m. Half-day children will attend from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Half day children will be walked to the Lincoln St. door for carpool pick up at 12:30 p.m. and must be picked up no later than 12:45 p.m. **All children must arrive at the center before 9:30 a.m.** unless they have a doctor's note or other circumstance and have notified the front office in advance.

2Parents are encouraged to schedule medical appointments for before or after their child's scheduled time at SWEEM. We understand this may not always work out. If your child has a medical appointment and they must be picked up mid-day, please let the teachers know at drop off informing them what time your child is leaving and what time they will be returning. If they are leaving after 12:30 for the appointment, please understand we will put them down for rest time and will get them up approximately 15 minutes before your arrival. We ask that parents not enter the classroom during rest time. Rather, a staff person will greet you at the door at the time of departure so children sleeping are not disturbed. If a child is leaving early for something other than a medical appointment, they are not to return until their next scheduled day. Such examples include swim lessons, music lessons, haircuts, etc. When children leave then come back in the past, it has become a disruption to their schedule as well as the schedule for the teachers and children in the classroom.

If your child is arriving after 11:00 a.m. due to a medical appointment, please feed them lunch before they arrive to childcare. Please do not bring a lunch back with your child because once our lunch is over, children will not eat again until afternoon snack.

With advance notification and approval of the director, children participating in the half-day program may arrive early or stay late. An additional fee is charged for this accommodation.

*\* In emergency situations, for instance, during a pandemic, hours may be temporarily amended. Parents will be notified immediately about any temporary amendments to the SWEEM Parent Handbook. In May 2020, amended hours went into effect due to COVID-19. Those amended hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.*

## STAFF/CHILD RATIOS

The program will meet or exceed the minimum guidelines set forth by Department of Human Resources.

|                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| 6 weeks to 12 months   | 1:3  |
| 12 to 18 months        | 1:5  |
| 18 months to 2.5 years | 1:7  |
| 3s                     | 1:10 |
| Pre-K                  | 1:11 |
| Kindergarten           | 1:12 |

## FOOD SERVICES

All food served to the children complies with meal and snack patterns of the **Food and Nutrition Service, U.S.D.A.** Feeding patterns and other mealtime specifics are documented in the Daily Program sections for each age grouping.

## **MEALS**

Tuition includes a hot noonday meal along with a morning and afternoon snack. It is our policy that each child must be offered these foods daily. We do not allow children to bring in their own lunches unless they are diagnosed by a licensed physician with a food allergy or disease (for example, Celiac Disease).

If your child has a food allergy or a disease, we are more than happy to offer your child a daily alternative. To get your child on our “allergy list” please bring in a letter from your child’s physician stating the food allergy or disease and a written care plan that includes:

- (1.) Instructions regarding the food(s) to which the child is allergic and the steps to be taken to avoid that food.
- (2.) A detailed treatment plan to be implemented in the event of an allergic reaction, including the names, doses, and methods of prompt administration of any medicines.

The center will notify the parents/guardians immediately of any suspected allergic reactions, as well as the ingestion of or contact with the problem food even if a reaction did not occur. The center will contact the emergency medical services system immediately whenever epinephrine (epi-pen) has been administered.

If your child requires an epi-pen, we will need the epi-pen, the physician’s instructions, and parent permission to use the epi-pen (medical form DHR-CDC-1949).

The staff will not hold lunches for children not in attendance at lunchtime (11-11:30 a.m.).

## **BIRTHDAY PARTIES**

Parents may arrange with the teachers to bring a snack to the class for their child’s birthday. The special snack will be served at morning snack or at lunch. (No afternoon special treats)

Birthday invitations for parties may only be brought in if you are inviting the whole class. If you are not inviting the whole class, please mail them.

## **COST**

A registration fee is required for each child enrolled and is not prorated or refundable.

All tuition payments will be auto drafted, either from a bank account or a credit card.

Tuition for the half-day program will be withdrawn on the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. Tuition for the full-day program may be withdrawn either monthly (on the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month) or weekly (weekly tuition is withdrawn on Wednesdays).

There will be a charge for declined payments.



There is no reduction of fees for absences due to illness, vacation, holidays, inclement weather closings or circumstances beyond SWEEM's control. If the center, or your child's classroom, closes for an extended period (for instance, due to a pandemic), full tuition is due to hold your child's spot. If this causes a hardship on your family, please contact the director for a Hardship Assistance Form to be submitted to the SWEEM Board of Directors.

## **OTHER CHARGES**

At SWEEM, we strive to provide the very best care possible for your children. At the same time, we must also be considerate of our employees and their families. Our full day program pick up is from 5 to 5:30 p.m. *(if operating during a pandemic, hours may change. Please see SWEEM COVID-19 Policies and Procedures for amended hours)*. If you pick your child up after 5:30 p.m., there will be a charge of \$50. If you are more than 10 minutes late, the late fee will be \$100. If you have not picked your child up after one hour from closing, we will call DHR.

Our half day program pick up is from 12:30 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. If you pick your child up after 12:45 p.m., there will be a charge of \$50. If you are more than 10 minutes late, the late fee will be \$100.

After three late pick ups in one year, your late fee will double. Any subsequent late pick-ups will be reviewed by the SWEEM Board of Directors and appropriate action will be taken. Call the center right away if you know you are going to be late, but please note, whether you call or not, the charges will still apply.

## **PROGRAM OPTIONS**

The ministry is structured to provide the following enrollment options for classroom ages as follows:

|                      |                                      |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 6 weeks to 12 months | Monday-Friday, Mon/Wed/Fri or Tu/Thu |
| 12-24 months         | Monday-Friday, Mon/Wed/Fri or Tu/Thu |
| 24-36 months         | Monday-Friday, Mon/Wed/Fri or Tu/Thu |
| 3 years              | Monday-Friday, Mon/Wed/Fri or Tu/Thu |
| Pre-K                | Monday-Friday only                   |
| Kindergarten         | Monday-Friday only                   |

Once registered, you are committed to pay for those days. In the event of a hardship, please contact the director for a Hardship Assistance Form to be submitted to the SWEEM Board of Directors.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS**

We request that children wear comfortable, washable play clothes and athletic or rubber-soled shoes for ease at indoor and outdoor play. Please no bare feet, sandals, Crocs, or slippers. Please bring extra clothes but leave toys at home. Soft nap toys are the exception. We also request that jewelry (including the teething necklaces), money, candy, gum, and other personal items not be brought to school.

Children will be greeted each day upon arrival. Any child who appears to be sick or might endanger self or others will not be permitted to stay.

Please keep your child home if he/she has a fever or shows signs of serious or contagious disease, such as but not limited to diarrhea, vomiting, unexplained rash, scabies, head lice or a doctor's diagnosis requiring that the child be separated from other children. If your child is sent home for fever, vomiting and /or diarrhea they may not return to school the next day. All communicable diseases should be reported to the school so other parents may be notified.

Our goal is to keep disease from spreading by consistent hand washing procedures, frequent laundering of items used, disinfecting equipment on a regular basis, and encouraging the children to use good manners by not sharing food, drinks, or clothing. We appreciate your help.

## **MEDICATIONS**

No medication or medical procedures (prescription or over the counter) shall be administered without being ordered by the child's health professional and without a written, signed authorization, on the required form (DHR-CDC-1949), from the child's parent(s)/guardian(s). ***Blanket authorization forms are prohibited.*** The authorization form shall include time(s) and date(s) to be administered, dosage, storage instructions (refrigerated or unrefrigerated), and specific directions for administering the medication/medical procedure, such as given by mouth, apply to skin, (such as but not limited to sunscreen, bug spray, hand sanitizer), inhale, drops in eyes, etc. An authorization form shall be valid for no more than seven (7) days unless accompanied by a written physician's statement. The authorization form (DHR-CDC-1949) can be obtained in the SWEEM office.

Any prescription drug or over the counter drug sent to the center shall be in its original container. Prescription drugs shall have a pharmacy label or shall be accompanied by a physician's written instructions. Over the counter drugs shall be clearly labeled with the child's name and the physician's written instructions for administering the drug. Medication should not be used beyond the date of expiration. A measuring device (if the medication requires measuring) shall be provided for each child's medication.

Three staff members in the center are designated to administer medication. Dosages and procedures shall be recorded in the child's file. Medicines/drugs shall be returned to the parents or disposed of properly when no longer needed.

## **FIRE PROCEDURE**

We meet all standards necessary for licensing by the Fire Department. The children have fire and weather drills regularly and know how to exit the building safely. An emergency exit plan is posted in each classroom. Areas are designated and marked for severe weather shelters.

## **WEATHER RELATED CLOSINGS**

Both the half-day and full-day programs will typically follow the Huntsville City School schedule for closing when inclement weather occurs or when snow, tornadoes, flooding, etc., are predicted.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Jesus brought a message of justice and equality to humankind. The model that Jesus left us with is to love all people and live together with respect for one another. This is also to guide relationships between parent and child and those who relate to children in a nurturing role. Mutual love and respect are what God calls for: “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.” (Colossians 3:20-21) God brings to our lives goodness and mercy, and teaches us to do the same for others, even those very different from ourselves.

Discipline at the Susanna Wesley Early Education Ministry is handled in a positive manner, consistent with the developmental needs of children. Clear behavioral limits are set and consistently enforced. Children are encouraged to gain self-control and to handle conflicts in a peaceful, effective manner.

Methods of positive guidance include but are not limited to retelling of expectations, redirection, providing appropriate behavioral alternatives, and praising appropriate behavior. We shall adhere to DHR standards in all disciplinary practices.

## **DAILY PROGRAM**

### **INFANTS**

It is our goal to provide children with the feeling that this is their “home away from home.” Each child will be provided personalized learning and growth activities to assure their development. They will be provided a variety of toys and time for freedom of movement outside their cribs. In addition, each child will be held, rocked, talked to, sung to, and taken on walks.

The diapering needs of the infant shall be attended to promptly when wet or soiled. Wet clothing will be changed. Diaper changing procedures will adhere strictly to DHR guidelines. Diapers will be checked every hour as a precaution to make sure the child is comfortable and clean.

Please provide diapers, wipes, several extra changes of clothes, pre-mixed formula in bottles, and unopened baby food for your child daily. We will provide clean crib sheets, disposable changing gloves, and bibs. A daily note will be sent home via [Preschool2me](https://www.preschool2me.com) describing the child’s day and progress.

Each child will be allowed to form his own pattern of sleeping and waking and will be assigned to a specific crib for their daily use. Soft materials, such as pillows, blankets, stuffed toys, or comforters are not allowed in the infant’s sleeping environment.

Eating habits and needs shall be closely coordinated with the parents. Children will be given personal attention at feeding. Weaning will begin only when the child’s physician or parents determine the child is ready. Parents and staff will work together in the weaning process to ensure consistency. You are welcome to come and breastfeed your baby, however, you may not breastfeed in the classrooms. There are several private areas in the church where you may breastfeed your baby.

Infant formula provided by the parent(s)/guardian(s), shall be sent ready to feed and labeled with the child's name and stored in the refrigerator. All bottles shall be sent home, or the contents discarded at the end of the day.

Expressed human milk should be sent in a bottle or container that is properly labeled with the infant’s full name and date and should only be given to the child specified. Parents must provide written instructions on how to

prepare, store, and use the expressed human milk. Unused breast milk should be returned to the parent in the bottle or container. Infant formula for a breastfed infant should only be used with parental consent.

If food for infants/toddlers is provided by the parent(s)/guardian(s), all jars/containers shall be labeled with the child's name. No previously opened jars of baby/toddler food shall be accepted by the center. All opened jars/containers shall be sent home or discarded at the end of the day.

**What to bring: Diapers, wipes, several changes of clothes, pre-mixed formula in bottles, unopened baby food. Please label all items.**

## **TODDLERS**

Toddlers are actively exploring their world. The children will be provided toys and activities, which allow them to explore and investigate. These will include such things as music, art, and movement. Toddlers will spend time outdoors daily when weather permits.

The diaper changing procedures described for infants also apply for toddlers. The staff shall begin toilet training toddlers only when the child is able to communicate his/her needs to use the toilet. The staff shall work together with parents to determine when to initiate toilet training procedures and to ensure a consistent and relaxed toilet training process. A daily note will be sent home via Preschool2me describing the child's day and progress.

Please remember to provide diapers, wipes, several changes of clothes, a nap mat with a blanket attached, and a soft toy for naptime for your toddler.

We will provide disposable gloves, bibs, lunch, and snacks.

We recognize differing needs of toddlers for sleep and rest. Each child will be allowed to follow his/her pattern. However, a quiet/rest time will be scheduled each morning and afternoon.

As a toddler's eating patterns change from those of the infant to those of the pre-school child, the regulations for pre-school feeding shall apply.

**What to bring: Diapers, wipes, several changes of clothes, and nap mat with blanket attached for full day students. Please label all items.**

## **PRE-SCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN**

Preschool/kindergarten children are becoming more social, and their learning and growth activities become more structured and group oriented. A daily schedule will be planned for each day and a parent bulletin board will keep parents informed of what the children did that day. Indoor and outdoor learning experiences will include such things as art, rhythm and music, books and Bible stories, discussion, natural science, block building, home living, manipulative toys and games, water play, climbing, riding, sand and digging.

Children shall work alone and in small groups. Activities will provide for quiet play as well as vigorous activity.

A supervised rest period shall be scheduled for preschool children in attendance for more than 5 hours.

Please provide an extra change of clothes for your preschooler. Although they rarely have toileting accidents, they do have other types of accidents and are much happier if they have their own clothes to wear.

Children in preschool/kindergarten classes shall be served a morning snack, a nutritious midday meal, and at least one afternoon snack. Meals are planned one month in advance and menus are handed out at the beginning of each month with the newsletter. Menus shall include a variety of foods.

**What to bring: Extra change of clothes, a nap mat with blanket attached for full day students. Please label all items.**

### **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit the ministry at any time.

You are welcome to share in classroom projects. Parents who have a talent, career, or hobby that they think would be interesting to the children are encouraged to set up a time to share it with the children.

On an as-needed basis, parents may be asked to serve on special committees for specific projects such as special events, holidays, fundraisers, etc. Parents may also serve on the Board of Directors. Serving on the board provides the parents the opportunity to oversee the operation of the ministry. The board consists of nine members, three of which are parents. The parents are selected for a three-year term

### **PARENT/STAFF COMMUNICATION**

The staff will make every effort to communicate with the parents daily to let them know how their child's day went. SWEEM uses the *Preschool2me* app, which sends daily reports and photos to parents via email and text. In addition, monthly curriculum calendars will be sent home to those children in the twos, threes, Pre-K, and kindergarten.

Any questions or problems a parent has concerning his/her child should be directed to the child's primary caregiver first, and then, if necessary, the director. All problems should be discussed with the director prior to any further action. If a question or problem cannot be satisfactorily resolved with the director, the parent may bring the subject to the board of directors for resolution. The board is the final authority concerning all problems regarding the Susanna Wesley Early Education Ministry.

When divorce is an issue, please indicate on your enrollment form the name of the custodial parent and those authorized to pick up your child. The custodial parent must give us a copy of the divorce decree, which will be kept confidential in your child's file. If you have an order of protection or restraining order that pertains to your child's protection, please notify us immediately and provide a copy of the legal document.

If a child needs to be evaluated for any reason, speech/developmental delays, kindergarten readiness, etc., all correspondence or forms must first be brought to the directors.

# Signature Page

I have read and understand the Parent Handbook of the Susanna Wesley Education Ministry. I accept the outlined policies and agree to follow them for my child(ren) to attend classes. In addition, I have received and have read the information about the influenza virus, the SWEEM Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan and the SWEEM COVID-19 Policies and Procedures.

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NAME OF CHILD(REN): \_\_\_\_\_  
(PLEASE PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PARENT(S): \_\_\_\_\_  
(PLEASE PRINT)

SIGNATURE(S): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(LEGAL GUARDIAN)

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Revised 8/1/2022