



Parent Handbook

2026-2027 School Year

A Ministry of Hazel Green United Methodist Church

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Welcome from the Director

Dear CEC Families,

Welcome to the Child Enrichment Center (CEC)! We are honored that you have chosen us to be part of your child's early learning journey.

At CEC, we believe childhood should be filled with wonder, laughter, discovery, and love. We know that choosing someone to care for your child is one of the most important decisions a family can make, and we do not take that responsibility lightly. Every day, our goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children are encouraged to grow academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Our dedicated Teachers strive to create classrooms where children feel loved, valued, and confident enough to explore the world around them. Through meaningful play, hands-on learning experiences, Christian values, and caring relationships, we help children develop the skills they need not only for Kindergarten, but for life.

At CEC, we believe that the best outcomes happen when families and Teachers work together. Open communication, mutual trust, and shared goals allow us to create the strongest possible foundation for every child. We value the partnership we build with each family and look forward to celebrating milestones, overcoming challenges, and making wonderful memories together.

This Parent Handbook has been designed to answer many of the questions you may have about our program, policies, and daily procedures. While it cannot address every situation that may arise, it serves as a guide to help us work together to provide the best possible experience for your child.

Thank you for trusting us with one of God's greatest gifts. We look forward to partnering with your family throughout the coming year.

With gratitude,

Paige Peil

Director

Child Enrichment Center

Did You Know?

More than **90% of a child's brain develops before age 5**, making the early years one of the most important times for learning, relationships, and healthy development.

Our Mission & Philosophy

At CEC, we believe every child is uniquely created by God with incredible potential, individual gifts, and a natural desire to learn.

Our mission is to provide a safe, loving, and nurturing environment where children grow academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually while developing a lifelong love of learning.

We believe children learn best through meaningful relationships, purposeful play, hands-on exploration, and caring guidance from trusted adults. Our classrooms are designed to encourage curiosity, creativity, confidence, independence, and problem-solving while supporting each child's individual developmental journey.

As a ministry of Hazel Green United Methodist Church, CEC provides a loving Christian environment where children experience Bible stories, prayer, Chapel, and lessons that teach kindness, compassion, respect, and God's love for all people. Families of all faith backgrounds are welcome, and we are honored to serve every child with love and respect.

Above all, we believe the strongest outcomes happen when families and Teachers work together. Through open communication, mutual trust, and shared goals, we strive to create the best possible experience for every child entrusted to our care.

A Day at CEC

Every day at CEC is thoughtfully planned to provide children with a balance of learning, exploration, creativity, movement, rest, and meaningful relationships.

While daily schedules vary by age group, children can expect opportunities for:

- Free choice and center-based learning
- Teacher-guided instruction
- Bible lessons and Christian values
- Circle time and classroom community
- Outdoor play and gross motor development
- Creative art and sensory experiences
- Music and movement
- Language and early literacy activities
- STEM exploration
- Social-emotional learning
- Nutritious meals and snacks

- Rest and quiet time
- Plenty of opportunities to build friendships, solve problems, and simply enjoy being children

Each day is intentionally designed to provide children with a safe, predictable routine while allowing flexibility to follow their interests, celebrate special moments, and meet their individual developmental needs.

Licensing & Program Oversight

Child Enrichment Center is a ministry of Hazel Green United Methodist Church and operates as a **license-exempt childcare program** under Alabama law. Although CEC is exempt from state childcare licensing requirements, we voluntarily use the **Alabama Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers** as a guide for our policies, procedures, and daily operations. Our program remains accountable to the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) and cooperates fully with required inspections, investigations, and applicable state regulations. We are committed to maintaining a safe, healthy, and high-quality learning environment for every child in our care.

Family Events & Special Celebrations

At the Child Enrichment Center, we love creating special moments for children and their families throughout the year. Teachers plan occasional activities such as crafts, snacks, special visitors, and themed events that invite families to join their child at school. These events are meant to be joyful, low-pressure opportunities to share in your child's early learning experience—not to add stress to your busy schedule.

If a parent is unable to attend, we warmly welcome grandparents, aunts, uncles, or another special loved one in their place. While we hope families can participate whenever possible, we completely understand that schedules don't always allow it.

If no one is able to attend an event, please let your child's Teacher know in advance so we can plan accordingly and ensure your child still feels included, supported, and celebrated.

Did You Know?

Young children learn best through **play**. During play, they're building language, problem-solving, self-control, creativity, and social skills—all while having fun!

Enrollment

We are honored that you have chosen the Child Enrichment Center to be part of your child's early learning journey. Our goal is to make the enrollment process as smooth as possible while ensuring we have the information needed to provide the best care for every child.

To enroll, families must complete all required enrollment forms and provide any requested documentation before their child's first day of attendance.

Enrollment requirements include, but are not limited to:

- Completed enrollment forms
- Emergency contact information
- Immunization records or approved exemption documentation
- Medical information, including allergies or health concerns
- Emergency Medical Authorization
- Signed Parent Handbook Acknowledgement
- Signed Potty Training Policy (when applicable)
- Any additional forms required by CEC

Enrollment is considered complete once all required paperwork has been received and approved by the Office.

Classroom Placement

Children are placed in classrooms based on several factors, including age, developmental readiness, classroom availability, and the individual needs of the child.

While age is an important consideration, CEC recognizes that every child develops at their own pace. The Director reserves the right to determine the most appropriate classroom placement to best support both the individual child and the overall classroom environment.

Transitions between classrooms are carefully planned to help children feel comfortable and confident as they adjust to new Teachers, classmates, and routines.

Hours of Operation

CEC is open Monday through Friday from **6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.**

Children may arrive as early as 6:00 a.m. and must be picked up no later than 6:00 p.m.

CEC follows the annual operating calendar provided to families each school year. Families will be notified in advance of scheduled holidays, professional development days, and other planned closures.

In the event of severe weather or other emergencies requiring changes to operating hours, updates will be communicated through Procure and other available communication methods.

Starting the Day Together

A consistent morning routine helps children feel secure, confident, and ready to learn. Arriving on time allows children to settle into their classroom and begin the day alongside their Teachers and classmates.

Class begins promptly at 8:00 a.m. each morning. We ask that all children arrive no later than 7:45 a.m.

To maintain a consistent learning environment:

- Children should arrive before the start of the school day unless they have a scheduled appointment or other approved circumstance.
- Drop-offs are not permitted after 12:00 p.m.
- Drop-offs are not permitted during Chapel on Mondays and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. This allows children to participate in worship without interruption and helps maintain a calm, respectful environment during Chapel.
- If your child will be arriving late due to an appointment or another unavoidable circumstance, please notify your child's Teacher through Procure.

The beginning of each school day includes classroom routines, Bible lessons, prayer, learning activities, and opportunities for children to connect with their Teachers and classmates. Arriving on time helps children transition successfully and allows classrooms to begin the day together.

Regular attendance helps children establish routines, build friendships, and fully participate in classroom learning experiences.

If your child will be absent for the day, we ask that families notify the classroom through Procure as a courtesy so Teachers know to expect your child's absence.

Sign-In & Sign-Out

The safety of every child begins with knowing exactly who is in our care at all times.

Accurate sign-in and sign-out records help us ensure every child's safety, maintain attendance records, and respond appropriately in the event of an emergency.

Families are required to sign their child in upon arrival and sign their child out before leaving each day using Procure or another CEC-approved attendance system.

For your child's safety, parents or authorized adults should escort children to the building each morning and accompany them during pick-up. Children should never be dropped off in the parking lot or allowed to enter or exit the building without an adult.

Children will only be released to a parent, legal guardian, or an individual authorized in Procure. Authorized individuals may be asked to present a valid photo ID before a child is released.

If there are custody arrangements or court orders that affect who may pick up your child, a current copy of the legal documentation must be provided to the CEC Office. We are legally required to follow court orders that are on file.

If someone unfamiliar will be picking up your child, please notify the Office or your child's Teacher through Procure before pick-up whenever possible. This helps us ensure a safe and smooth dismissal.

It is the family's responsibility to keep emergency contacts, phone numbers, and authorized pick-up information current throughout the year.

For the safety of all children, CEC reserves the right to delay releasing a child if we believe the individual picking up may be impaired or otherwise unable to safely transport the child. In these situations, staff will work with the family to identify another authorized adult who can safely provide transportation.

The safety of our children extends beyond our classroom doors. We encourage all families to transport their children in an age- and size-appropriate car seat or booster seat that is properly installed and used according to Alabama law and manufacturer recommendations.

Children should be picked up no later than 6:00 p.m. Please refer to the Tuition & Financial Policies section for information regarding late pick-up fees.

Did You Know?

Children who follow a consistent morning routine often transition more easily into the classroom and are better prepared for learning.

Building Access & Security

Providing a safe and secure environment is one of the many ways we care for our CEC families.

To help maintain building security, CEC's exterior doors remain locked throughout the day. During operating hours, families and visitors should enter through the designated entrance based on the time of day:

- Gym Entrance: 6:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
- Office Entrance (Door #4): 8:00 a.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Families are always welcome at CEC. For the safety of all children, we ask that all visitors check in through the Office before entering the building during operating hours.

Children are escorted to and from their classrooms by CEC staff. To help maintain building security and minimize classroom disruptions, families do not accompany children into classrooms during normal arrival and dismissal times.

To further protect everyone in our building:

- Exterior doors remain secured throughout the day.
- Children are released only to individuals authorized in Procure.
- Photo identification may be requested before a child is released.
- Please do not hold exterior doors open for individuals you do not recognize or allow others to enter without checking in through the Office.

Thank you for partnering with us to help maintain a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for every child.

Meals & Nutrition

Good nutrition plays an important role in a child's growth, development, and ability to learn.

CEC provides:

- Breakfast (6-7 am)
- Morning snack (9:15 am)
- Afternoon snack (2:30 pm)
- Milk, juice, and water throughout the day

CEC provides breakfast each morning for children who arrive before **7:00 a.m.**

Children arriving between **7:00 a.m. and 7:45 a.m.** are welcome to bring a ready-to-eat breakfast from home. Teachers will provide time for children to finish eating before classroom activities begin.

To help children transition smoothly into the school day, breakfasts brought from home should be finished by **7:45 a.m.** as we begin preparing for the start of the instructional day.

Families provide a **ready-to-eat lunch** each day. Because classroom schedules vary and staff supervise children during meals, lunches should not require cooking or extensive preparation. Thermoses are encouraged for foods that should remain warm.

If a child arrives without a lunch, CEC will provide one. No child will ever go without a meal while in our care.

 Did You Know?

Family-style conversations during meals help children build vocabulary, social skills, and independence.

Infant Feeding & Bottles

Every infant has unique feeding needs, and we work closely with families to follow each child's individual routine.

For the health and safety of our youngest children:

- Bottles must be prepared before arriving at CEC and clearly labeled with the child's first and last name and the current date.
- Families may also send bottles pre-filled with water along with pre-measured formula in a labeled dispenser for staff to prepare as needed.
- Bottles may not contain cereal, medication, or supplements unless accompanied by written instructions from a licensed healthcare provider.
- Once approved by a healthcare provider to begin solid foods, families may send age-appropriate foods from home.

Teachers follow each infant's individualized feeding schedule while maintaining open communication with families as feeding needs change throughout the first year.

 Did You Know?

Holding a bottle, making eye contact, and talking with babies during feedings helps build secure attachments and supports early brain development.

Birthdays & Celebrations

We love celebrating birthdays and other special milestones with our children!

Families wishing to provide birthday treats should coordinate with their child's Teacher in advance.

To help protect children with food allergies and dietary restrictions:

- All treats must be commercially prepared and in their original packaging.
- Homemade treats may not be served.
- Teachers may request alternative treats when necessary to accommodate classroom allergies or dietary needs.

Our goal is to make every celebration safe, inclusive, and enjoyable for every child.

Rest & Sleep

Rest is an important part of every child's day. Adequate sleep supports healthy growth, brain development, emotional regulation, and learning. CEC provides developmentally appropriate opportunities for rest based on each child's age and individual needs.

Infants & Waddlers

Infants and waddlers are not placed on a strict group sleep schedule. Because sleep needs vary greatly during the first year of life, children in these classrooms are allowed to eat and sleep according to their individual developmental needs and family routines.

Our Teachers carefully monitor each child's cues and provide opportunities for rest as needed throughout the day. This individualized approach reflects current recommendations for infant care and supports healthy development.

CEC follows safe sleep practices to help provide a safe sleeping environment for our youngest children. Infants are always placed on their backs to sleep unless otherwise directed by a physician, and all safe sleep practices are followed in accordance with current program policies and applicable guidelines.

Older Classrooms

Children in our toddler, preschool, and Pre-K classrooms participate in a daily rest period, generally observed from 12:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. Each classroom follows a consistent routine designed to create a calm and peaceful environment.

Children are expected to rest quietly on their nap mat for approximately 45 minutes. While we encourage children to sleep whenever possible, we understand that not every child falls asleep

each day. If a child is unable to fall asleep after the designated rest period, a quiet activity may be provided at the Teacher's discretion, provided it does not disturb children who are sleeping.

Whenever possible, we encourage children to sleep during rest time, as adequate rest supports healthy growth, learning, emotional regulation, and a successful afternoon. To promote healthy sleep habits, naps will not exceed 2 hours and 15 minutes.

We recognize that every child is different. Our goal is to balance each child's individual developmental needs with the consistent routines that help classrooms feel safe, predictable, and successful.



Did You Know?

Sleep helps children's brains organize everything they learned throughout the day. Rest time is an important part of healthy development—even if a child doesn't fall asleep.

Nap Items

Families should provide a labeled nap mat and any small sleep comfort item ("lovey") requested by the classroom Teacher.

- Nap mats should be brought to school on Mondays and will be sent home on Fridays for laundering.
- Nap items will also be sent home anytime they become soiled.
- Sleep loveys should be small enough to fit inside your child's backpack, clearly labeled, and will be sent home daily.
- Please label all nap items with your child's name.

Personal Belongings

Children learn best when they are comfortable and dressed for active play.

Families should send children in comfortable clothing that allows them to participate in art, sensory activities, outdoor play, and other hands-on learning experiences.

Please remember:

- Closed-toe shoes are required for safety.
- Children wearing dresses or skirts should also wear shorts underneath.
- Send at least one complete change of seasonally appropriate clothing.

- Label all clothing, backpacks, lunch boxes, water bottles, nap items, and other personal belongings with your child's first and last name.
- Please avoid sending valuable toys or personal items unless requested by your child's Teacher for a special classroom activity.
- Toys, tablets, smart watches, and other electronic devices should remain at home unless specifically requested by the classroom Teacher for a special activity.

CEC is not responsible for lost, damaged, or misplaced personal belongings. Items left at CEC will be placed in the Lost & Found area. Unclaimed items may be donated periodically throughout the year.

Potty Learning

At CEC, we recognize that every child develops at their own pace. Our goal is to partner with families to make potty learning a positive, encouraging experience while maintaining a clean, safe, and healthy classroom environment.

Successful potty learning happens best when children are developmentally ready and families and Teachers work together consistently both at home and at school.

Signs of Readiness

While every child develops differently, common signs of potty learning readiness include:

- Showing interest in using the toilet or wearing underwear
- Staying dry for longer periods of time
- Communicating when their diaper or pull-up is wet or soiled
- Following simple directions
- Pulling pants up and down with minimal assistance
- Demonstrating awareness of the need to use the restroom

If your child is not yet demonstrating these readiness signs, we encourage families to continue introducing potty learning at home until they are ready to begin the process at school.

Beginning Potty Learning at CEC

Before beginning potty learning at school:

- Families should discuss their child's readiness with the Teacher.
- Potty learning should also be taking place consistently at home.
- Children beginning potty learning must wear **pull-ups with easy-open Velcro sides**. Pull-ups that pull on like underwear are difficult to change after accidents and create unnecessary sanitation concerns.

Teachers will provide regular opportunities for children to use the restroom, encourage independence, celebrate successes, and communicate progress through Procure.

Transitioning to Underwear

Children must remain in pull-ups while they are learning.

To transition to underwear at CEC, children must demonstrate successful potty learning by remaining **accident-free at school for three consecutive weeks**.

This expectation helps ensure children are truly ready for the increased independence that wearing underwear requires and allows Teachers to focus on the needs of the entire classroom.

Once a child has been accident-free at CEC for three consecutive weeks, families may begin sending their child in regular underwear.

Accidents

Accidents are a normal part of the potty learning process and will always be handled with patience, encouragement, and dignity.

Families should send:

- At least **two complete changes of clothing**, including socks.
- An extra pair of shoes.
- Comfortable clothing that children can easily pull up and down independently.

If accidents become frequent after transitioning to underwear, the Teacher may recommend returning to pull-ups for a period of time until the child is ready to try again. This is not considered a setback, but rather an opportunity to build confidence and ensure success.

Preschool Readiness

At CEC, we believe children are most successful when they are developmentally ready for the expectations of their classroom. Because our Preschool program is designed to foster increasing independence, children must be able to independently manage their toileting needs before entering the Preschool classroom.

To be considered potty independent, children should be able to:

- Recognize when they need to use the restroom.
- Use the toilet with minimal Teacher assistance.
- Pull clothing up and down independently.
- Practice proper handwashing with Teacher supervision.
- Remain consistently accident-free while at school.

Children may remain in the Early Preschool classroom until 3½ years of age while continuing the potty learning process. Our Teachers will work closely with families to encourage progress and provide consistent support throughout this important developmental milestone.

If a child has not successfully completed potty learning by 3½ years of age, a temporary pause in attendance may be necessary until the child is able to independently manage their toileting needs and is ready to transition into the Preschool program. This decision will be made in partnership with the family, with the goal of setting the child up for long-term success in the classroom.

CEC recognizes that some children may have documented medical conditions, developmental delays, or disabilities that impact potty learning. In these situations, we will work collaboratively with families to determine appropriate accommodations while maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment for all children.

Our Partnership with Families

Consistency is one of the most important factors in successful potty learning. Families are expected to continue practicing potty learning at home while children are participating in the process at CEC.

To ensure clear expectations and consistency, families beginning potty learning at CEC will be asked to review and sign the **Potty Training Policy** acknowledging their understanding of these guidelines.

Our goal is to make potty learning a positive milestone for every child. By working together with patience, encouragement, and consistency, we can help children develop the confidence and independence they need for success.

Our Commitment to Health & Safety

Nothing is more important than the health, safety, and well-being of the children in our care.

At CEC, every policy and procedure is designed with one goal in mind: providing a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment where children can learn and thrive.

Our Teachers receive ongoing training in health, safety, emergency preparedness, and child development. We follow all applicable licensing regulations and maintain procedures that support the well-being of every child while promoting a caring, respectful environment.

Families are an essential part of this partnership. By working together, we can help protect the health and safety of every child in our program.

Illness Policy

Healthy children learn best. To help reduce the spread of illness and protect everyone in our program, we ask families to keep children home when they are sick.

Children should remain home if they have symptoms that prevent them from comfortably participating in normal daily activities or that may place other children or staff at risk of illness.

A child will be sent home if they develop any of the following while at CEC:

- Fever of **100.4°F or higher**
- Vomiting
- Two or more episodes of diarrhea
- Unexplained rash
- Difficulty breathing or persistent wheezing
- Symptoms of a contagious illness
- Any illness that prevents participation in normal classroom activities

If a child becomes ill during the day, families will be contacted and are expected to arrange pick-up **within 45 minutes**. Failure to pick your child up in the designated time could result in late fees or dismissal.

Children may return to CEC when they have been:

- Fever-free for at least **24 hours without fever-reducing medication**
- Vomit-free for at least **24 hours**
- Diarrhea-free for at least **24 hours**
- Free of symptoms that interfere with participation in daily activities
- Cleared by a healthcare provider when required

CEC reserves the right to request a healthcare provider's release before a child returns if necessary to protect the health of other children and staff.

Communicable Illnesses

We understand that illnesses happen, especially in early childhood.

Families are asked to notify the Office if their child is diagnosed with a contagious illness such as RSV, influenza, COVID-19, strep throat, pink eye, hand, foot, and mouth disease, or any other communicable illness.

When appropriate, CEC will notify affected families while protecting the privacy of the child and family involved.



Did You Know?

Handwashing is one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce the spread of germs in schools and childcare settings.

Medication

Whenever possible, medication should be administered at home.

When medication must be given during the school day, the following requirements apply:

- Medication must be in its original container.
- Prescription medication must include the child's name and pharmacy label.
- Over-the-counter medication must be in its original packaging.
- A completed medication authorization form must be on file.
- Medication may only be administered according to the written authorization provided by the parent or legal guardian.

Medication will only be administered by authorized CEC staff and will be documented each time it is given.

Injuries & Emergency Medical Care

The safety and well-being of every child is one of our highest priorities.

If your child experiences a minor injury, our staff will provide appropriate first aid, such as comfort measures, ice packs, or bandages as needed. An injury report will be completed in Procure so families are informed of the incident.

If your child becomes ill or experiences an injury that requires immediate parent notification, we will contact a parent or guardian as soon as possible.

In the event of a medical emergency, CEC staff will immediately call 911. Parents or legal guardians will be contacted as quickly as possible using the emergency contact information provided during enrollment. If a parent or guardian cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency contacts listed on the child's enrollment forms.

Because our staff are not permitted to transport children in personal vehicles, emergency medical personnel will provide transportation if necessary.

As part of the enrollment process, families provide written authorization allowing CEC staff to seek emergency medical treatment when immediate medical attention is necessary and a parent, guardian, or emergency contact cannot be reached.

Allergies & Medical Conditions

The safety of children with allergies and medical conditions is a shared responsibility between families and CEC.

Families must notify the Office of all allergies, dietary restrictions, medical diagnoses, or other health concerns before their child's first day of attendance and whenever changes occur.

When necessary, CEC will develop an Individual Care Plan to help ensure staff understand the child's needs and any emergency procedures.

Families are responsible for providing any required medications, including emergency medications such as EpiPens or inhalers, before the child's first day of attendance.

Emergency Preparedness

The safety of our children and staff is our highest priority. CEC conducts regular emergency drills throughout the year, including fire, severe weather, lockdown, and other emergency procedures, so our staff are prepared to respond quickly, calmly, and confidently.

If an emergency occurs, our first priority will always be ensuring the safety and well-being of the children in our care. Depending on the situation, children may shelter in place, relocate to a

designated safe area, or remain securely in their classrooms until emergency officials determine it is safe to resume normal operations.

Families will be notified through Procure as soon as it is safe and practical to do so. During an active emergency, we ask that families do not come to the center until instructed, as doing so could interfere with emergency response efforts or place additional people at risk.

If an evacuation or reunification becomes necessary, families will receive detailed instructions regarding where and when children can be safely picked up.

Behavior Guidance

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6

At CEC, we believe every child is uniquely created by God with incredible potential. Our goal is to provide a safe, loving, and nurturing environment where children learn self-control, responsibility, kindness, and respect for others.

We believe children learn best when they feel safe, connected, and understood. Behavior guidance is not about punishment—it is about teaching. Through consistent guidance, encouragement, and developmentally appropriate expectations, we help children build the social and emotional skills they need to make positive choices, solve problems, and develop healthy relationships.

As a **Conscious Discipline**® school, our Teachers intentionally help children identify their emotions, develop self-regulation skills, and learn appropriate ways to express their feelings. Safe spaces, calming strategies, and caring adult guidance are used to help children regain control before returning to classroom activities.

Positive Guidance

Our Teachers use positive, developmentally appropriate guidance techniques that encourage children to make responsible choices and develop confidence. These strategies include:

- Building positive relationships with each child
- Greeting children by name and helping them feel welcomed each day
- Positive reinforcement and encouragement
- Setting clear, age-appropriate expectations
- Redirecting children to appropriate activities

- Offering choices and opportunities to solve problems
- Teaching children appropriate ways to express their feelings
- Modeling kindness, patience, and respectful communication
- Using natural and logical consequences when appropriate
- Helping children repair relationships after conflicts
- Helping children recognize and celebrate their successes

Our goal is always to teach skills that children can carry with them long after they leave our classrooms.

Calming Breaks

There are times when children become overwhelmed and need extra support to regain self-control. When appropriate, a child may be offered a brief calming break before returning to classroom activities.

Calming breaks:

- Are used to help children regain self-control, never as punishment.
- Are provided when a child is unable to participate safely in classroom activities.
- Are supervised by a Teacher at all times.
- Last only as long as necessary for the child to calm their body and emotions.

In rare situations, when positive guidance strategies have been unsuccessful and a child continues to display disruptive or unsafe behavior, a brief supervised time-out may be used as a last resort.

Time-outs:

- Are only used after other developmentally appropriate guidance strategies have been attempted.
- Occur within sight and hearing of a Teacher at all times.
- Are intended to help a child regain self-control, not to punish or shame them.
- Last approximately one minute per year of the child's age (for example, a three-year-old would have a three-minute time-out), though the Teacher may end the time-out sooner if the child is calm and ready to rejoin the group.

After a calming break or time-out, the Teacher will help the child process what happened, discuss more appropriate choices, and, when appropriate, repair relationships through an apology or another age-appropriate act of kindness before returning to classroom activities.

Family Partnership

We believe children experience the greatest success when families and Teachers work together.

If challenging behaviors become frequent or ongoing, we will communicate with families to discuss concerns, share observations, and develop consistent strategies that support the child's success both at school and at home. When appropriate, a conference may be scheduled to create an individualized plan for supporting the child's development.

Biting & Aggressive Behaviors

Biting and other aggressive behaviors are a common developmental behavior in infancy and early childhood. While it can be upsetting, it is often a child's way of communicating before they have the language skills to express their wants, needs, or frustrations.

Our goal is not simply to stop biting—we work to teach children the communication and self-regulation skills they need to replace biting and other aggressive behaviors.

When biting or aggressive behaviors occur, Teachers will:

- Immediately ensure everyone's safety.
- Comfort and care for the injured child.
- Redirect and teach the child who bit or acted aggressively.
- Observe patterns to identify possible triggers.
- Communicate with families while maintaining confidentiality.

While biting is developmentally common in young children, we recognize that it can be distressing for everyone involved. Our Teachers respond promptly, compassionately, and consistently while working closely with families to support each child's growth.

If a biting incident results in injury to another child, the child who bit will be sent home for the remainder of the day.

Because every child develops differently, repeated aggressive behaviors may require additional meetings with families to develop a plan that supports the child's success while maintaining a safe environment for all children.

 Did You Know?

Young children aren't trying to give adults a hard time—they're often *having* a hard time. Learning to manage big feelings is an important part of early childhood.

Serious Safety Concerns

The safety of every child and staff member is our highest priority.

When a child's behavior presents an immediate safety concern for themselves, other children, or staff members—including repeated hitting, biting, kicking, spitting, throwing objects, or leaving Teacher supervision (eloping)—a family member may be contacted to pick up the child for the remainder of the day.

Each situation will be evaluated individually, taking into consideration:

- The child's age and developmental level
- The severity of the behavior
- The frequency of the behavior
- The safety of the classroom environment
- Previous interventions that have been attempted

Families are expected to arrive within **45 minutes** of being notified. Failure to pick your child up in the designated time could result in late fees or dismissal.

If behaviors continue to significantly impact the safety or well-being of the classroom despite consistent interventions and family collaboration, additional meetings may be recommended to discuss next steps. This may include recommendations for outside evaluations or support services. In rare situations where CEC is unable to safely meet a child's needs, dismissal from the program may be necessary.

Prohibited Forms of Discipline

The following practices are never permitted at the Child Enrichment Center:

- Physical punishment of any kind, including spanking, hitting, slapping, grabbing, or shaking
- Verbal abuse, humiliation, ridicule, or threats
- Withholding food, water, rest, or bathroom privileges
- Any form of discipline that could frighten, shame, or emotionally harm a child

Every child deserves to be treated with dignity, patience, and respect. While we understand that learning appropriate behavior is a process, we remain committed to partnering with families, celebrating growth, and helping every child develop the social and emotional skills they need to thrive. Our goal is always to teach, encourage, and nurture—not simply to correct behavior.

Developmental Screenings

CEC believes early identification leads to early support.

To help monitor each child's development, CEC utilizes developmental screening tools, including the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ), at various times throughout the year.

Developmental screenings are not diagnostic tools. They simply help identify areas where a child may benefit from additional observation, enrichment, or evaluation.

If concerns arise, families will be contacted to discuss the results and any recommended next steps.



Did You Know?

Early identification often leads to earlier support—and early support can make a tremendous difference in a child's development.

Partnering to Support Every Child

At CEC, we recognize that every child is wonderfully unique. Children grow, learn, communicate, and develop at their own pace, and we are committed to creating an environment where each child feels safe, valued, encouraged, and supported.

Some children quickly master new skills, while others benefit from additional time, encouragement, or individualized guidance. Our goal is always to meet children where they are while helping them continue to grow socially, emotionally, physically, academically, and spiritually.

We believe the strongest outcomes happen when families and Teachers work together. Parents know their children best, and we value the insight, experiences, and perspectives that families bring. When questions arise about a child's development, learning, communication, behavior, or social-emotional growth, we approach those conversations with care, respect, and a shared desire to help each child succeed.

When concerns arise, our first step is always to observe, communicate, and collaborate. Teachers carefully monitor children's progress, share observations with families, and implement developmentally appropriate strategies within the classroom. Often, thoughtful adjustments

and consistent encouragement both at home and at school help children make wonderful progress.

When appropriate, we may recommend that families seek additional guidance from outside professionals, such as their pediatrician, Early Intervention, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, or other developmental specialists. These recommendations are made to provide families with additional resources and support—not as a diagnosis.

We recognize that many children receive additional services while continuing to thrive in a traditional early childhood classroom. Receiving speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavioral services, or other developmental support is simply one part of a child's unique journey. Whenever possible, we are happy to collaborate with families and outside providers, with parent permission, to help create consistency between home, therapy, and the classroom.

When families choose to pursue outside services, we welcome communication with therapists, specialists, and other professionals when appropriate and with parent permission. Working together helps us better understand each child's strengths, needs, and goals while creating a more consistent experience across all environments.

While we are committed to supporting every child to the best of our ability, CEC is a traditional early childhood education program and is not staffed or licensed to provide one-on-one therapeutic services or continuous individual supervision. Our classrooms are designed to meet the needs of groups of children while maintaining safe Teacher-to-child ratios required by state licensing.

If a child's needs begin to significantly impact their own safety, the safety of other children or staff, or our ability to maintain appropriate supervision within the classroom, we will meet with the family to discuss concerns, review the strategies that have been implemented, and determine appropriate next steps together. Additional supports, evaluations, or outside resources may be recommended when they would benefit the child.

In rare situations, after collaborative efforts and reasonable accommodations have been explored, CEC may determine that we are unable to safely meet a child's needs within the structure of our program. If this occurs, we will work closely with the family to discuss available options and make every effort to ensure the decision is handled with compassion, respect, and the child's best interests in mind.

Above all, our desire is for every child to feel loved, encouraged, and successful. We are honored to partner with families as children grow, celebrate milestones, overcome challenges, and build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Mandatory Reporting

As required by Alabama law, all CEC staff are mandated reporters.

If a staff member has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, they are legally required to report those concerns to the appropriate authorities.

These reports are made in accordance with state law and are intended to protect the safety and well-being of children.

Tuition & Financial Policies

Providing a high-quality early childhood program requires thoughtful planning, consistent staffing, and a commitment to maintaining the safest environment possible for every child. Because staffing and classroom ratios are based on enrollment rather than daily attendance, tuition reserves your child's place in our program and allows us to provide dependable care each day.

We are grateful for your partnership in helping us keep our program running smoothly.

Tuition Payments

Tuition is due regardless of attendance and reserves your child's enrollment at CEC.

- Monthly tuition is due on the 1st of each month and is considered late after the 10th.
- Families paying weekly should submit payment on Monday of each week. Weekly tuition is considered late after 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday.
- Tuition is charged during holidays, scheduled closures, professional development days, and most school breaks unless otherwise announced.

Payment Methods

CEC accepts the following forms of payment:

- ACH (bank draft) – No processing fee
- Debit and credit cards – 3.25% processing fee
- Cash
- Check (payable to Child Enrichment Center)

To help families avoid additional fees, we encourage payment by ACH, cash, or check whenever possible.

At enrollment, families can indicate their preferred payment method (ACH or debit/credit card). This preference will be used when generating future invoices through our billing system.

If you would like to change your preferred payment method at any time, please notify the Office before your next invoice is generated. This helps ensure your invoices accurately reflect your selected payment method and prevents unnecessary processing fees.

Late Payments

We understand that unexpected situations can arise. If you experience financial hardship, please contact the Director as soon as possible so we can discuss your situation before your account becomes delinquent.

Accounts that remain unpaid will receive a reminder notice. If an account continues to carry an unpaid balance, childcare services may be suspended until the account is brought current.

Our goal is always to work together whenever possible, but maintaining current accounts allows us to continue providing quality care for all families.

Returned Payments

Any payment returned by your financial institution is the responsibility of the family. Any fees charged to CEC as a result of a returned payment will be added to your account.

Tuition Discounts

We are pleased to offer the following tuition discounts:

- 5% discount for families who pay their school-year tuition in one lump sum by the first day of school.
- 5% discount for *active* Hazel Green United Methodist Church families.

Please contact the Director for current tuition amounts and discount details.

Vacation Credit

Families enrolled in full-time, year-round care for at least one calendar year may receive one complimentary Vacation Credit Week each year.

To qualify:

- The absence must consist of five consecutive childcare days.
- The Office must receive at least two weeks' advance notice.

Vacation Credit is intended to provide flexibility for families while allowing us to plan staffing appropriately.

Attendance, Closures & Refunds

Because staffing is scheduled based on enrollment and state-required Teacher-to-child ratios, tuition cannot be adjusted for:

- Illness
- Family vacations (except approved Vacation Credit Week)
- Inclement weather
- Scheduled school closures
- Holidays
- Professional development days
- Other absences

We appreciate your understanding that your tuition reserves your child's place in our program regardless of attendance.

Late Pick-Up

CEC closes promptly at 6:00 p.m.

Children picked up after closing will incur the following late fees:

- \$10 beginning at 6:01 p.m.
- An additional \$1 per minute until the child has been signed out.

These fees help offset additional staffing costs and encourage timely pick-up for the well-being of both children and staff. These fees also apply to early closures, illness-related pick-ups, or incidents requiring a parent to pick up early.

We recognize that life occasionally brings unexpected challenges. If you have questions about your account or are experiencing circumstances that may affect your ability to make a payment on time, please reach out to the Director as early as possible. Open communication allows us to work together toward the best possible solution whenever we can.

Withdrawal from CEC

While we hope every family enjoys a wonderful experience at the Child Enrichment Center, we understand that circumstances sometimes change. Whether your family is relocating, beginning a new chapter, or your childcare needs have changed, we appreciate the opportunity to have been part of your child's early learning journey.

To help us plan staffing, classroom enrollment, and waitlist placement, CEC requires **a minimum of two (2) weeks' written notice** prior to your child's last day of attendance. Written notice should be submitted to the CEC Office or Director.

Tuition remains due throughout the two-week notice period, regardless of attendance. Families are responsible for any outstanding tuition or fees on their account prior to their child's final day of enrollment.

Withdrawal from CEC does not automatically guarantee future enrollment. Families wishing to return at a later date must complete the current enrollment process and will be admitted based on classroom availability.

If you have questions about your account or your child's withdrawal, please contact the Director. We are happy to assist you throughout the transition and appreciate the opportunity to have partnered with your family.

Communication & Family Partnership

We believe children are most successful when families and Teachers work together. Open, honest, and respectful communication allows us to celebrate accomplishments, address concerns, and support each child's individual needs.

Procare is CEC's primary communication platform. Families should use Procare to communicate with Teachers and the CEC Office, receive important announcements, classroom updates, photos, incident and injury reports, complete required forms, and access other important school information. We encourage families to check Procare regularly to stay informed.

To provide consistent communication and protect the privacy of our children and staff, communication regarding your child's care at CEC should take place through Procare whenever possible. Teachers are discouraged from discussing CEC-related matters through personal text messages, Facebook Messenger, social media, or other personal communication platforms.

Keeping communication within Procare also helps us respect our Teachers' personal time away from work. Just as families value uninterrupted time together, our staff deserve the opportunity

to disconnect and enjoy time with their own families. Using Procure allows Teachers to respond during scheduled work hours or when classroom responsibilities allow.

Families are encouraged to communicate with their child's Teacher whenever questions or concerns arise. While brief conversations at drop-off and pick-up are always welcome, longer discussions may be scheduled to ensure Teachers can give families their full attention while maintaining appropriate supervision of the children in their care.

Please remember that our Teachers' first responsibility during the day is supervising and caring for the children in their classroom. Because of this, responses to messages may not be immediate. We appreciate your patience and understanding and are committed to responding as promptly as possible during the school day.

For time-sensitive matters—such as unexpected absences, changes to authorized pick-up, or emergencies—please contact the CEC Office directly by phone in addition to sending a Procure message. This helps ensure important information is received promptly.

If your phone number, email address, emergency contacts, or authorized pick-up information changes, please notify the CEC Office as soon as possible so we can keep your child's records current.

Above all, we are committed to listening with respect, communicating with kindness, and working together in the best interest of every child. Strong partnerships between home and school help create the best possible experience for the children we are honored to serve.



Did You Know?

Studies consistently show that strong communication between home and school leads to better outcomes for children.

Conferences

Children grow and change so quickly during the early years.

Families may request a conference with their child's Teacher or the Director at any time to discuss developmental progress, classroom experiences, behavior, or other concerns.

Likewise, CEC may request a conference whenever we believe additional collaboration would benefit the child.

Photographs & Social Media

We love capturing special moments and sharing the wonderful experiences children have throughout the year.

Photographs may be taken during classroom activities, special events, field trips, and celebrations.

Images will only be shared in accordance with each family's signed media authorization.

CEC is committed to protecting the privacy of every child and will never intentionally identify children publicly in a manner that compromises their safety.

Respectful Partnership

At the Child Enrichment Center, we believe children benefit most when the important adults in their lives work together with mutual respect and trust.

We are committed to maintaining a welcoming environment where families, children, and staff are treated with kindness, professionalism, and respect.

We ask all members of our CEC community to:

- Communicate respectfully with staff and other families.
- Address concerns calmly and professionally.
- Support a positive environment for all children.
- Follow CEC policies designed to promote safety and consistency.

Harassment, threatening behavior, intimidation, discrimination, or abusive language toward children, families, staff members, or visitors will not be tolerated.

When concerns arise, we are committed to working together to find respectful solutions whenever possible.

Confidentiality

Protecting the privacy of our children and families is extremely important.

Information regarding children, families, or staff will be treated confidentially and shared only with individuals who have a legitimate need to know or as required by law.

Likewise, we ask families to respect the privacy of other children and families while at CEC.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important part of every child's day and supports healthy physical, social, and emotional development.

Weather permitting, children participate in outdoor play each day. We encourage families to dress children in comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing that allows them to run, climb, explore, and play.

Outdoor play may be modified or canceled during severe weather or when temperatures or conditions make it unsafe for children.



Did You Know?

Outdoor play supports balance, coordination, problem-solving, creativity, and emotional regulation—not just physical activity.

Water Play

Throughout the year, children may participate in water play activities as part of classroom learning and special summer events.

Families will be notified in advance of scheduled water play days.

Children should arrive with:

- A labeled swimsuit (if requested)
- A labeled towel
- Water shoes or other appropriate footwear (if requested)
- A complete change of clothing

Children must have a signed Over-the-Counter Medication Authorization Form on file for sunscreen to be applied by CEC staff.

Inclement Weather

The safety of our children, families, and staff is our highest priority.

During inclement weather, CEC follows the **Madison County Schools** schedule. If Madison County Schools are closed due to weather, CEC will also be closed. If the school system delays opening or dismisses early, CEC will follow the same schedule.

Our delayed opening times are as follows:

- **1-hour delay:** CEC opens at **8:00 a.m.**
- **2-hour delay:** CEC opens at **9:00 a.m.**
- **3-hour delay:** CEC opens at **10:00 a.m.**

If Madison County Schools dismiss early, CEC will also close at the same time. Families will be given a **15-minute grace period** to pick up their children following the announced dismissal time.

On daycare-only days, holidays, school breaks, or when severe weather develops after the school day has ended, the **CEC Director** will determine whether the center will delay opening, close early, or remain open based on local weather and road conditions.

Families should monitor **Procare** for all weather-related announcements. Updates may also be shared on the CEC Facebook page and through local weather outlets as needed.

Custody & Court Orders

CEC recognizes the importance of complying with legal custody arrangements.

If custody agreements, restraining orders, or other court documents affect who may pick up a child, families must provide the Office with current legal documentation.

Unless legal documentation is on file, CEC must assume that both parents have equal rights regarding their child.

Non-Discrimination

CEC welcomes families from diverse backgrounds and is committed to providing an environment where every child is treated with dignity, kindness, and respect.

Enrollment decisions and daily operations are conducted without unlawful discrimination.

Questions or Concerns

We value open communication and encourage families to ask questions whenever they arise.

Most questions can be answered by your child's Teacher. If additional assistance is needed, the Director is always available to discuss concerns, answer questions, or help find solutions.

Our goal is to work together in the best interest of every child.



CHILD ENRICHMENT CENTER

2026-2027 Calendar

IMPORTANT DATES | AUGUST 2026 – JULY 2027

AUGUST

 **August 5**
First Day of School

 **August 13-14**
Fall Pictures

SEPTEMBER

 **September 7**
CEC Closed – Labor Day

 **September 11**
Grandparents Celebration

OCTOBER

 **October 5-9**
Fall Break
Daycare Only – Sign-Up Required

 **October 30**
Trail of Treats

NOVEMBER

 **November 11**
Veterans Day
Daycare Only – Sign-Up Required

 **Thanksgiving Break**
Wednesday-Friday
CEC Closed

DECEMBER

 **December 4**
Grinch Day

 **December 11**
Elf Day

 **December 18**
Christmas Program

 **December 21 – January 1**
Christmas Break
CEC Closed

JANUARY

 **January 4**
Pajama Day
Students Return

 **January (Date TBA)**
100th Day of School

 **January 18**
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Daycare Only – Sign-Up Required

FEBRUARY

 **February 15**
Presidents Day
Daycare Only – Sign-Up Required

MARCH

 **March 1-5**
Read Across America Week

 **March 15-19**
Spring Break
Daycare Only – Sign-Up Required

 **March 25**
Easter Egg Hunt

 **March 26**
Good Friday
CEC Closed

APRIL



MAY

 **May 3-7**
Teacher Appreciation Week

 **May 7**
Mother's Day Celebration

 **May 28**
Last Day of School

 **May 21**
End-of-Year Program & Pre-K Graduation

 **May 31**
Memorial Day – CEC Closed

JUNE

 **June 1**
Summer Care Begins

 **June 18**
Father's Day Celebration

JULY

 **July 22-23**
CEC Closed – Staff In-Service

Dates are subject to change. Updates will be communicated through Procure and our social media channels.

Thank you for being a part of the CEC family!

Changes to the Parent Handbook

CEC reserves the right to revise policies and procedures as needed to comply with licensing requirements, improve operations, or better serve our families.

Families will be notified of significant changes through Procure or other appropriate communication methods.

The most current version of the Parent Handbook supersedes all previous editions.

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Child Enrichment Center Parent Handbook.

I understand that the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook have been established to help provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for all children.

I understand that it is my responsibility to review and follow the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook and recognize that these policies may be updated as necessary.

I understand that questions regarding any policy may be directed to the Director at any time.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____