

Trinity Lutheran ECC

Parent Handbook



2025/2026
School Year

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Welcome to Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center

“Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from Him” ~Psalm 127:3

I am honored and blessed that you have chosen Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center for your family. At Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we follow the theory of Jean Piaget, one of the founders of child development, who believed that young children need to use their imagination and learn through play. Mr. Piaget believed that play was integral to a child's growth and the beginning of a lifelong learner. At Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, our activities are child-led, with teacher-guided interaction to target specific areas of development. This fosters independence and a love of learning.

I am the Program Administrator, Jennifer Reynnells. I have been working with children in a childcare center since middle school, where I assisted in my mother's childcare center. I have served as a Program Administrator in both Christian and secular childcare centers for over eighteen years.

As a Christian-based center, we will pull from the Lutheran *One in Christ* curriculum to encourage our daily spiritual growth with the Lord. We also use the *Creative Curriculum* to encourage child-led discovery and play while ensuring educational goals are being met for your child's specific age group. Our classrooms are print-rich environments with various centers for each child to explore and learn.

Please do not hesitate to contact the office at (269) 983-0040 or send me an email at Jennifer.reynnells@discovertrinity.org with any questions or concerns.

Together in Christ,

Jennifer Reynnells

Program Administrator

Mission

The mission of Trinity Lutheran Church, School, and Early Childhood Center is to reach the world for Christ, making disciples by proclaiming the Gospel in Word and Sacrament through worship, Christian education, community outreach, and contagious sharing of the faith in word and deed.

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center is a ministry of love to children and their families. We provide a program, in a Christian atmosphere, which promotes the social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth and development of young children. Our center supports parents in the nurturing process of the “whole” child.

Our Child Care Center is an outreach program of Trinity Lutheran Church.

Responsibility for the day-to-day operation of this program is that of the Early Childhood Center Administrator. The day school Principal serves as an advisor to the Early Childhood Center Administrator.

Congregational Connection

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center is a part of the ministry of Trinity Lutheran Church. Trinity believes that every child is a loved and forgiven child of God. We provide opportunities to learn of Jesus’ love using songs, lessons, and finger-plays. Teachers work hard to model Christ’s love as they interact with children and other adults.

Program Purpose and Goals

The purpose of Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center is to provide a nurturing and loving environment where children can develop and grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, and, most of all, spiritually while learning about God’s love and how to follow His teachings.

To achieve our purpose of the Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we focus on four goals.

These goals are:

- Intellectual Development:
 - To prepare children for future academic success through developmentally appropriate activities and kindergarten readiness.
 - To encourage problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking skills through varied child-led and teacher-assisted activities.
 - To provide an engaging learning environment that fosters a love of learning and a child's natural curiosity.
- Social and Emotional Development:
 - To help children develop self-esteem, self-confidence, and a sense of self-worth.
 - To provide a secure and safe environment where all children can express themselves and be understood.
 - To teach children valuable social skills such as cooperation, respect, manners, and sharing.
 - Teaching social skills by establishing clear structures and routines.
 - Promote inclusivity and celebrate diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
 - Integrating check-ins in the classroom and providing resources for counseling resources.
- Spiritual Development:
 - To create an environment where children feel loved, accepted, and valued by God and others.
 - Instill Christian principles through Bible stories, prayer, and daily devotions.
 - To incorporate Lutheran values and principles, including grace, forgiveness, love for your neighbor, and service to others.

Educational Philosophy

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center strives to provide a warm, loving, and secure Lutheran environment where children can learn through hands-on exploration. We participate in age-appropriate religious experiences, including prayers, hymns, and Bible stories. We believe that each child is a unique creation of our Lord.

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center is a child's first school experience filled with joy, wonder, and interest in the world around them. Children should feel confident to ask questions and explore new ideas through child exploration and appropriate teacher-led activities. We focus on the use of the *Creative Curriculum* for our educational approach. We strive to create a setting that challenges children while encouraging self-expression through a variety of age-appropriate experiences. We value our strong partnerships with families to work collaboratively to meet each child's growth.

At Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we believe that play is a child's "work". Play lies at the heart of our educational experiences, providing a grace-centered approach for social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth in an environment of understanding and unconditional love. We celebrate each child's unique gifts and talents to create an inclusive environment that values and respects diversity. Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center wants to assist children to flourish intellectually, develop physically, and thrive socially and emotionally.

Incorporating the use of small groups or learning centers, the children can experience free choice and center time through a variety of different activities centered around a thematic unit. All activities are geared to meet children's learning abilities and may be modified if a child needs assistance. Children learn how to take turns, express themselves, and form relationships through play at Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center.

The program policy embraces and reflects the diverse backgrounds of children, school-age individuals, families, the community, and the broader world. Trinity Lutheran Early

Childhood Center will accommodate and support children, school-age individuals, families, and staff with disabilities by ensuring accessibility, helping to find necessary resources, and fostering an inclusive environment. This includes tailored support services, adaptive technologies, and training for staff to effectively meet diverse needs and promote participation for everyone involved.

Licensing and Accreditation

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center holds a childcare license through the State of Michigan's Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential. The center keeps a licensing notebook containing a summary sheet, of all inspections, special investigations, and corrections for the past five years. The licensing notebook is available for parents to review during regular business hours. If you would like to view Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center's reports from the last three years, please visit www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center is committed to accreditation by the National Council of Lutheran Schools (NCLS) to provide the highest standards of quality in early childhood education by creating a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment for all children.

Enrollment

At Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we are committed to inclusivity and diversity. Our center admits children of any race, color, nationality, and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available within our facility. We do not discriminate based on race, color, national, or ethnic origin in the administration of our educational policies, admission policies, and other policies implemented at the center. We believe that every child deserves equal access to our programs and activities, fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for all families.

The following forms must be completed and be on file at the center BEFORE your child can attend:

- a. Enrollment Application
- b. Health Appraisal Form (immunization records and a physical)
- c. Emergency Information Form
- d. Registration Commitment Form
- e. Licensing Notebook – Parent Notification
- f. Photo Release Form
- g. Babysitting Policy Form
- h. Sunscreen Permission
- i. Registration fee
- j. Security Access Card Form

(All forms are confidential)

You will also receive:

- a. ECC Calendar
- b. Lunch menu (schoolyear only)
- c. Daily Routine
- d. Rate Sheet

Classroom information and letter from your child's lead teacher

Classrooms:

The following classes are being offered at Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center

- **Infant** (6 weeks – 12 months)
- **Transition** (12 -24 months)
- **Toddler** (24-36 months)
- **3-Year-Olds PLUS (Adventures)** – Children must be at least 33 months

Childcare is Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM, with a preschool curriculum throughout the day.

- **4-Year-Olds PLUS (Explorers)** – Children must be at least 45 months old

Childcare is Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM with a preschool curriculum in the morning throughout the day.

All children admitted to the following Preschool Classes *must be toilet-trained and able to meet their personal needs*: Classes run 8:15 AM to 12:15 PM and are chosen as an “a-la-carte” option.

- **3-year-olds (Traditional)** – Children must be 3 years old before **December 1st**
- **4-year-olds (Traditional)** – Children must be 4 years old before **December 1st**.

Traditional Preschool classes run 8:15 AM-12:15 PM Monday through Thursday, and you must enroll on the number of days you prefer. ***You may enroll 2, 3, or 4 days for Traditional Preschool.***

- **Before and After Care** for children in the Young Fives to age 12. We offer care during summer, half days, late start days, or other no-school days throughout the school year.

Registration and Fees

- An annual NON-REFUNDABLE registration fee is required upon application. The fee is due every September thereafter.
 - The fees are as follows:
 - Infant, Transition, and Toddler: \$55
 - Traditional and Plus Preschool: \$100
- If we reach the maximum ratio for the classroom, a waiting list will be utilized. Trinity Church members and/or families already enrolled at Trinity will be offered the openings first. Openings are determined by birthdate. There is a \$25 charge to be added to our waiting list. This fee does not guarantee placement in our childcare or preschool programs. Parents will be contacted if an opening becomes available.
- A fee of \$15.00 for any portion of each 15 minutes following 6:00 pm will be charged for each child who has not been picked up by 6:00 pm.

- Families with multiple children enrolled in childcare **full-time** will be billed the full rate for the most expensive child and receive a 10% discount for each additional child. No discounts are given for children enrolled part-time.
- Fees are subject to revision at any time. You will be given at least a 30-day notice of the change.

We only offer full-time rates in our classrooms. If you are contracted for full-time care, you will be charged full-time, even if you only use your child's spot part-time.

Hours of Operation

The Center is open Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., unless previously announced in advance.

We operate year-round except for:

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday (early closing or closed)
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and Friday after
- Christmas Eve Day
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve Day

If any of these days fall on a weekend, the days before or following the weekend holidays will be taken. Please see the annual calendar for the specific dates we are closed.

- One week each summer, on the week of July 4th, we are closed for extensive cleaning purposes.

Our center will be open even when Trinity School/Preschool is closed unless the weather and/or road conditions warrant a closing. Closing is determined by the center ECC Administrator and Trinity Day School Principal, and proper closing procedures will be followed. See “School Closings” for more information. The safety of the children always comes first.

Childcare classrooms open at 7:00 AM. Parents must bring their children to the classroom each morning and pick them up each evening. Upon drop off and pick up, parents must sign their child into and out of ProCare to verify the drop off and pick up times. This also allows the teacher or caregivers to speak to parents about the day.

Absences and Vacations

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center prioritizes providing an exceptional program that meets the highest standards while adhering to licensing regulations. To ensure we can achieve this, our staffing levels are carefully aligned with the number of children enrolled. As a result, we are unable to offer reductions or refunds for tuition for a child, whether they occur due to inclement weather, illness, or family vacations.

We kindly request that you inform us whenever your child is absent so we can plan accordingly.

Our childcare fees are designed to incorporate four weeks of vacation and holidays into the monthly cost for each child. This means that your monthly fees remain steady and predictable, providing you with peace of mind even during those cherished times away with your family.

We ask for your understanding that childcare fees are due in full regardless of whether your child is experiencing illness, enjoying a vacation, or attending a doctor’s appointment. This consistent approach allows us to maintain a nurturing, stable, and enriching environment where all children can flourish.

Billing

Childcare fees are due before the 15th of each month. The system will automatically process if not paid by the 15th of each month. This will be year-round, based on Sept. to June.

All fees are due on the first business day of each month and the first business day on or after the 15th of the month. If such fees are not paid by the close of business on the third business day after the due date, a late fee of \$25 will be charged, and the child/children will not be allowed to attend until payment is made in full, including all late fees.

From June to August, *weekly* childcare fees are due in this manner unless enrolled in ProCare.

The weekly summer childcare fees are to be paid in full on or before the Monday morning that the child will be attending childcare. If such fees are not paid by the close of business on the third business day after the due date, a late fee of \$25 will be charged, and the child/children will not be allowed to attend until payment is made in full, including all late fees.

There is a \$35.00 service charge for all returned checks. You will be notified as soon as possible of the returned check and will be required to immediately bring in cash to reimburse the check plus the service charge. If this is not done immediately, termination will occur.

Special Fees:

1. Trinity Lutheran ECC participates with Michigan's Department of Human Services (DHHS) for childcare assistance and will bill DHHS directly for services. Families are required to pay at least 50% of the monthly tuition before a child can start. Once payment is received and posted to the account, DHHS families will

receive a statement of their portion of childcare charges to be paid no later than one week from the statement date.

2. Trinity Lutheran ECC accepts registration for infants prior to birth. Spots are held on a first come/first serve basis according to our Waiting List policy. A \$55 registration fee will secure placement in our program. We honor a typical 6-week maternity leave after birth. Parents are required to pay the full tuition rate 6 weeks after birth, regardless of attendance.

Family Discounts

Families with multiple children enrolled in childcare full-time will be billed the full rate for the most expensive child and receive a 10% discount for each additional child. No discounts are given for children enrolled part-time.

Termination of Enrollment

Termination of enrollment may occur if any of the following apply:

1. A written notice must be given two weeks in advance by a parent.
2. A mutual decision after an adjustment period.
3. Immediate failure to pay fees as stated under billing.
4. The inability of the parents/guardians to work within the Center's policies.
5. The inability of the Center to meet the special needs of the child.
6. A child's failure to observe rules of the center.
7. A child is a threat to others.
8. Failure to submit required forms.

Security

Trinity Lutheran School and Early Childhood Center are secured by ADT Security Systems. The building is accessible by security access cards or by entering at the school office (corner of Court and Pearl St) and signing in. One access card per child will be issued at no charge. **If additional cards are needed, we require a \$5.00**

deposit per card. The deposit will be reimbursed if the card is returned in reusable condition.

Please familiarize yourself with the following policies:

1. Do not hold doors open for others; only authorized users may use the cards.
2. Card usage is logged into our security system; you are responsible for the use of your card.
3. If your card is lost, you **must** tell the school or ECC office so your card can be deactivated.
4. Access cards do not take the place of identification. If someone unfamiliar with our staff will be picking up your child, they will be asked to show a driver's license or other picture identification.

Staff and Volunteer Policy

All staff and unsupervised volunteers of Trinity Lutheran ECC must submit to the following before providing direct care for children enrolled in our program:

- Shall act in a manner that is conducive to the welfare of children.
- Be responsible and suitable to meet the needs of the children.
- Any individual registered on the public sex offender registry (PSOR) is PROHIBITED from having contact with any child in care.
- All staff and unsupervised volunteers must complete a Disclosure and Consent form and submit to a comprehensive fingerprinting background check.

School and Center Closing

Trinity Lutheran School and Traditional Preschool will close when the St. Joseph School District closes due to weather emergencies. If Trinity Lutheran School and Preschool should close for other emergency reasons, the same closing procedures will be followed as for weather-related closing.

If children are present in school when closing becomes necessary, staff persons will telephone the emergency phone numbers of parents to enable safe dismissal of the children. The children will be released only to authorized parents, relatives, and/or drivers.

Generally, our childcare programs will remain open unless it is specifically stated “Child Care Closed” in the announcement.

In the best interests of parents, children, and staff, we will decide to close the ECC by considering many factors. One of the factors we consider includes if a “Road Emergency” is put into effect by the Berrien County Sheriff. **We would broadcast the information about closing through the use of our Pro Care app.** Trinity ECC will be listed under Trinity Lutheran School. It is not listed separately under Childcare.

Parent Roles and Responsibilities

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center has an open-door policy. Parents are welcome at any time to observe or visit.

Parents should bring the children into the classroom each day and pick up at the room at the end of the day. Parents are always welcome and encouraged to come to the ECC Administrator with any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Your child should be dressed in clothing appropriate for active play, messy work (such as mashed potatoes, paint, water, pudding, etc.), and outdoor/gymnasium play. You can send a clean outfit for the end of the day. Staff will change your child before pick-up, so they are ready for an after-school outing.

Everything brought to the center should be clearly labeled with your child’s first and last name. **Food items need to have your child’s first and last name, date, and contents labeled on each item.**

The infant room is a no-shoe environment for adults.

Trinity is not responsible for any lost items.

Home Language Involvement

At enrollment, a family language questionnaire is sent home. Families are encouraged to fill out the form and send it back to the ECC office. Children and school-age students are encouraged to use their home language in play and learning experiences through the following strategies:

1. **Multilingual Materials** – Providing books, labels, and learning resources in multiple languages.
2. **Bilingual Storytelling & Songs** – Incorporating stories, songs, and rhymes in different languages to enhance language exposure.
3. **Peer Language Exchange** – Encouraging children to teach and learn from each other in their home languages.
4. **Cultural Activities** – Integrating traditions, celebrations, and games from diverse backgrounds into the curriculum.
5. **Encouraging Self-Expression** – Supporting children in speaking, writing, and creating in their home language during play and learning.
6. **Family Involvement** – Inviting families to share stories, traditions, and language-based activities with the classroom.
7. **Multilingual Staff Support** – Utilizing staff members who speak multiple languages to communicate and model language use.
8. **Visual & Environmental Cues** – Using bilingual signs, charts, and interactive displays to reinforce home language use.

Behavior Policy

At Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we believe in creating a supportive environment where children can learn to manage their behavior positively. Our behavior policy emphasizes the promotion of constructive behavior and helps children develop

self-control, responsibility, and respect for themselves and others. We are dedicated to maintaining a safe environment for all children.

Our goals at Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center are:

- To foster a safe and supportive atmosphere for children to express their feelings.
- To encourage the development of social and emotional skills, including cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution.
- To guide children in understanding that actions have consequences and the importance of making positive choices.

Our behavior expectations are:

- Show respect to themselves, their classmates, teachers, and the classroom environment.
- Emulate love and acceptance, as taught by Jesus.
- Follow directions and instructions given by teachers.
- Use kind words and positive communication to uplift others.
- Cooperate by working together, sharing, and taking turns during activities and playtime.

Staff will use positive redirection and reinforcement to address behaviors that do not create a safe and loving environment. They will start with gentle reminders about behavior expectations. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child will be directed to a different activity to help them refocus. A time-out may be used as a last resort, but only for children over the age of two, as it is developmentally appropriate.

In cases of persistent disruptive behavior or safety concerns, staff will communicate with parents to collaborate on strategies to address these issues. A specific behavior plan may be developed, and guidance from child behavior specialists may be sought if necessary. If parents or guardians refuse to engage in the behavior plan, the family may be asked to leave the center.

Discipline at Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center is handled with love and forgiveness, modeled after our values. We employ positive methods that promote self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation. Discipline should serve as a learning tool, reinforcing positive behaviors while curbing negative ones. All disciplinary actions will be fair and impartial and applied progressively whenever appropriate.

Initially, disciplinary issues will be addressed verbally and documented using an incident report in our Pro Care software, with a copy retained in the system. In severe cases, a printed report will be added to the child's file. Continued negative behavior will prompt measures such as parental notification, a written warning, a parent-teacher-ECC administrator conference, and potentially detention or suspension, determined by the circumstances. A third offense of a similar nature may lead to further suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the ECC Administrator.

The following forms of discipline are strictly prohibited:

- Physical punishment (hitting, spanking, etc.).
- Placing substances in a child's mouth as punishment.
- Restriction of a child's movement by binding.
- Emotional or mental punishments (humiliation, threats, etc.).
- Deprivation of basic needs (meals, rest, etc.).
- Exclusion from outdoor play or activities.
- Isolation in unsupervised areas.
- Time-outs must be instructional and not punitive.

Staff will encourage appropriate behavior by:

- Model and teach appropriate behavior.
- Encourage positive behaviors through acknowledgment.
- Redirect to preferred activities when needed.
- Set clear limits and maintain consistency.
- Discuss feelings and emotions, offering emotional coaching.
- Assist with emotional regulation and appropriate behavior discussions.

The following intervention steps will be used for inappropriate behavior by staff at Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center:

- Observe if children can resolve issues independently, intervening only if there's potential harm.
- Help children articulate feelings, encouraging them to solve problems with guidance.
- Redirect children to different activities when necessary.
- Use time-out as a last resort, focusing on calming them without punitive measures.

At Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we ensure all stakeholders—parents, teachers, children, volunteers, and board members—are informed and engaged in maintaining a caring and constructive disciplinary environment. Through this approach, we aim to support our children in developing lifelong positive behavior patterns.

Timeout will not be used for children under 2 years of age.

Health and Safety

Each child will be observed upon arrival and throughout the day for any symptoms of illness. If these symptoms, as described below, exist, the child will be isolated from others, and the parent, guardian, or designated person will be called to pick up the child immediately.

Please **keep your child at home** and **call the center to report** if:

- a. He/she has a fever or has had one in the past 24 hours.
- b. He/she has been vomiting.
- c. He/she has an unnatural and continued cough.
- d. He/she has symptoms of a possible communicable disease. Symptoms are usually the sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, ear infection, rash, and/or fever.
- e. He/she has diarrhea.

f. He/she has head lice until treatment has been completed.

NOTE: Your child must be symptom-free – no fever, no vomiting or diarrhea - without any symptom-alleviating medication for 24 hours to return to care.

We recognize that this can be a hardship; however, to maintain a healthy center, we must enforce these guidelines to promote the well-being of all our children, their families, and our staff.

When illness keeps your child at home, you **must** notify your child's teacher/caregiver via Pro Care. The Berrien County Health Department requires that we file a weekly health report.

Children who are well enough to return to school are well enough to play outside unless otherwise requested in writing by a doctor.

**PLEASE NOTIFY THE CENTER IMMEDIATELY IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN
DIAGNOSED WITH A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE.**

Some communicable diseases include chicken pox, German measles, infectious hepatitis, measles, mumps, polio militias, scarlet fever, whooping cough, diphtheria, meningitis, strep throat, or tuberculosis. Your child will not be permitted in the center without written authorization from his/her physician, or has not been on medication for 24 hours, or the symptoms have disappeared.

All parents will be notified if a child in the center has been diagnosed with one of the above-named diseases.

It is Trinity's policy that all **Staff and Volunteers** follow the same guidelines as listed above. Staff members will be sent home or told not to come to work if they have any of the listed symptoms and will not be allowed to return to work until they are 24 hours symptom-free and/or have a doctor's note. We want our children and staff to be happy and healthy. Working together, we can curb the spread of disease.

Minor accidents and injuries, such as small scrapes, will be treated with soap, water, a Band-Aid, and a hug. Parents will be notified via ProCare and by an accident report written at the time of the accident/injury. Minor incidents will be handled immediately by ECC staff. Staff will immediately contact parents if any injuries to the head.

Major accidents, incidents, and injuries will be assessed immediately as to the severity of the injury and the steps needed. Notification will occur immediately via telephone call to parents for serious injuries/incidents. If staff are unable to reach the parent, the emergency contact person will be contacted immediately. If parents and emergency contacts cannot be reached promptly, EMS will be called. The Trinity Director, Trinity ECC Staff, and/or EMS will provide care as the child is transported to the hospital. Immediate transport will be provided if the injury is life-threatening per the EMTs.

If the accident doesn't warrant an EMS call but is severe, Trinity will call the parents and develop a plan of action. Parents may choose to pick up their child or have Trinity call EMS to transport the child. This includes injuries, illness or incidents such as, but not limited to, head injuries of any kind, injuries requiring medical attention, allergic reactions/rashes, seizures, asthma attacks, unconscious child, fever, vomiting child, or incidents involving lost children, physical discipline of a child by a staff member/volunteer, alleged sexual contact between children or between a child and staff/volunteer, etc.

The clean-up of all body fluids will be done according to the OSHA standards; all staff will receive one hour of training a year to learn/review the proper procedures.

Each child will be observed for evidence of unusual bruises, lacerations, or burns. If evidence is found, it will be noted in the children's file and reported to the

coordinator. All staff will be trained in the identification of child abuse and neglect and the state's law.

Each child shall have a physical examination as stated on the green health appraisal form not more than thirteen months before, nor later than one month after admission to the center.

A child whose parent(s) object to physical examinations, medical treatment, or immunization may be admitted into the center **only with a signed waiver**. These waivers are obtained through the Berrien County Health Department.

For school-age children, upon enrollment and annually thereafter, a signed statement from the parent confirming that the child is in good health with activity restrictions noted, the child's immunizations are up-to-date, and that the immunization record or appropriate waiver is kept on file either in MICR or in paper format provided by the parent at the center. A licensed healthcare provider's statement indicating that the child is in the process of getting immunizations must be on file at the center.

Medication Administration Policy

To ensure the proper and safe administration of medications to the children of Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, medications will only be administered by authorized staff who have received proper training through the State of Michigan. Parents and guardians must provide written consent for any medication to be administered at Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center during childcare hours. No over-the-counter medications will be given without a physician's note written with the correct weight dosage and reason for administration. All prescription medication must be provided in its original container with a pharmacy label that includes the child's first and last name, medication name, dosage, storage, and administration instructions. Medication will be checked for the correct dosage by two staff members before being administered to the child.

Medications will be stored in a locked cabinet or designated area out of reach of children. When completed, medication will be returned to a parent or guardian to be disposed of. Medication will be administered according to the instructions on the prescription label. Medication will not be added to a bottle or food unless indicated on the prescription label. A medication administration log will be maintained with the date, time, dosage, and staff member administering the medication to the child. Staff will receive training yearly on medication administration as part of the professional development plan.

Some children may experience a reaction to medications, we ask that the parent administer all first doses of medicine at least 12 hours before the child attends the Center.

Allergy Management Plan

Purpose

To provide a safe environment for children with allergies and to ensure staff are trained to prevent, identify, and respond to allergic reactions, including life-threatening anaphylaxis.

Definitions

- **Allergen** – A substance that triggers an allergic reaction.
- **Anaphylaxis** – A severe, life-threatening allergic reaction that requires immediate medical attention.
- **Epinephrine Auto-Injector** – A device used to inject epinephrine to treat anaphylaxis.

Allergy Identification

- Parents/guardians must complete an **Allergy Information Form** at enrollment.
- An **Individual Allergy Action Plan (IAAP)** signed by a physician must be provided annually or upon medical changes.
- Allergy plans must include:
 - All known allergens
 - Common symptoms

- Emergency medication instructions
- Contact information

Prevention Practices

Food Allergies

- Review all food labels and ingredient lists.
- Do not allow outside food without director's approval.
- Designate allergy-safe zones if necessary (e.g., nut-free table).
- Use separate utensils/preparation surfaces for allergy-safe foods.

Environmental/Other Allergies

- Monitor air quality and pollen levels.
- Limit exposure to allergens such as dust, pets, or latex as needed.

Classroom Procedures

- Each classroom and kitchen will have a **confidential list** of children with allergies and a copy of their IAAP.
- Staff will clean hands and surfaces before and after meals/snacks.
- Substitutes will be informed of any allergies in the classroom.

Medication & Emergency Response

- Medications (e.g., epinephrine auto-injectors, antihistamines) must:
 - Be labeled with the child's name and dosage
 - Be stored in a designated, unlocked location easily accessible to staff
- **If an allergic reaction occurs:**
 1. Administer emergency medication per the IAAP.
 2. Call 911 if symptoms are severe or epinephrine is used.
 3. Notify the child's parent/guardian.
 4. Document the incident and submit a Child Incident Report

Staff Training

- All staff must complete **annual allergy and epinephrine training**.
- Training includes:
 - Recognizing allergic reactions
 - How to use an epinephrine auto-injector
 - Emergency procedures and reporting requirements

Family Communication

- Parents are encouraged to:
 - Update the IAAP and medications regularly
 - Provide allergy-safe snacks or alternatives
 - Collaborate on classroom accommodations

Review Process

- Allergy procedures will be reviewed:
 - Annually
 - After any allergy-related incident
 - Whenever a new child with a life-threatening allergy enrolls
- Policy will be updated as needed to improve safety and compliance.

Outdoor Opportunities

Opportunities for children to play outdoors not only provide an opportunity for learning in a different environment but also offer many health benefits. Outdoor play encourages children to develop gross motor skills, maintain a healthy immune system, and have better nighttime sleep.

All children, from birth to age 12, will participate daily in:

- 2 to 3 occasions of active play outdoors.
- 2 or more structured teacher-led activities or games that promote movement over the day.

Outdoor Play:

- Infants (birth -12 months of age) should be taken outside 2 to 3 times per day, as tolerated. There is no recommended duration for infants' outdoor play.
- Transition / Toddlers (12-35 months), preschoolers (36 months to 5 years), and school-age children (5 -12 years) should be allowed 60 to 90 total minutes of outdoor play.

Severe Weather Conditions:

- Severe Thunderstorms/Lightning: Outdoor activities will be suspended when thunder is heard or lightning is observed. Children will be moved indoors immediately and will remain inside until it is safe to resume outdoor activities (no thunder or lightning for at least 30 minutes).
- Tornadoes: The center will follow local weather alerts and follow their Tornado procedure. Staff will account for all children and provide reassurance until the warning has passed.

Temperature Extremes:

- Heat Advisory - When the heat index is at or above **90°F**, outdoor activities will be limited to shaded areas and will include frequent water breaks. Children will engage in indoor activities during peak heat hours (typically between 10 AM and 4 PM).
 - Children will always have access to drinking water. Children will be encouraged to drink water during periods of prolonged physical activity.
 - Parents are encouraged to dress children in loose-fitting, light-colored, and lightweight clothing.
 - Infants receiving breastmilk or formula can be given additional breastmilk or formula to take outside. Water will not be given, especially in the first six months of life.
- Cold Weather: When the temperature falls below **15°F**, outdoor play will be limited and will involve shorter periods outside.
 - Children should wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing. Outer garments, such as coats, should be tightly woven and be at least water-repellent when rain or snow is present.
 - Children should wear a hat, coat, and waterproof gloves/mittens kept snug at the wrist. There should be no hood and neck strings.
 - Teachers should check children's extremities for normal color and warmth every 15 minutes.

Proper clothing will be required for outdoor activities to ensure children are adequately protected against the cold and heat.

Pest Control Management

Our policy follows the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (1994 PA 451, MCL 324.8316).

You will be provided yearly with a pest control management plan. This plan details how and when pesticide applications occur in the building and on the premises. At least 48 hours before any application of pesticides anywhere on the premises, you will be notified by a letter sent home with your student. The letter will include information about the pesticide, including the target pest or purpose, approximate location, date of the application, contact information at the center, and a toll-free number for a national pesticide information center recognized by the Michigan Department of Agriculture. We will not use liquid or aerosol insecticide applications in a room of the center unless the room is unoccupied by children for not less than 4 hours or longer if required by the pesticide label use directions.

Notice of application will also be posted on all entrance doors and in other public, common areas at the center.

Emergency Procedures

Emergency procedures are posted in each classroom. All classrooms have a crisis manual in their room and an emergency bag with first aid materials in it. Fire, tornado, and intruder drills are practiced and recorded according to state regulations. All staff are trained in emergency procedures.

Hand Washing

Hand washing means cleaning the hands with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds.

All staff and volunteers shall wash their hands at all the following times:

- (a) Before starting the workday at the center.
- (b) Before the care of children.
- (c) Before preparing and serving food and feeding children.
- (d) Before giving medication.
- (e) After each diapering. (Not applicable to preschool)
- (f) After using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet.
- (g) After handling bodily fluids.
- (h) After handling animals and pets and cleaning cages.
- (i) After handling garbage.
- (j) When soiled.

Staff and volunteers will ensure that children wash their hands at all of the following times:

- After entering the building
- Before and after meals
- Before and after snacks
- After diaper changes/bathroom breaks
- After handling bodily fluids
- After coming back from the gym or outside whenever needed

Guidelines for hand washing shall be posted in food preparation areas, in toilet rooms, and by all hand washing sinks.

When soap and running water are not available during an outing, hand sanitizers and/or single-use wipes may be used as a temporary measure.

General Food Service

Breakfast: Trinity does not provide breakfast. If a child brings breakfast, they are given ample time to eat breakfast each day. If you are bringing breakfast for your child, please arrive before 9:30 AM as many of our classrooms start their preschool program at 9:30 AM.

Lunch: Trinity offers a hot lunch program from September through May. This program follows the minimum meal requirements of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Lunch menus will be provided monthly, and any corrections or substitutions will be posted in the lunchroom. Families may purchase lunches in advance and will be notified when there is a negative balance. Payments are made through Fast Direct. During the summer months or when you choose not to participate in the hot lunch program, parents must provide a cold lunch for their child.

On days when Trinity School is open, a hot lunch will be available to purchase. If Trinity School is not in session, parents will need to provide a cold lunch for their child. Lunches need to be labeled with your child's first and last name and dated with that day's date. Please do not send your child's lunch in glass containers. Advance notice will be given of lunch availability along with a menu and price sheet.

****A child will not be denied lunch for any reason. Children who forget a cold lunch will be given a hot lunch, and the parents will be charged for the meal. On days when hot lunches are not available, the center will have simple sandwiches and a drink for the child who forgets their lunch. ****

Snacks: Healthy snacks and milk are provided by the center twice daily, once in the morning and again in the afternoon. Parents who do not want their children to have the snack Trinity provides must provide a replacement snack for their child.

Food items need to have your child's first and last name, date, and contents labeled on each item.

Nutrition

At Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we recognize the vital role nutrition plays in young children's growth and development. Our nutrition policy ensures that children have healthy, balanced meals and snacks that support their physical well-being and cognitive development.

All meals and snacks provided by the center will be designed to offer a balanced diet that includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and dairy products. We aim to introduce children to a wide range of flavors and textures to promote healthy eating habits. Any unused food must be taken home or thrown away each evening.

Portions will be tailored to match the developmental needs of each age group, ensuring that children receive adequate nutrition for their growth and energy levels. Monthly lunch and snack menus will be posted in advance for parents to review, allowing families to be informed about what their children will be eating. We welcome feedback and suggestions from parents regarding meal choices.

Infant parents are to bring all meals and snacks for their child daily. A child too young to sit in a highchair or at a feeding table shall be held or placed in an infant seat while being fed. A child who is unable to hold his or her bottle shall be held when the bottle is given. Solid foods shall be introduced to the individual child according to the parent's or a licensed physician's instructions.

Commercial baby food containers that are open and foods prepared in the center which are stored shall be covered, dated, and labeled as to the contents, the specific child for whom it is intended, and refrigerated. The contents shall be used or discarded within 24 hours. A child shall not be fed directly from baby food containers. If the contents are to be fed to the child at more than one sitting, parents are required to separate and label the contents for multiple feedings.

Formula shall be prepared at the child's home and placed in an assembled bottle unit before being brought to the center. Each bottle and nipple supplied by a parent shall be used for a single feeding only and then returned to the parent daily. Formula and milk left in a bottle at the end of a feeding will be discarded.

We take food allergies and intolerances seriously to ensure a safe eating environment for all children. Parents must inform the center of any food allergies or dietary restrictions during the enrollment process and update us if anything changes. If an epi-pen or other device is needed to assist in the prevention of anaphylaxis, please see the Trinity Lutheran ECC office. For children with allergies or specific dietary needs, we ask that parents provide appropriate substitutions to ensure they receive nutritious meals without compromising their safety.

Special Dietary Needs:

Children with special needs may have individual requirements relating to diet, swallowing, and other feeding needs that require the development of an individual plan BEFORE ENROLLMENT AT TRINITY ECC. Food, eating style, utensils, and equipment, including furniture, may be adapted to meet the developmental needs of individual children.

Trinity will request explicit, written procedures for dietary modifications or substitutions. These written instructions must identify:

- The child's special needs
- Dietary restrictions based on dietary needs.
- Foods to be omitted from the diet and foods to be substituted.
- Pertinent special needs information.

Breastfeeding:

Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center is committed to supporting the health and well-being of infants and young children. Our childcare center encourages and supports

breastfeeding as the optimal method of feeding infants. We strive to create a welcoming environment for breastfeeding mothers and provide resources for families to ensure that breastfeeding is successfully integrated into our care programs. Parents are encouraged to discuss their breastfeeding intentions with childcare staff before enrollment. Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood staff are trained to support breastfeeding mothers and to handle breast milk safely. - We will provide a comfortable and private place for mothers to breastfeed or pump if needed. Breast milk will be stored and handled according to CDC guidelines to ensure safety and hygiene.

Parents should provide clearly labeled breast milk containers for their infant with the child's first and last name, as well as the date produced. All expressed breast milk will be stored in the refrigerator or freezer upon arrival to the classroom and kept refrigerated until used or discarded. Frozen breastmilk will be thawed under cold running water or in the refrigerator and will be used within 24 hours. Infants will be fed on demand, following a responsive feeding approach to meet their individual needs.

If needed, our center will provide resources and information on breastfeeding for parents, including local lactation consultants and support groups. Open communication between parents and caregivers is essential to ensure that the child's feeding needs are met. Parents are provided with updates regarding feeding schedules and routines throughout the day using the ProCare site. Any breastmilk left after a child's feeding, or within one hour of a feeding will be discarded.

Dress Code

A person's heart, mind, and soul are the essence of that person. A person's character is of greater value than his/her appearance. However, outward appearance is also important since a person's outward appearance can distract or enhance one's Christian witness to the world. Since modesty and humility are basic Christian virtues, it is expected that a student does not wear clothing to draw attention. The ECC teachers, in consultation with the ECC Administrator, will ascertain appropriate and inappropriate dress in questionable cases. The ECC Administrator will notify parents of any dress

code infractions so that parents can bring appropriate clothing for their child to return to class.

The Dress Code Policy aims to keep all students neat, clean, well-groomed, and appropriately dressed during the day while at the center. **The dress code applies to students in Y5 through 8th Grade but serves as a guideline for our ECC children.**

General Information

- All clothing must be kept neat and clean and must be of appropriate length and size.

The appropriate length for shorts, skorts, jumpers, dresses, and skirts.

- All dress, hairstyles, hair length, makeup (grades 6-8 only), jewelry, nail polish, etc.

should be modest and appropriate in appearance and not a distraction to the classroom environment, as determined by the administration of the school.

- Children must have closed-toe shoes.

- We encourage your child to dress up for Chapel days to show our respect for God as we worship in His house.

Boys

Appropriate School Dress

- Pants, jeans, or shorts in good condition
- Shirts: Casual, in good taste; shirts must have sleeves; Turtlenecks
- Sweaters; fleeces
- Trinity Logo/Spirit wear
- Shoes: Must be worn with socks; Sandals with heel strap may be worn with or without socks; **NO FLIP FLOPS**

Additional Guidelines for Chapel

- Pants: Dress slacks/shorts; Cords; Khakis (Generally have zippers, pockets, & belt loops)
- Sweaters, no sweatshirts
- Shirts: Collared; Polo; Buttoned; Shirts must be tucked in!

Girls

Appropriate School Dress

- Pants, jeans, or shorts in good condition
- Shirts: Casual, in good taste; Turtlenecks; Sleeveless – NO spaghetti strap or racer backs, NO tank tops (5th-8th)
- Sweaters, fleeces
- Trinity Logo/Spirit wear
- Dresses, skirts, split skirts, skorts, & jumpers
- Shoes: Must be worn with socks; Sandals with heel strap may be worn with or without socks; **NO FLIP FLOPS**

Additional Guidelines for Chapel

- Pants: Dress slacks/shorts; Cords; Khakis (Generally have zippers, pockets, & belt loops)
- Dressy Shirts/Blouses and Sweaters. No Sweatshirts.
- Dresses, skirts, split skirts, skorts, & jumpers.

Gym Shoes

All students, ages 1 and up, must have a pair of shoes at school that are used solely for playing in the gym. These shoes can be kept at school, and staff will notify parents if a change in size is needed throughout the year. They must be non-marking shoes; tennis shoes are the preferred choice.

Transportation

Trinity ECC uses the Berrien Bus for our transportation needs. We follow guidelines for capacity, seat belts, etc. for these buses. We will always maintain the proper student-to-staff ratio, even on the bus. We do not have our bus or other means of transportation. School-age children from St. Joseph Public Schools travel on St. Joseph buses and follow the rules and guidelines set by that school district.

Education and Training of Staff Members

At Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center, we prioritize the training and education of our staff to ensure the highest standard of care and development for the children. All staff members receive comprehensive training in early childhood, including safety, care, child development, and crisis management. To maintain their skills and knowledge, staff members are required to complete 24 hours of training through in-services and workshops annually.

This ongoing education helps them stay updated on the best practices and new developments in the field. Additionally, all staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid, ensuring they are prepared to respond to emergencies effectively. They also receive specialized training in Shaken Baby Syndrome, Infant Safe Sleep practices, and Blood Borne Pathogens.

Our lead caregivers possess advanced qualifications in Early Childhood Education, equipping them with the expertise to provide high-quality instruction and care. Our ECC Administrator is currently working on a master's degree in early childhood education. With a dedicated and well-trained staff, we are committed to fostering a safe and enriching environment for all children.

Nap Time and Sleeping Equipment

At Trinity, we prioritize the well-being of our children by providing a nurturing environment for rest. Nap time is designated for all children, ensuring they receive the rest they need. For school-age children attending Trinity for over 5 hours, such as during summer care or holiday breaks, we also offer a peaceful rest/quiet time. Infants under 12 months will comfortably sleep in cribs equipped with firm mattresses. Children aged 12 months and above will use cots or mats for their rest time. Each sleeping area, whether it is a crib, cot, or mat, is provided by Trinity and comes with a washable, waterproof covering and suitable bedding. We ensure that each child has their designated sleeping space, clearly labeled for their individual use.

Children may bring small, appropriately labeled bedding, such as a blanket and a small pillow. Any bedding items sent from home will be stored in individual containers, drawers, or lockers and will be sent home weekly for cleaning. Trinity provides a cot and crib sheets, and toddlers are welcome to send a crib sheet to fit their sleeping mat. For infants, it's essential to keep their sleeping environment minimal, so they should have nothing else in their cribs. Parents or the center will supply sleep sacks for use during nap time.

Swaddling is permitted until infants reach 2 months old, and caregivers will adapt to each infant's unique sleeping schedule. Transition-age children have an option for morning naps, as needed. For children under school age who may not sleep during rest time, we facilitate engaging in quiet activities such as reading books or working on puzzles, ensuring a constructive and calming experience for everyone.

Our nap time runs from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm.

Diapering and Toilet Training

If a child's health condition or parent's preference necessitates that disposable diapers cannot be used, alternative arrangements may be made according to the parent or a licensed physician's instructions. Disposable diapers are preferred.

The center shall maintain a diapering area, and all supplies and equipment shall be maintained in a safe and sanitary manner. Diapers shall be done solely in that area. The caregiver and child shall thoroughly wash their hands after each diapering and after cleaning up bodily fluids, using soap and running water. A washcloth or towel, or both, used in diapering shall not be used subsequently on another part of the body or for any other purpose.

Toilet training shall be planned cooperatively between the child's primary caregiver and the parent so that the toilet routine established is consistent between the center and the child's home and, at a minimum, shall include washing hands after toilet use. **The caregiver shall change diapers when soiled or wet.**

Infant, Transition, and Toddler Daily Information

Trinity shall record daily logs for children up to 3 years of age in our Pro Care app, including:

- a. Food intake
- b. Sleeping patterns and times
- c. Bowel movements
- d. Developmental milestones
- e. Medication intake
- f. Changes in your child's behavior

Birthdays

Birthdays are an incredibly special time for the children, and we will observe them in the classroom. If you would like to bring in a birthday treat for your child, we ask that you speak with your child's teacher first. No homemade treats, please.

Show and Tell

Often, the classrooms will have an opportunity to bring an item from home to present to the group. This language experience of sharing a special item serves to foster vocabulary development and build self-confidence and self-esteem. The teacher may also encourage special items of interest to be brought to the science table during a particular unit.

Guns, weapons, or violent types of toys or figures are not appropriate and should not be brought to school.

Apart from Show & Tell, children should not bring toys, electronic devices, or special objects from home.

Field Trips

Field trips will be incorporated throughout the school year and during the summer if educationally appropriate. Parents will always be informed prior to any trip, and permission slips will be sent home. There may be extra costs associated with participating in a field trip. These costs will be the responsibility of the parent.

A bus will be provided for our school-age classes, or we will walk on our field trips. Parents are welcome to drive their child on the field trip or if space allows, ride on the bus. They are also welcome to walk along with us. For the safety and well-being of all children on a field trip, we kindly ask that children in our care do not travel in vehicles belonging to other families at the center.

Parent Visits and Conferences

Parents are welcome to visit the classrooms, and we encourage you to do so. The teacher will appreciate being contacted in advance of your visit. We also appreciate your help in the classroom on special days that the teacher may have planned (holidays, special events, etc.).

Parent/Teacher conferences will be scheduled twice a year so that the teacher and parents can discuss the child's school experience. However, parents should feel free to discuss questions and/or concerns at any time. We encourage open communication between home and school so that we can work together to make this the best possible experience for your child.

First Days of School at Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center

On the first days of school, parents may wish to allow a few extra minutes to stay in the classroom if their child appears to be apprehensive. You can explore the classroom environment together. Having a positive attitude about school, learning, trying new things, and teachers will help children reflect your attitudes about school.

While most children adapt easily to preschool and separate from their parents with no problems, it is not unusual for some children to feel anxious or perhaps even cry for a short time on the first few days. We encourage parents to speak positively to their children about school and reassure them that you will be back to pick them up soon.

Do not excessively prolong your departure! Most children stop crying within minutes after you leave! If you have a concern in this area, speak to your child's teacher and then follow his/her lead to make separation easier. Look forward to pick-up time and be ready to praise any works of art and adventures that your child shares with you.

There are several things that parents can do to help their child prepare for the first school experience. You may find the following list of suggestions helpful:

- Read to your child daily.
- Encourage independence and self-reliance.
- Encourage language development in your child. Answer his/her questions; have many conversations! Foster the proper use of grammar and vocabulary.
- Encourage your child to express feelings verbally rather than physically when angry or frustrated.
- Allow your child to make things with his/her hands and to explore the world around him/her.
- Show genuine interest in your child's activities and attempts at new things
- Teach good hygiene and the ability to attend to his/her own needs.
- Keep regular eating and sleeping habits. Make sure your child is well-rested and has eaten breakfast (or lunch) before coming to school.

Home and School Connections

Open communication between home and school proves to be a valuable tool in reinforcing what is being learned in the classroom. Each teacher will send home a newsletter to outline upcoming classroom events. The ECC Administrator will send out a monthly newsletter as a reminder of upcoming dates and any additional information for parents. Families will also receive the KINGSMAN, our school newsletter. In this publication, you will read items of interest concerning our school.

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL OFFICES

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH OFFICE 983-5000

619 Main Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085

Pastor Michael Roth, Senior Pastor

Pastor Benjamin Micheel, Associate Pastor

TRINITY LUTHERAN SCHOOL OFFICE 983-3056

613 Court Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085

Mrs. Amy Roth, Principal Ext. 101

Ms. Angela Martinez, Office Manager, Ext. 100

TRINITY LUTHERAN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER OFFICE 983-0040

613 Court Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085

Mrs. Jennifer Reynnells, Director, Ext. 201

Mrs. Heidi Lockman, Administrative Assistant, Ext. 200

Parent Handbook Notification Page (Sign and Return)
Trinity's Handbook is available online at www.trinitystjoe.org

I acknowledge that I have read through the entire Parent Handbook. I acknowledge that my signature on this form indicates that I understand what I have read and will adhere to the rules and policies stated in the Parent Handbook. I understand that the policies and procedures set in the Handbook are in the best interest of my child and are there to protect them and provide for them while a Trinity's Early Childhood Center. To that end, I understand that circumstances may arise that are not outlined in the Parent Handbook and that each case will be handled in Christian love, fairness, and respect.

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Print Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____