

# Susanna Wesley Early Education Ministry

## FAMILY HANDBOOK 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR



SWEEM is a ministry of  
First United Methodist Church  
120 Greene Street  
Huntsville, AL 35801  
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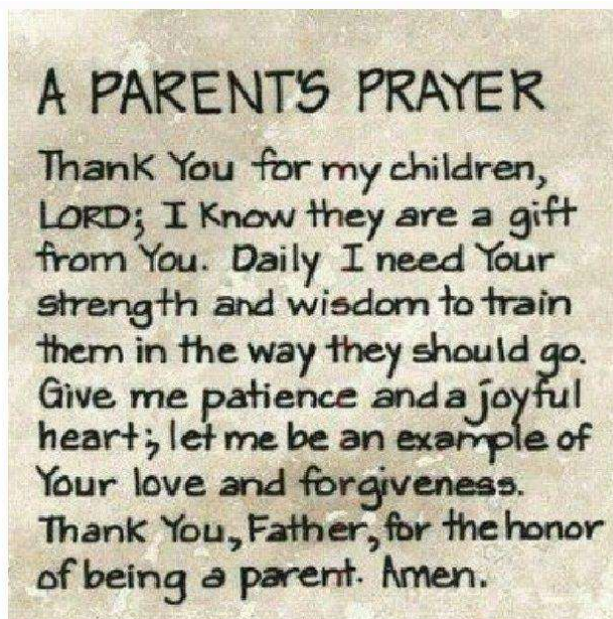
## A Welcome Message for Families

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 teachers, and we are here to partner with you while at SWEEM. We will support your child/children as they 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 SWEEM will become 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. 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, and may God bless you and your family.



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## ABOUT US

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 continuously served children since then.

In 2001, the vision became a 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. We offer our services to you in the assurance of God's promises and the gift of God's grace.

### *Philosophy*

Christian values motivate and guide the operation of this ministry. Christian ethics and morals are taught, Bible stories from 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 interdependent 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 high self-esteem when given opportunities to succeed. High self-esteem gives the courage to tackle life's problems through positive behavior. Children with high self-esteem will be able to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities of

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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.

### ***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.

### ***Hours of Operation***

SWEEM is open Monday through Friday, 7:30 am until 5:30 pm.

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. All children must arrive at the center before 9:00 a.m. unless they have a doctor’s note or other circumstances and have notified the office in advance. If your child is arriving after 11:00 a.m., please feed them lunch before they arrive at childcare.

### ***Holidays, Other Days for Program Closings, an Inclement Weather Closings***

SWEEM will be closed on the following holidays.

- New Year’s Day and the Day After
- MLK Day
- Presidents Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- July 4<sup>th</sup>
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Friday After Thanksgiving
- Three Days at Christmas
- New Year’s Eve

SWEEM will also close the day before the beginning of the new school year for teacher meetings, training, classroom preparation, and a program Open House. Please see the program calendar for specific dates.

### ***Inclement Weather Closings and Delays***

Both the half-day and full-day programs will typically follow the Huntsville City School (HCS) schedule for closing when inclement weather occurs or is predicted.

- If HCS is closed due to inclement weather, SWEEM will also be closed.
- If HCS closes early due to inclement weather, SWEEM will close 30 minutes after the closing time of the HCS.

- If HCS has a delayed opening due to inclement weather, SWEEM will open at the same time delay as HCS. For example, if HCS opens after a two-hour delay, SWEEM will open at 9:30 am.
- If HCS cancels all after-school activities due to inclement weather, SWEEM will close at 3:30 pm.
- If HCS switches to an eLearning day due to inclement weather, SWEEM will be closed.
- If HCS is not in session when inclement weather occurs or is predicted, the SWEEM administrators will decide whether SWEEM will open, open late, close early, or close for the day.

### **Admission & Enrollment**

Admission priorities are (1) Children of SWEEM and FUMC Staff, (2) Siblings of children in the program, (3) Children already in the program who need a different schedule, (4) Church members on the waiting list, (5) non-church members on the waiting list.

The following forms are provided before the child's first day of attendance must be in our office before a child may attend the program:

- Pre-admission enrollment record (DHR-CDC-739)
- A physician's authorization, along with the authorization form (DHR-CDC-1949) for administering medication, if needed
- 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.
- Emergency card (A new one is completed each year)
- Signature page of SWEEM Parent Handbook
- Permissions Form for Procure Family Engagement App, Directory, and Media Publications
- Tuition Express Payment Authorization

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

A registration fee is required for each child upon enrollment and yearly thereafter and is not prorated or refundable. A more detailed explanation of the fee policy is found in the Tuition and Fees section of this handbook.

Each year, in early spring, we will facilitate the process of enrollment for our summer program and 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.

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Half-day children 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, nor can they attend the interim week between the end of the summer program and beginning of the new school year.

Half-day children will have various school breaks throughout the year in which they do not attend SWEEM, and those are noted on the program's school year calendar.

If your child is not attending our summer program or is not returning for the next school year, they can attend the program during the interim week before summer programming begins.

### ***Waiting List***

It is very exciting when a SWEEM family is expecting a new baby. If you need childcare for your new baby, you must get on the waiting list as soon as possible. Siblings are enrolled as a priority after SWEEM and FUMC staff's children, if we have space in the classroom, your new baby would be enrolled.

### ***Inclusion***

SWEEM believes children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance, and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage the full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

If your child has an identified special need, a meeting will be facilitated with the director and your child's classroom teachers to develop a plan for participation at SWEEM.

### ***Non-Discrimination***

At SWEEM equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

### ***Family Involvement***

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program by visiting their child/children's classrooms, participating in events, and providing feedback on the program.

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 with 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.



## Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except for that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children in our program are confidential. It is also very important that parents do not share information about or discuss other children in our program with other parents.

## Staff Qualifications

Our teachers are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Teachers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, quality childcare, and professionalism.

## Child to Staff Ratios

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

6 weeks to 12 months	1:3 (DHR 1:5)
12 to 24 months	1:5 (DHR 1:7)
24 to 36 months	1:7 (DHR 1:8)
3-year-olds	1:8 (DHR 1:11)
4-year-olds and Pre-K	1:8 (DHR 1:18)

## Communication & Family Partnership

**Daily Communications.** Daily communication from the classroom teachers will be done through the Procure app. Notes will be placed into your child's cubby at the end of the day if diapers, wipes, extra clothes, or other items are needed and/or set through Procure. Parents can also send a message to the classroom through the Procure app. Our teachers will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians each day at drop off and pick up. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during drop-off and pick-up. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.

**Newsletters.** Monthly newsletters from the director provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters are sent to families through the Procure app.

**Email.** To communicate with our director, please email [sweem@huntsvillefirst.org](mailto:sweem@huntsvillefirst.org), and to communicate with the assistant director, Wendy Kanupp, please email [wendy@huntsvillefirst.org](mailto:wendy@huntsvillefirst.org) for tuition questions or concerns.

**Progress Reports.** A written report documenting your child's progress will be distributed twice a year, mid-school year and at the end of the school year.

**Conferences.** Conferences can be scheduled at any time with your child's teachers to discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and any concerns you may have regarding your child's development. We encourage you to communicate any concerns directly to your child's teacher.

**Communication of Concerns.** Any questions or concerns a parent has about his/her child should be directed to the child's teachers first and then, if necessary, to the director. All concerns



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should be discussed with the director before any further action. If a question or concern cannot be satisfactorily resolved with the director, the parent may bring the subject to the board of directors for resolution.

**Divorce of Parents.** 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.

**Evaluations and Letters of Recommendation for Private Schools:** If a child needs to be evaluated for any reason, speech/developmental delays, kindergarten readiness, etc., or is applying with a private school, all correspondence or forms must first be brought to the director. All forms can be emailed to the director and classroom teachers at [sweem@huntsvillefirst.org](mailto:sweem@huntsvillefirst.org).

### *Open Door Policy*

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of children, external doors will always remain locked.

## **LEARNING AND AGE-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

### *Learning Environment*

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible daily routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to what is different from us and the ability to work and play with others.

### *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 with 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.

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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 Procure 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. The church has several private areas 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. We cannot accept glass bottles.

Expressed human milk should be sent in a bottle or container that is properly labeled with the infant's full name and date and only be given to the specified child. 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 breast-fed infant should only be used with parental consent. We cannot accept glass bottles.

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 glass jars or 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, the pre-mixed formula in bottles, and unopened baby food. Please label all items.**

### ***Toddlers and Twos***

Toddlers and two-year-olds are actively exploring their world. The children will be provided with toys and activities which allow them to explore and investigate. These will include such things as music, art, and movement, and they will spend time outdoors daily when the weather permits. During inclement weather, children will play in the Fellowship Hall using large balls, ride-on toys, and other large motor toys.

The diaper-changing procedures described for infants also apply to toddlers. The staff shall begin toilet training 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 Procure describing the child's day and progress.

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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.

A supervised rest period shall be scheduled when children are in attendance for more than 5 hours. Our toddlers usually start the year resting in a crib and transition to a cot later in the year. Parents will be notified when the transition from a crib to a cot is taking place. Toddlers may also start the year still needing two naps. Teachers will follow the sleep pattern of each toddler until they are ready to transition, having only one nap a day. Two-year-olds will nap on a cot.

As eating patterns change from those of the infant to those of the preschool child, the regulations for preschool feeding shall apply to include being served breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack.

**What to bring: Diapers, wipes, several changes of clothes, water bottle/sippy cup with water ONLY, a nap mat with a blanket attached for full-day students who are napping on a cot, and a backpack or tote bag to carry home artwork or other projects. Please label all items.**

### *Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten*

Preschool/Pre-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. 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, etc.

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 and pre-kindergarten classes shall be served breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack.

**What to bring: water bottle with water ONLY, a nap mat with a blanket attached for full-day students who are napping on a cot, and a backpack or tote bag to carry home artwork or other projects. Please label all items.**

## *Transitions*

Your child's transition in childcare should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

## *Electronic Media*

Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computer use. Still, from time to time, we may use a television show, YouTube video, or other media outlet without advertisements as a teaching aid. All electronic media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child with a positive experience with an increased understanding of the world. There may also be times teachers will use their classroom iPads to play music during nap time or for a music and movement activity. For our pre-kindergarten curriculum, there is a daily video component that supports the curriculum lessons being taught to the children.

The state of Alabama's Daycare Regulations prohibits any screen time for children under two. This includes TV, videos and computers. Teachers may use their classroom iPads for playing music, but children under the age of two will NOT see any videos that accompany the music being played.

## *Birthday Celebrations*

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.

## *Toilet Training*

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns. **Please note children do need to be fully potty-trained to attend our Pre-K program.**

## ***GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE***

### *General Procedure*

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

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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 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.

### ***Challenging Behavior***

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness.

Each student at SWEEM has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place.
- Be treated with respect.
- Receive the help and support of caring adults.

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent, and understandable to the child.

### ***Physical Restraint***

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child’s safety or that of others, and we may restrain a child by gently holding her or him only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

### ***Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families***

If a child’s behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child’s individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

On rare occasions, a child’s behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Continued care could be harmful to or not in the best interest of the child as determined by medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue the burden on our resources for the child’s accommodations for success and participation.

## TUITION AND FEES

A registration fee is required both at the time a child is first enrolled at SWEEM and yearly thereafter. Registration fees are not prorated or refundable. Each spring we hold registration for the summer program and the upcoming school year for all returning families. If you decide to withdraw your child/children from the upcoming school year after they are registered, you must notify the office in writing by June 1<sup>st</sup> that they are not returning. If the notice is received after June 1<sup>st</sup>, families will be required to pay August tuition in full, and that will be auto drafted before their last day at SWEEM.

All tuition payments will be auto drafted from a bank account or a credit card, and current fees SWEEM is charged by the bank, credit card company, or Tuition Express (which is the entity that processes our tuition payments), will also be charged to a family's tuition account.

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 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 equal to the fee charged to SWEEM from the bank, credit card company, or Tuition Express. Families who have three declined payments during the school year will be required to pay tuition in cash each Monday with the correct change for the remainder of the school year.

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 hardship for your family, please contact the director for a Hardship Assistance Form to be submitted to the SWEEM Board of Directors.

During Vacation Bible at FUMC, SWEEM will be closed the entire week. SWEEM does not charge tuition for the week we are closed for Vacation Bible School, and the date is indicated on the program's school year calendar.

If your child attends half-day and your request to stay a full day is accommodated, your half-day child needs to be dropped off before 8:30 a.m., or your child needs to attend any non-scheduled day, the following fees will apply and be auto drafted like tuition is processed.

- If arriving between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. the additional fee will be \$10.00 per day.
- If arriving between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. the additional fee will be \$5.00 per day.
- To attend a non-scheduled half-day, the fee will be \$40.00 a day.
- To attend a non-scheduled full day, the fee will be \$68.00 a day.

SWEEM is not able to accommodate a drop-in service. However, if you need your child to attend a day they aren't scheduled, please let us know and if we can accommodate them, we will let you know. The fees above will apply for such schedule changes. You may not swap days to accommodate a schedule change. For example, if you registered your child for Monday, Wednesday, and Friday full days, but you need them to come Tuesday for a full day instead of

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Wednesday, you will still be charged for three full days and the Tuesday add-on will be charged a separate fee as stated above.

### ***Charges for Late Pick-Up***

If you pick your child up after 5:30 p.m., there will be a charge of \$50. If you are over 10 minutes late, the late fee will be \$100. If you have not picked your child up after one hour and none of your emergency contacts have been able to pick up your child, we will call the Department of Human Resources.

Children who attend half-days are to be picked up at or before 12:30 p.m. If you pick your child up after 12:30 p.m., there will be a late fee charge of \$50. If you are over 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 immediately if you know you will be late, but please note whether you call or not, the charges will still apply.

### ***Other Fees***

From time to time there will be additional fees associated with special activities such as class parties. These fees are due before the event and are given in cash directly to the classroom teachers unless otherwise specified.

## **ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL**

### ***Absence***

If your child is going to be absent or will arrive after 9:00 am, please call the office, email the director, or message the teacher through the Procure app. If your child is absent due to illness, please let us know, as we are required to notify families when there is a communicable disease in the classroom.

### ***Withdrawal from the Program***

Two weeks' written notice is required when withdrawing a child from SWEEM. This can be done in writing or through email to [sweem@huntsvillefirst.org](mailto:sweem@huntsvillefirst.org).

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 the Alabama Department of Human Resources <https://dhr.alabama.gov/child-care/>. In addition, hard copies of the Performance Standards are available to view in the SWEEM office.



## **DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP**

### ***General Procedure***

It is a daycare regulation that children are both signed in AND out each day they are in attendance. Sign-In/Out sheets are located on the clipboard outside each classroom. The person dropping off and picking up a child must indicate the time and their signature on the Sign In/Out sheet.

### ***Cell Phone Usage***

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we communicate with you about your child. To make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center.

### ***Authorized Pick-Up and No-Show for Pick-Up***

Your child will only be released to you or those people you have listed as Emergency Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency Contact to pick up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you and the contacts listed as Emergency Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after one hour we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

## **MEALS AND FOOD ALLERGIES**

### **WE ARE A PEANUT-FREE FACILITY**

Tuition includes breakfast, lunch, and an 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 food for meals, other than infants unless a child is 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, or you may provide your child with the food for their meals if the alternative does not eliminate the allergen. We must have a letter from your child's physician stating the food allergy or disease and a written care plan that includes:

- Instructions regarding the food(s) to which the child is allergic and the steps to be taken to avoid that food.

- 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 you need to provide food for your child due to SWEEM not being able to accommodate for the food allergy, tuition will be decreased equal to the amount of the cost of the meal being substituted.

## HEALTH

### *Immunizations*

It is a daycare regulation that children's immunizations are required to be up to date according to recommended schedule from the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). If your child is on a delayed immunization schedule, a written letter from the child's physician is required.

### *Illness*

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children and staff, sick children cannot attend SWEEM. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill at drop-off after a discussion with SWEEM administration. If your child becomes ill while in care, parents will be called to come pick up sick children. We also understand that some illnesses are caused by medication, diarrhea from taking antibiotics, so please let us know if your child is on medication.

If children exhibit any of the following symptoms prior to coming to childcare or while in attendance at SWEEM, they will not be allowed to come to care or remain in care if they have already arrived. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive. This is not an all-inclusive list.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness results in a greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness poses a risk of the spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Diarrhea – stools with blood and/or excessive mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting is not related to normal infant “spit-up” and is accompanied by other symptoms such as lethargy, fever, diarrhea, generally not feeling well, and continued vomiting.
- Mouth sores
- Rash unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo until 24 hours after treatment begins.

- Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment begins.
- Head lice until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment begins.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are symptom-free for 24 hours without medication **or**
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours and are fever free for 24 hours without medication **or**
- They can participate comfortably in all usual activities **or**
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
  - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, **and;**
  - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage **or**
- They have a doctor's note stating they can return to care due to not being contagious, such as with allergies, the common cold, teething and are fever free for 24 hours without medication.

For infants and younger toddlers, we understand that teething may present with a low-grade fever, decreased appetite due to sore gums, and irritability. However, children will still have to go home if their temperature is 100.4 degrees or above. Teething fevers rarely reach the 100.4 degrees level.

If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required. SWEEM is also obligated to notify the Alabama Department of Public Health of such reportable communicable diseases; the complete list can be found here.

<https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/search/index.html?query=reportable+diseases&referrerPageUrl=https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/>

### **Allergy Prevention**

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be given to the child's teachers, our caterer and maintained in the office. All lists are kept confidential. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies. We are also trained to use epi-pens if your child is prescribed one to have at daycare.

### **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

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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, applying 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 with the child's name clearly labeled on the container. Prescription drugs shall have a pharmacy label. 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.

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.

Medications can NOT be added to children's bottles or sippy cups, unless specified with the physician's instructions. If such is required, please bring the medication as required above and a SWEEM staff person will add it to the child's bottle or sippy cup. Parents cannot add medication to their child's bottle or sippy cup then bring those items to school.

## **SAFETY**

### ***Clothing and Items from Home***

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement, is appropriate for the weather, and can get dirty. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities, including painting, outdoor play, weather, and sensory activities. Our playground is an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment, which could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Flip-flops, slippers, sandals, and bare feet are inappropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities. Closed-toed shoes shall be worn each day. Children who do not come to daycare in closed-toed shoes will not be allowed to stay. Parents will either need to take the child home to put on closed-toed shoes then bring them back to daycare or keep their child home for the day. If your child is in one of our infant rooms, they do not need to wear closed-toed shoes until they are walking. When all the infants in the classroom are walking, they will be going to the playground each day, and the closed-toed shoes will help with keeping them safe.

Jewelry (including the teething necklaces), money, candy, gum, and other personal items are not to be brought to daycare. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO BRING TOYS OR OTHER PERSONAL ITEMS TO DAYCARE. When they bring such to daycare, things can get

lost or broken. We have plenty of wonderful toys for the children to play with. The only item children can bring to daycare is a lovie for rest time.

Children, except for our infants, cannot bring food to the center and can't come into the center eating food. The only exception are treats that have been preplanned with the teacher, such as for birthdays or class parties, can be brought in. We have several children with life-threatening food allergies, and bringing outside food not preplanned with the teacher can put those children at risk for an allergic reaction. In addition, it causes other children in the classroom to become upset that they aren't getting any of the food another child came in eating.

### ***Injuries***

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver if your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and the course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling, needs medical attention, or is to your child's head or face, you will be contacted immediately.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance while we will try to contact you or emergency contact.

### ***Biting***

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the child who bit to learn more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the family of the child who bit. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

### ***Smoking***

The poison in secondhand smoke is especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies; therefore, the indoor and outdoor center environment are always non-smoking areas. Tobacco use in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

### ***Prohibited Substances***

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

### ***Dangerous Weapons***

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, by the manner it is used or intended to be used, capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff, or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called, and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

### ***Suspected Child Abuse***

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may investigate. It then becomes the agency's role to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

## **EMERGENCIES**

### ***Emergency Procedures***

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.

### ***Emergency Transportation***

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

# Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgment, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time to time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for your acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

*I have received the Susanna Wesley Early Education Ministry Family Handbook. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure, or information contained in this handbook that I do not understand.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Recipient Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date