



PARENT HANDBOOK

Parent Handbook

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Welcome to the Sacred Heart Montessori. The purpose of this Parent Handbook is to outline the policies and procedures under which our program operates as a licensed child care provider.

Please note: Throughout the handbook the Center will be described as the SHM Center(s).

1. Registration Checklist

Children may be enrolled from 3 months through five years of age, regardless of race, creed, or religious beliefs. The following forms are required by the state of Florida and need to be read, completed and/or signed prior to enrollment:

- Parent Handbook (signed & dated)
- Enrollment Application (signed & dated)
- Emergency Information/Consent for Medical Treatment (signed & dated)
- Updated Immunization Information

Additional forms and information can be found in the Appendices section of this Handbook.

➤ Definitions

Early Care: Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m.

After Care: Monday through Friday between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Full-time Child Care: Monday through Friday (8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.)

Infant/Young Toddler: Younger than 24 months

Older Toddler/Preschooler: 24 months and older

*Please refer to the Enrollment packet for detailed pricings per program.

2. State Licensing Requirements

The SHM Centers are licensed and comply with the Florida Administrative Code (Child Standards) Chapter 65C-22 licensing regulations and standards. These standards relate to the child care facility, staff, health, safety procedures, nutrition, care giver to child ratios, and record keeping. The SHM Centers are all subject to inspection by state and city health, fire, and licensing officials.

3. **Termination Policy** The first two weeks will be regarded as a trial period, in which case either party may terminate the contract without notice. After the first two weeks of enrollment, if a student withdrawal is requested for any reason by the school directress, advance tuition will not be refunded. One month written notice is required for any child being withdrawn from the school, with the exception of gross misconduct on part of the provider, parent, or child. These are grounds for immediate discontinuation of service and any advance tuition will not be refunded. In cases of non-payment, legal action may be taken, and the parents will pay all SHM Center(s) legal fees incurred.

4. **Child Care Center Hours** SHM Centers are open Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (depending on the school site). The Centers will follow the Annual SHM calendar year with the exception of certain teacher planning days.

• **Holidays**

The Centers will observe the same holidays and spring/summer breaks as the M-DCPS schedule. The following holidays are observed by SHM along with the attached school year calendar specified in the appendices:

- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day (First Monday in September)
- Veterans' Day (officially designated date)
- Thanksgiving Recess
- Winter Recess
- Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Presidents' Day
- Spring Recess (March)
- Memorial Day (Last Monday in May)
- Juneteenth

5. **Payment Policy**

The SHM Centers fees vary by age group. The Payment Schedule is included in the Appendices. Failure to make payments prior to the service periods requires that the student be withdrawn from the SHM Centers. Parents must pay separate fees for food services based on the child's free/reduced lunch status or have the option to bring in balanced meals for breakfast, lunch and snack. Daily meal times are specified in the appendices under the daily routine schedule.

3. **Non-Sufficient Checks (NSF)**

Any checks returned for non-sufficient funds will not be re-deposited. Within 24 hours of notification, cash for the check amount and a \$35.00 bank service charge must be paid or your child will be withdrawn from the center.

4. **Registration Fee**

A non-refundable \$200 deposit is due prior to enrollment and will be prorated into the total registration fee. The non-refundable registration fee ranges from \$500 to \$700 per child. A child's placement is not secured until both the registration and the signed Enrollment application is submitted and paid in full. The full registration fee is due in the month of July prior to the start of the upcoming school year.

6. Attendance/Lateness

If the child will not be attending child care due to illness or other reason, please inform the Center Director as soon as possible. Discounts will not be given for children's absences, regardless of the reason. Daily attendance will be maintained in an Attendance Roster, as well as the SHM Centers registration card. Pick up must be at 5:50 pm. If the child is picked up after 6:00 p.m. there will be a warning for the first offence and a \$100 late fee thereafter. Late pick-ups after scheduled time but within school hours may result in an additional \$15 fee every 15 minutes.

➤ Arrival/Dismissal

All children must be brought to the entrance where a staff member will escort them to their classroom. Parents are to sign in and out on a daily basis. Family members, parents, guardian or other designees must be listed on the emergency contact card to be preapproved for drop off and pick up. If there is an exception, please be sure to notify the Center in writing as soon as possible. In that case, the person picking up the child will be required to present a picture ID before the child is released and must be over the age of 18. If there is a court order prohibiting a parent or other family member from the child, written notification from the custodial parent must be kept on file in the SHM Center and legal document must be attached. Please send the child clean, dressed neatly, with necessary supplies for the day. Please do not send half eaten breakfasts, breakfast bars, candy or gum with the children. Classes start promptly at 9 am, children arriving after 9 am will not be accepted without a valid doctors note. Children may not arrive to school after 11:30 am with an excused note. It is important parents pick up their children at the designated time, a 5 minute grace period will be given, and late arrivals will incur an additional late pick up fee.

- **Pick up/Drop off-** Transition at the door should be consistent and brief, we have found that a brief sendoff works best during transition periods to help the child understand that a routine is established. Your child will be escorted in/out of the school with a staff member and ask families refrain from requesting a specific member to receive your child who may already be attending to other duties.
- **VPK Attendance.** All children enrolled in the VPK program must be signed in and out the VPK Attendance roster daily (Rule 6M-8.305). Children are to arrive on time and ready to start the day. Late arrival or too many absences may result in expulsion from the program as per VPK standards. Please refer to the VPK daily schedule for further details.

7. Insurance

Upon registering the child, it is mandatory the center obtain a liability insurance required by Department Children and Families. This fee is included in your registration cost and is required by the Department of Children and Families of Miami-Dade & Monroe. The SHM Centers may not operate without this insurance and therefore each child must be covered; it is required even if you already have family or individual medical insurance coverage. This insurance plan DOES NOT take the place of family or individual medical insurance coverage and is renewed annually by the SHM Centers. Fees are subject to change and therefore may vary your registration cost annually.

8. Health Issues

For the health and safety of all of the children in the SHM Centers, please do not bring any child to the Center sick. Children with mild cold like symptoms that are otherwise feeling and acting well cannot attend the Center. Mild cold-like symptoms include clear runny nose, slight cough, and fever. If you are not sure if the child should be brought to the Center, please call and check with Center staff. If a child becomes ill during child care center hours, the parents will be contacted to pick up the child. Parents need to pick up their children within one hour of being notified. If parents are not available, the emergency contact person will be notified. Once the child is removed from the SHM Centers due to illness, they may not return to the Center until symptoms requiring removal are no longer present.

9. Exclusion From Child Care

A child with any of the following illnesses must be completely free of any symptoms before returning to the SHM Center. If the child is taking antibiotics for an illness, the child may return after 24 hours without medication regulating fever, cough and cold symptoms, is no longer contagious, and is otherwise feeling well enough to participate in the daily schedule. Signs of illness include the following; unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying for no reason, uncontrollable runny nose (more than clear), cough (more than slight), difficulty breathing, diarrhea, vomiting, mouth sores, rashes (note from doctor stating non-contagious is ok), pink eye, chicken pox, mumps, measles, hepatitis A, impetigo, lice, ringworm, scabies, strep throat, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, shingles, and any other contagious disease or rash. **Any child with a fever of 100 degrees or above, orally (in the mouth), or axillary (under the arm), may not attend child care.** State law requires that parents be notified if any child attending the Center has been exposed to certain contagious diseases. Written notification will be provided to all parents.

10. Medication

No medication may be administered by the school unless prescribed and ordered by a physician. In which case, a copy and *Authorization to Administer Medication* form is filed out and approved. Please see Appendices for the Policy on administering medication to children at the schools.

11. State Requirement for Reporting Child Abuse

By Florida statutes, Chapters 39 and 415, all staff members must report any suspected incidents of possible child abuse or neglect. Please note that any child can be questioned by the Florida Department of Children & Families (FDCF) Child Protective Services at any time without parental consent. Please notify a staff member if the child has a mark that is questionable or accident that may have occurred under their care.

12. Staff Qualifications

Program oversight is provided by the Department of Children and Families Office of Early Childhood Programs. The daily program operation will be supervised by the school's administration.

Each SHM Center will be staffed by an individual with Center Director Credentials (Job Code 4248), and depending on the number of children, one (1) to two (2) hourly paraprofessionals, with Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC-formerly CDA) (Job Code 8009). Lead Teachers will also be credentialed Montessori professionals and/or hold a formal degree from an accredited program by the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade or hold a formal Bachelor's degree in education.

13. Parent Meetings/Conferences

Parent meetings/conferences are an important component in a child care and preschool environment. The purpose of these meetings is to support the child's social, emotional, physical, and academic development. The teacher or administrator may request scheduled conferences if necessary. However, if a parent has a concern or needs to speak with the Center Director or School Administrator, a meeting can be scheduled.

14. Uniform Policy

Children over two (2) years of age must wear uniforms based on the colors of the SHM Centers. Center staff will provide information on where they can be purchased. Although the use of uniforms is not mandatory for children under two (2) years of age, parents are welcomed to either purchase or have uniforms made for their children. All children need an extra set of labeled clothing left at the Center, kept in marked zip lock bags.

15. Behavior Management & Discipline

Discipline of a child is achieved through patience, consistency and positive reinforcement. At the SHM Centers, children are taught manners, kindness and respect for others. Expectations and rules are also clearly explained and repeated throughout the day. If a child is old enough to

understand the rules and does not follow them and exhibits inappropriate behavior (hitting, aggression, etc.), hurts others, or property, the following developmentally appropriate guidance techniques will be used. These techniques are as follows:

1. **Positive Reinforcement:** The child will be encouraged when he or she is demonstrating acceptable behavior.
2. **Redirection:** The child is redirected to another activity and given an opportunity to try again at another time.
3. **Thinking Chair:** The child is separated from the group for an age appropriate amount of time (one minute per one year of age). This technique is only used when a child repeatedly does not follow directions; exhibit temper tantrum type behaviors, or hurts himself or others.
4. **Last Resort:** When a child's behavior is continually disruptive or dangerous to others, a meeting will be held with the parents. If the problems cannot be resolved, other child care arrangements will be made.

16. Classroom Visits

Parents may visit the SHM Centers. However, to avoid disruption in the Center and the learning process, it is preferred that visits are scheduled ahead of time and are done so with the administrator at the office using the camera system.

17. Snacks & Meals

Good nutrition is necessary for children to develop healthy bodies and minds and is vital to their overall health, development and education. The SHM centers offer catered meals at an affordable rate. Meals are based on a nutritional diet and a weekly menu will be posted at the SHM Entrance weekly. Children attending any of the half day programs will not receive the lunch or snack portion. The scheduled meal hours are set per regulations and the child must be present at the scheduled time in order to receive the meal that day. If a child has any particular dietary issue resulting from being a vegetarian, or having allergies, religious beliefs, or non-religious beliefs, please inform the Center staff. Parents also have the flexibility to bring their own meals daily. Please keep in mind Microwaves are only accessible for infants under 1 year old.

18. Birthday Parties

Birthdays are celebrated on the 3rd Friday of each month for all the students turning of age and shared amongst peers and staff only. Parents are encouraged to share responsibility in bringing

treats and simple décor, cupcakes and/or treat bags to be handed out to children at the time of dismissal. The child turning of age will celebrate with friends during outdoor play and photos will be shared for those loved ones at home.

19. Curriculum

The Montessori Curriculum is a child-centered classroom where learning activities are presented individually to children, students' progress at their own pace. They are given opportunities to practice, review, or move forward based on their own interests and capabilities. They take charge of their own learning and become accountable for their own knowledge. Children learn best through direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. During this active learning process, infants and toddlers are encouraged to discover the world around them by exploring and playing. Learning and development are anchored by long-term, trusting relationships with caregivers, who are close at hand to support the children as they play. Ongoing professional development and technical assistance will be provided by the Office of Early Childhood Programs.

- **Cultural Traditions**

Cultural and family traditions are a part of a child's life and learning experiences. Therefore, many cultural events are incorporated into the curriculum. Families are invited to share cultural traditions enjoyed at home and family celebrations. However, if you prefer that your child be excused from any particular activity or celebration, please notify the Center Director.

- **Outdoor activities**

Weather permitting, outdoor play will be part of the daily schedule. These activities may include the following: climbing, sliding, jumping, running, balls, jump rope, racing, water balloons, parachute, bubbles, follow the leader, ride-on toys, wagons, tunnels, safe water toys, various games, water table, painting, gardening, exploring nature/weather, etc.

- **Toys**

Our school offers well-organized, separate, age appropriate educational material for the classrooms. Toys are not permitted at school and can be a distraction during lessons, please avoid bringing the child with a toy in hand so that the child does not associate the negative experience with school upon arrival. Toys should be left at home or in the car. Toys may only be brought on designated sharing/show and tell days. Please note that toy weapons or those promoting violence should never be brought to the SHM Center. We will not be held responsible for missing toys.

20. Diaper Policy

It is the parent's responsibility to provide diapers and wipes. Diaper crème is also accepted with parent consent and written authorization. Each child has his or her own clearly labeled diaper

bin, either in the infant/younger toddler room or older toddler/preschooler room, depending on the age of the child. Diapers are checked frequently and changed every two hours or more often, if required. The diaper changing tables are cleaned and disinfected between each diaper change, and hand washing of child care provider and child is performed after each diaper change. A note will be sent home when toiletry needs must be replenished. If after two days of receiving written request parents have not provided the necessary toiletry needed to sustain the child's needs the child may not be accepted into the center.

21. Toilet Training

Potty training is encouraged as long as the child is ready (typically between two and three years of age). The initial training needs to be done at home for at least two weeks with success before it can be effectively started at the SHM Center. Parents will be required to supply pull-ups and wipes. Children will be allowed to come to the Center in cotton training pants/underwear after they have been accident free for at least two weeks in pull-ups. Communication between parents and the Centers is imperative for a successful transition from diapers to toilet. Children **MUST** be fully potty trained to enter the primary classroom and a parent acknowledgment form must be signed and returned to the administration. If frequent accidents occur the child may be asked to stay home until training is complete.

22. Parent Supplies

Parents are responsible for supplying the following items: diapers/pull-ups, wipes, diaper creams, weather appropriate clothes and a change of clothes, jacket, shoes must be Velcro (no flip-flops or crocs), and pacifier is used if necessary in the infant class and **ONLY** at naptime for toddlers if needed. For the older children sleeping on a mat: a nap mat and a blanket are needed. Children's crib sheets and blankets will be sent home every Friday and must be washed and returned to the SHM Center the following Monday. Children will get dirty throughout the day because of food, paint, markers, dirt, bubbles, etc.; therefore, please dress your child accordingly for play. The SHM Center are not responsible for replacing stained or soiled clothing. It is highly recommended that children's names are written on the tags of their clothing and belongings, especially socks and underwear, in order to prevent any mix-ups. The child's cubby will be checked periodically to ensure that he or she has all of the necessary items required at the Center. As the weather changes throughout the year, so do the items needed by children.

23. Nap Time

Infants and toddlers sleep in separate areas or rooms. The infants sleep in provider provided cribs, and the toddlers sleep on mats. The goal is to have the two different age groups (18 months and older, younger than 18 months) sleeping on the same afternoon nap schedule. Generally, children 15 months and younger will take a morning nap as well, moving toward a one nap a day schedule when they are between 12 and 18 months. Children will never be forced to sleep; however, they are encouraged to remain quiet and on their mat during this time.

For the older, toddler age children, sleeping on mats, please send a Nap-mat that includes a pillow and cover; can be easily rolled up independently.

- **Daily Care Sheets**

For infants 12 months and younger, parents will receive a daily care sheet. This sheet will list when the child was given a bottle (when applicable), what they ate and drank, when diapers were changed, their nap schedule, and any other pertinent information.

24. Daily Schedule

The SHM Center follows a developmentally appropriate daily schedule. Actual times and activities may vary depending on the time of the year, weather, age and developmental level of the children. Age appropriate activities are scheduled with flexibility in order to respond to the needs of each individual child and their stage of development.

25. Government Programs

- **Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)**

The Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program – or **VPK** – is a free prekindergarten program for 4 and 5-year-olds who reside in Florida. Parents can enroll their child in the state's free, voluntary prekindergarten (**VPK**) education program that year or wait until the following year when their child is 5. The program hours are from 9 am -12 pm.

- **School Readiness**

The School Readiness program is intended to help children from low-income families get the support they need to be successful in school. While helping children prepare for school, the program provides child care so a parent can work or attend a training or education program.

26. Emergency Procedures

The SHM Center follows the M-DCPS plan for emergencies. In the event of an emergency closing during the school day, parents will be notified by phone. Parents are asked to pick up their children within one hour of being notified of the emergency. It is vital that parents stay tuned to radio, television and internet advisories for information on school closings due to inclement weather or other emergencies.

Fire drills are conducted once a month at various times of the day. The SHM Center follows the school's fire drill schedule and emergency plans. Teachers will practice fire drill procedures with the children.

- ***Medical Emergencies***

Emergency information is kept on file in the SHM Center. In case of illness or injury, this information will be used to notify the parent or the person designated by the parent, of the child's status. If the child is injured while at the Center, first aid will be administered. If treatment by a doctor is necessary, every effort will be made to contact the parent or the doctor on the emergency card. In the event of a severe emergency, the SHM Center will call 911; notify the parents and the school administration. In all cases, an injury report will be completed, and a copy will be given to the parents as well as the Florida Department of Children and Families (FDCF). Authorization for emergency treatment must be signed at the time of enrollment to ensure that in the event of an emergency, your child receives the necessary emergency treatment he or she needs. It is very important that all emergency contact information is up to date and correct. Please inform the Center immediately of any changes. Parents are responsible for all costs involved in emergency medical treatment, including emergency transportation, if required.

27. Communication

Good communication is an important component of a quality child care center. Therefore, if you do not understand something, have a concern, or you feel uncomfortable with one or more of the policies and/or procedures outlined in the Parent Handbook, it is vital that you speak with the Center Director for further clarification. Strong home-school communication ensures that children will benefit from their early childhood experiences and develop to his/her full potential. Parent/Teacher communication will be accomplished via parent meetings, parent memos, monthly calendars, informal arrival and dismissal information, emails, the *Parent Engagement* application and special occasion gatherings. It is necessary that families enroll in the apps provided and keep an updated email and phone number with the SHM centers to maintain quality communication between the school and home.

28. Contract Compliance

Please keep your Parent Handbook accessible so you can periodically review the SHM policies and procedures, as necessary. The SHM centers reserves the right to amend any portion of the Parent Handbook at any time. If and when a change is made, parents will be notified and provided with a copy. Please note that each SHM Centers will have their own individualized Parent Policy Handbook with specific child care hours, schedules and activities for their sites. You must also sign and adhere to their policies.

Sacred Heart Montessori

Policy Acknowledgment Form

Please sign below that you have read, understood and agree to the following school policy & procedures as set forth in this Parent Handbook.

Parent Signature

Date