

# **Silver Spring Child Care Center Family Handbook 2018-2019**



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**MSDE Office of Child Care License # 118643**

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## **Welcome**

I am very excited to welcome you and your child to the Silver Spring Child Care Center (SSCCC) community. Here you will discover knowledgeable and caring teachers, engaged children and involved families. Our play-based curriculum allows children to explore and learn about the world around them through self-selected and teacher-directed activities developed around children's interests and abilities. Teachers emphasize social-emotional skills and self-regulation while facilitating children's natural curiosity and acquisition of rich vocabulary and beginning numeracy and literacy skills. Families participate in the daily life of SSSCC in many ways: assembling furniture and equipment, gathering and donating materials, sharing knowledge and interests, participating in field trips, planning and attending family events, organizing fund raising efforts, serving on our Board of Directors, and forging lasting relationships within the SSSCC family. I am confident that you will find many opportunities to participate in the community and enrich your child's early care and education at SSSCC.

This handbook is a compilation of useful and essential information that you will need while your child is enrolled at SSSCC. Here you will find our policies, procedures, expectations and daily routines. We are licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care (MSDE OCC), and many of our policies are based upon its regulations. I hope you will take a few moments to review this handbook and that you will keep it handy throughout the year. If you have questions about any information contained herein, please contact me for clarification.

In addition to reading this handbook, please stay informed by reading our monthly e-newsletter, News and Views, as well as other emails texts and notices we may send. Your child's teachers and room parents will also keep you informed of classroom and Center-wide activities and other news throughout the year via notices posted on Family Information Boards in each classroom, photos and displays, notices placed in Family Folders, and emails. Family conferences are held twice a year and families may request more frequent meetings if desired. Most importantly, I encourage you to take the time to chat with your child's teachers regularly to get a sense of your child's day.

Looking forward to a fantastic year,

***Cindy***

Cindy Newsome  
Director

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## About SSCCC

### Mission

SSCCC's mission is to support working families in the Silver Spring community by providing affordable, quality early care and education for children of all social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

### History

SSCCC was established in 1971 as the result of a proposal by a group of concerned citizens, predominantly from Christ Congregational Church in Silver Spring, to provide quality child care for children of all social, economic and cultural backgrounds. In 2016, the last four (4) original teachers retired from SSCCC, a strong indication of our commitment to Silver Spring families.

### Philosophy

SSCCC understands that a caring and supportive community is vital to a child's healthy development. We offer a community of teachers, children and families that is inclusive, thoughtful, responsive and compassionate. In such a setting, children may safely explore their ideas, their world, and the people who inhabit it. Through positive interactions within the community, children develop understanding and acceptance of the feelings of self and others and learn to care deeply about the diverse people who make up the SSCCC family.

### Board of Directors

SSCCC, a nonprofit organization, is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of current and alumni families, teachers, and the Director. The Board is responsible for setting policies and providing for the well-being and success of the Center, setting tuition and fees, approving the budget, responding to staff grievances on appeal, and hiring the director. If you are interested in joining the Board, please contact the Board President or SSCCC Director.

### Staff

Our Director has over 30 years of experience in early care and education. She earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Virginia Wesleyan University and taught Kindergarten through grade 3 in Maryland and Virginia Public Schools. Upon moving to Montgomery County, she entered the early care and education field and has been a director for 20 years.

SSCCC classrooms are staffed with caring teachers and assistants trained in early care and education (ECE). All complete a minimum of 12 hours of continued training annually and are certified in child and adult CPR and first aid. Some teachers have attained bachelor's degrees;

others are currently working toward their degrees. Our teachers have been with us for an average of 9 years – and some have been with SSCCC for 20 years or more. Collectively, we have over 245 years of full-time professional experience in ECE. This exceptionally long-term commitment to SSCCC and to ECE in general, is indicative of the value SSCCC places on consistent quality child care and early education.

SSCCC provides breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack daily. While lunch is catered, breakfast and snack are prepared on-site. Our cook is an experienced restaurateur and kitchen staff is certified in food service management through Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.

## **Important Information**

### **Adult Supervision**

MSDE OCC regulations shall be followed at all times, even when families are present. To ensure their safety, children must always be accompanied by an SSCCC teacher or adult family member. This means that no one shall send an unaccompanied child to a classroom to retrieve belongings, to the rest room, or onto the playground to join a class. Siblings under the age of 18 shall not pick-up a child or accompany a child in lieu of an adult. At no time shall sibling be left unsupervised on the first floor of Christ Congregational Church while SSCCC children are retrieved by family members.

SSCCC does not assume responsibility for children until they are signed in and escorted to the classroom and placed in a teacher's care. Families must also alert teachers when children have been signed out and are under family supervision.

### **Enrollment**

No child may attend SSCCC until all enrollment forms have been completed and returned, along with the registration fee and tuition. SSCCC is required to maintain up-to-date records, including emergency contacts and current vaccinations. Families are responsible for submitting proof of vaccinations from the child's health care provider or documentation indicating medical or cultural reasons for non-immunization. Families are required to complete a new Emergency Form and Part I of the Health Inventory Form annually.

It is the responsibility of each family to ensure that SSCCC has current contact, emergency and health information on file for each child. If information on a child's Emergency Form changes, the family must make and initial the change(s) on the original form (on file in the office) or complete a new form in its entirety. For safety and security reasons, SSCCC personnel may not write in changes on any child's Emergency Form. Occasionally MSDE OCC requires the completion of new or additional forms and SSCCC will notify families in a timely manner. Once the due date has passed, a child may not attend SSCCC until these forms are completed and submitted.

## Withdrawal

SSCCC requires at least 30 days written notice of intent to withdraw a child. Families are responsible for the full tuition amount up to the last day of enrollment or 30 days from the date of written notice, whichever is later. All tuition and fees due must be paid before the withdrawal date.

## Days and Hours of Operation

SSCCC provides full-day full-time care and is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. year 'round.

## Unscheduled Closures and Delays

To support working families, SSCCC remains open as much as we safely can – including during public school closings and most snow days. The decision to remain open or to close is made balancing the needs of families with the safety of drivers encountering potentially hazardous road conditions. In the event of an unscheduled delay or closure, notification will be made as soon as possible (usually by 5:30 a.m.). If a decision to close early is made, families will be notified to pick up children within two (2) hours, or earlier if circumstances dictate.

We have only one actual rule: **If the Federal Government is CLOSED then SSCCC is closed!** If the Federal Government Offices are not closed, we will make our decision by 5:30 a.m. based on the following reports and information:

- Local weather and traffic conditions, current and predicted
- Input from our Weather Watcher families, all of whom live within walking distance of SSCCC
- A preponderance of similar decisions made by area schools and governments

Here's how you can find out if SSCCC is open or closed, or has a delayed opening:

- Delays and closures will be submitted to **NBC 4** and [www.nbcwashington.com](http://www.nbcwashington.com) by 5:30 a.m.
- The SSCCC phone message (301-589-1593) will be changed to reflect our status shortly thereafter.
- Families will receive a text message from the Remind app between 5:30 & 6:00 a.m.
- Families will receive an email by 6:00 a.m. letting you know our status.

## Tuition and Fees

SSCCC is a non-profit organization and depends on timely payment of tuition and fees for daily operations. The Board of Directors reviews tuition rates and other fees annually with an eye toward keeping tuition costs affordable while meeting programming expenses. Any increases take effect on July 1. Tuition includes breakfast, lunch afternoon snack and is due in advance on the first day of each month. A twice-monthly schedule for tuition payment may be arranged by speaking with the director. The first month's tuition is due two (2) weeks prior to the child's first day of attendance. The activity fee covers the costs of field trips, tee shirts and Spanish lessons and is due each September 1.

Families are responsible for full monthly tuition payments when children are absent due to sickness or vacation, scheduled closings such as holidays and professional development days, and unscheduled closings. Children remain at the 2-year-old rate until they are 3 years old, enrolled in a 3- to 5-year-old cohort, and fully toilet trained. The new tuition will begin the month after all three conditions are met.

Tuition may be paid by personal check, cashier's check, or money order. SSCCC does not accept cash payments. Payments should be placed in the tuition box near the hallway exit door.

Monthly Tuition	\$1389	2-year-olds and non-toilet trained children
	\$1319	toilet trained children in a 3- to 5-year-old cohort

### One-Time Non-refundable Fees

- Application/ Wait List Fee \$75
- Registration Fee \$100

### Recurring Fees

- Annual Activity Fee \$ 150 for first child  
\$ 75 per additional child

### Occasional Fees

- Returned Check Fee \$25.00

If a second check is returned, SSCCC reserves the right to require payment by money order or certified check.

- Year-End Event To Be Determined

To offset the cost of the SSCCC Year-End Event, families pay a small fee if they plan to attend. This fee is about \$30 for a family of four (4). Per-person fees apply for additional family members.



- Late Pick-Up Fee

<b>SSCCC Late Pick-Up Fees</b>			
<b>Times Late per Quarter</b>	<b># of 10 Minute Increments Late</b>	<b># Children</b>	<b>Total Due</b>
1 to 3	1 (1 to 10 min)	1	\$25
1 to 3	1 (1 to 10 min)	2	\$50
1 to 3	2 (11 to 20 min.)	1	\$50
1 to 3	2 (11 to 20 min.)	2	\$100
1 to 3	3 (21 to 30 min.)	1	\$75
1 to 3	3 (21 to 30 min.)	2	150
4+	1 (1 to 10 min)	1	50
4+	1 (1 to 10 min)	2	100
4+	2 (11 to 20 min.)	1	100
4+	2 (11 to 20 min.)	2	200
4+	3 (21 to 30 min.)	1	150
4+	3 (21 to 30 min.)	2	300

### **Late Pick-Up Policy**

SSCCC is licensed and insured to operate year-round between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Issues surrounding liability and accountability arise when children are present after 6:00 p.m. Therefore, families are asked to arrive daily for pick-up by 5:45 p.m. This allows time for a brief chat with teachers, hand-washing so that “school germs stay at school” and belongings to be collected before 6:00 p.m. Teachers will turn off the lights and exit the building at 6:00 p.m. When a family member is running late, it is that person’s responsibility to arrange for a back-up person to retrieve the child on time AND to alert SSCCC.

If the person authorized to pick up a child does not arrive by 6:00 p.m., two (2) SSCCC employees shall remain until the child is picked up. One employee will start a cell phone stopwatch feature, which is the official time keeper. Every attempt will be made to contact the family using all supplied telephone numbers. If the child has not been retrieved by 6:20 p.m. and the family cannot be contacted, an SSCCC employee shall begin calling the emergency contacts listed on the child’s Emergency Form. Emergency contacts will be requested to pick the child up. If the child is released to one of these individuals, an employee shall leave written notice for the family on the Brewster Avenue door. If the child is still present at 7:00 p.m. and no arrangements have been made to collect the child, an SSCCC employee shall call Child Protective Services for further instructions (240-777-4417). On days SSCCC closes early, the late pick-up policy goes into effect at the announced closing time.

For safety and security, two (2) SSCCC employees remain until each child is picked up. Late pick-ups cause hardships for those individuals, who have their own schedules to keep. Late families are assessed a late pick-up fee at the rate of \$25 per child per 10-minute increment or part thereof. This rate doubles after three (3) late pick-ups in a quarter. An SSCCC employee

will issue a late pick-up invoice at the time the child is picked up. The fee must be paid to SSCCC by check the next day the child attends and will be added to the tuition statement for tax purposes. Families who are frequently late (3 or more times in a month) will receive a written warning and should discuss pick-up options with the Director. Families who are late six (6) times in a three-month period will be given two (2) weeks' notice to make other child care arrangements.

## **What to Bring**

Each child should bring the following items. Please label all personal belongings, such as clothing, blankets, water bottles, and backpacks with your child's full name to help avoid confusion with other children's belongings.

- seasonally appropriate change of clothes (3-4 sets while toilet-training)
- lightweight rest time blanket
- stuffed animal for rest time (optional)
- family photograph(s)
- refillable water bottle

## **What Not to Bring**

- medication, cough drops, lotions, lip balm
- snack foods (candy, gum, chips, soda)
- toys, except on scheduled "show and share" days
- precious treasures that may be damaged or lost
- money or other valuables
- items which cannot be easily replaced
- weapons

## **Illness**

Families should make other arrangements for the care of sick children. Don't know if your child is sick enough to stay home? Below are some typical signs of illness. A general rule of thumb is, if a child is too ill to fully participate in the day's activities, including playing outside, the child cannot attend SSCCC. A day or so at home allows the child to rest and reduces the risk of infecting others.

- Temperature of more than 100 degrees F
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomachache
- Diarrhea
- Pale, flushed or clammy skin
- Headache
- Moderate to severe cough

- Earache
- Steady thick discharge from nose
- Sore throat
- Rash or infection of the skin
- Red or pink eyes; discharge from eyes
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of energy or decrease in activity

Communicable diseases such as strep throat, pink eye or flu and contagious conditions such as fever, head lice, ringworm, impetigo, and unexplained rashes require treatment before the child may return to SSCCC. The first dose of any prescription or over-the-counter medication must be administered at home and the child monitored for side effects. The child may return to SSCCC after being free of fever and other symptoms for at least 24 hours without the use of fever/symptom reducing medication. Please notify the Director immediately if your child is diagnosed with any contagious illness. Families will be notified of the presence of contagious illnesses, so they may monitor children for symptoms. The identity of contagious children will not be divulged.

Should a child become ill during the day, we will immediately notify the family and isolate the child. Sick child should be picked up within 45 minutes of our call. If SSCCC cannot reach the family, the child's emergency contacts will be called to retrieve the child and a message will be delivered to the family via voice mail, text or email. Generally, a temperature over 100 degrees, vomiting, diarrhea, or any combination of two or more symptoms noted above is sufficient cause to send a child home.

## Play-Based Learning

### *It's Not JUST Play*

*Play is an essential part of early learning.*

*It is the lifeblood of the early learning process.*

*As children play they are developing the cognitive, socio-emotional and physical skills they will need to take them into successful adulthood.*

*They are developing their curiosity, problem solving and flexibility along with verbal and non-verbal communications skills.*

*They are developing their emotional intelligence, they are finding their voice and learning confidence, cooperation, sharing, negotiation, empathy and persistence.*

*Every time they hit that playground they are developing their gross Motor skills and by planting their feet in the warm, damp earth they are connecting with the power and wonder of nature.*

*It's definitely not "just play."*

***THEY ARE MASTERING SKILLS FOR LIFE.***

*Anonymous*

SSCCC understands that exploratory activities and discovery drive early learning. Through play children develop the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills they will need to become successful adults. Our play-based curriculum offers daily opportunities for child-initiated free play as well as more structured play-based learning activities. Children engage in challenging activities of their choice and experience new materials at their own pace. They are encouraged to think creatively, explore and discover, take appropriate risks, problem-solve, engage in inquiry and investigation, and share their learning with others. All children participate in weekly Spanish instruction.

The teacher: child ratio at SSCCC ranges from 1:4 to 1:7, well below the MSDE OCC required ratios. This low ratio and our small cohort sizes enable teachers to provide individualized and small group instruction to meet the needs of all children.

## Daily Activities

A schedule of daily activities is posted in each room. The order and times of activities other than mealtimes are flexible to accommodate children's interests, unanticipated teachable moments and weather conditions. Below is a typical schedule.

7:00	SSCCC Opens
7:00-9:00	Free Play
9:00-9:30	Breakfast
9:30-9:45	Group Time
9:45-10:50	Small Group Activities/ Centers
10:50-11:50	Outside Time
11:50-12:00	Lunch Preparations
12:00-12:45	Lunch
12:45-1:00	Story Time, Transition to Rest Time
1:00- 3:00	Rest Time
3:00-3:30	Wake-up, Snack
3:30-3:45	Group Time
3:30-4:30	Small Group Activities/ Centers
4:30-5:30	Outside Time
5:30-6:00	Free Play
6:00	Center Closes

## Outside Play

Outside play provides opportunities for developing friendships, observing nature, planning and team-work, physical development, and relaxation. At SSCCC, children go outside at least twice each day, for about an hour each time. Families should provide appropriate outerwear each day, including boot, mittens, snow pants and shade hats. All children should bring a refillable water bottle each day. If families so choose, the bottles may be left at SSCCC and will be sanitized weekly.

Decisions to restrict outside time due to extreme weather are based on Child Care Weather Watch, Iowa Department of Public Health. The chart and explanation are posted on the bulletin board outside the SSCCC office. You can also download the current version at: [https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/child\\_care\\_weather\\_watch.pdf](https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/child_care_weather_watch.pdf)

## Family Field Trips

SSCCC plans a few family field trips each year. In October, we enjoy our annual trip to Clark's Elioak Farm to enjoy the petting farm, hayride, pony rides and pumpkin picking. In the spring we go to Brookside Gardens Butterfly Pavilion. Rising kindergarteners and their families are invited to participate in a special trip to Wheaton Regional Park in the summer. Everyone rides

the train and carousel and enjoys icy cold treats as a final send-off. Individual classes may walk to Indian Springs Park for exercise, nature observations and science projects. Occasionally families will arrange for small groups to attend area attractions with which they are connected, such as the Montgomery County Recycling Center. These are true family affairs: families are invited to attend all field trips and the activity fee covers the child's costs along with one (1) family member's. Two (2) year-olds must be accompanied on each trip by a family member. SSSCC charts a bus for the Clark's Elioak Farm trip. Families provide transportation for all other trips and children must be in approved child restraints installed by the family. If a family cannot attend a field trip, they make arrangements with another family to transport the child and notify SSSCC in writing. No care is provided at SSSCC for children not attending center-wide field trips.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

At SSSCC we enjoy celebrating every child's birthday! Families wishing to bring a special birthday treat should speak with a teacher for information regarding food restrictions. Treats must be commercially prepared, not homemade. In lieu of food, children also enjoy bubbles, noise makers, stickers, craft activities, or a dramatically read and acted-out story. Latex balloons are not allowed. Birthdays are usually celebrated during afternoon snack and families are welcome to join in. **Out of consideration for all children, families may not pass out party invitations for or discuss home parties. The pain of "You can't come to my birthday party" is real and devastating to young children.**

## **Optional Classes**

SSSCC contracts with Child Development Consultants LLC to offer a social skills class for rising kindergarteners each spring. Amy Freedman, MA, CCC-SLP, aka The Friendship Lady, offers a series of classes coaching children in social skills geared to individual needs. Families may register for the class and pay the fee to SSSCC since we sign our contract and submit payment well before the classes begin.

Families may also contract directly with local karate and dance instructors for weekly lessons presented at SSSCC. Information is sent home each fall and arrangements are made directly between the family and instructor. Classes are supervised by SSSCC teachers for security purposes.

## **Program Policies and Information Communication**

The key to children's successful early care and education experience is, in large part, found in communication between families and SSSCC. Teachers are well-versed in child development, but each family is the expert on that child. Sharing information, such as a poor night's sleep, a subject or activity or particular interest, or attainment of a new milestone, is important. Families

stay informed of children's daily experiences and teachers can better plan to address children's needs. Together, we can provide the best experience for each child.

You will find several avenues of communication at SSCCC in addition to this handbook. One good way to stay informed about events at SSCCC is to make a practice of checking your email frequently for messages from SSCCC. Each month, we send a newsletter, activity calendar and menus for breakfast, lunch and snack. Other important or useful information is emailed throughout the month. This information and more is also found on our website, [silverspringccc.org](http://silverspringccc.org). Urgent and time-sensitive notices are sent to family cell phones via the Remind.com app. Be sure to sign up when you receive the invitation!

Teachers and room parents post notices on Family Information Boards in each classroom, place information in Family Folders, place telephone calls and send emails. Checking the white board outside the classroom door for high lights of the day and taking a few minutes to view classroom displays and photographs are great ways to get a snapshot of your child's day.

The best way to remain informed of your child's progress is through regular communication with teachers. Teachers can engage in a quick chat at drop-off or pick-up but are still responsible for the children in their care. If a longer conversation is desired, families can contact the Director, who will arrange coverage for the teacher at a mutually convenient time. Individual family conferences are held twice a year and families may request more frequent meetings or phone conferences.

SSCCC maintains an open door policy and families are welcome to visit. Families may arrange to share a story (or more) with a classroom in the morning, join a child for lunch, or stay on the playground a while at pick-up. If you have a friendly pet or an interesting hobby or profession, we'd love to have you come and share it with the children. SSCCC encourages families to find ways to share their interests, hobbies and cultural traditions with their child's class. Please talk with a teacher about scheduling a time to come in!

## **Family Directory**

SSCCC collects and distributes contact information via a program directory each fall. This directory, including the contact information provided therein, should be used only for SSCCC-related communication. The directory should not be sold, shared or used for any other purpose, including, but not limited to: the transmission of advertising, promotional, or other commercial materials; the transmission of political communications; or the transmission of communications that are abusive, defamatory or obscene. Families may opt out of having contact information published in the directory.

## Arrival and Departure

MSDE OCC requires families sign children in and out of SSCCC every day. Sign in sheets for each class will be with the teacher receiving children for the class. Previous written notice is required if families wish someone other than the person(s) authorized to pick up daily on the Emergency Form to pick up a child. In extreme situations, a telephone call will suffice as notice. Written notice must be supplied the following day for our records. Anyone picking up a child for the first time must present a valid government issued photo ID. **We will not release a child without prior authorization from the family.**

The parking lot driving lanes always need to be kept clear and families should park only in the upper lot near the Brewster Avenue entry. Children should not be left unaccompanied in cars or on the parking lot. Never leave keys in the car or leave an unattended car running. Families must always use appropriate car seat/safety restraints as required by Maryland law.

## Building Security

SSCCC, Christ Congregational Church and its other tenants are committed to maintaining a safe, secure building and the help of our families is crucial. Upon enrollment, families are given a 5 character code to access SSCCC through the Brewster Avenue entrance. This code is to remain confidential and families are cautioned against giving it to children, who may intentionally share it. Families are asked to be diligent in securing the Brewster Avenue when entering and exiting the building and to immediately alert SSCCC if the door will not close properly.

Be aware of “hitch hikers,” people who attempt to gain access to a secure building via a person who has access. If you see someone approaching the door, do not hold the door open for the person, even if it is someone you recognize, such as an SSCCC family member. It is possible that a restraining order is in place of which you know nothing. Direct these persons to the main building entrance where they may use the call box to contact the proper person for access. It’s better to ruffle a few feathers than to put our children and others at risk.

## Hand Washing

To keep everyone at SSCCC healthy, families must always have children wash hands before entering the classroom. Proper handwashing for early care and education includes using soap and water on fronts and backs of hands, between fingers, under nails and around wrists. To allow enough time for soap to stop germs, we recommend children sing the ABC Song or Birthday Song through twice while washing. Children should also wash hands before leaving SSCCC. Otherwise, they will take home a cocktail of germs from about 60 families!

## Clothing

The daily program at SSCCC includes activities during which a child may get dirty. It is important for children to wear comfortable, easy to clean and easy to change clothing. We move



around a lot, working with paste, paint, water, mud, dirt, sand, etc. Please provide a complete seasonally-appropriate change of clothing that can be kept in your child's cubby: socks, shoes, underwear, pants, a top and a sweater or sweatshirt. Children in the process of toilet-training will require several sets of clothes. Please note that MSDE OCC requires children to wear closed-toe shoes (no sandals or slip-ons) for safety.

Outdoor play is essential to healthy development. Children will go outside twice daily, except under extreme weather conditions. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for each season. During the winter months it is particularly important to dress warmly in layers, including hat, mittens, and boots when indicated. For your child's safety, please remove all strings and ties on any jackets that will be worn on the playground. A swimsuit and towel will be necessary for the summer, when we enjoy many water days!

## **Meals**

SSCCC believes that developing healthy eating habits is an important part of growing up. All meals and snacks meet the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program guidelines. Breakfast is served daily at 9:00 a.m. A delicious, well-balanced lunch is served every day at noon, and an afternoon snack is provided after rest time. The children and staff eat together "family style" in their classrooms. Sharing meals is another way to promote social development in young children and for children and teachers to get to know each other individually. Menus reflecting meat-based and plant-based meals are sent home monthly. Families of children who require a modified diet due to medical or cultural reason should complete a Food Substitution Form alerting SSCCC to foods the child must avoid.

Silver Spring Child Care Center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which is funded by the USDA, and is required to comply with USDA nutritional standards. Although some juice is allowed under the USDA Guidelines, we do not provide juice as part of our regular menu. We serve it only at social events where each family can make the decision to serve the child or not.

## **Rest Time**

At SSCCC children are involved daily in a variety of engaging activities including literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific inquiry, problem solving, artistic expression, gross and fine motor activities, and cooperative play. They are using their bodies and their minds as they experiment, design and construct; expanding their ideas and creating new understandings from their experiences. They are listening and responding to their ideas and those of their teachers and friends. SSCCC children are very busy! We understand that children also need time to be quiet and reflective, without external stimulation. This allows them to think, to daydream, to imagine, to rest their minds and bodies amidst the challenges of navigating a group setting. Children who have rested are ready to participate in afternoon activities with greater self-regulation and self-direction, with fewer emotional difficulties and a lower need for adult

intervention. The MSDE OCC requires a time for quiet rest every day. Our quiet time is from 1:00 – 3:00. Although most children sleep during all or part of that time, some children never sleep during rest time. After 30 to 45 minutes of resting, children who are awake are provided with quiet activities to enjoy while remaining on their cots. Sleeping children will be allowed to sleep as long as needed and to awaken naturally as the noise and activity levels of the class increase.

Children rest on individual labeled cots which are sanitized weekly, and SSCCC provides each child with a clean cot sheet weekly. Families may provide a small cozy blanket and one rest time stuffed animal. Families will take these items home to wash each Friday and return on Monday morning. All rest time items must be labeled with the child's full name and fit in the zippered bags which SSCCC provides to reduce the spread of germs.

## **Inclusion and Individual Supports**

SSCCC makes every effort to accommodate children with special needs. We work closely with families to assess our ability to meet the child's needs and establish an open dialogue to ensure a successful experience. Teachers receive focused training in making the classroom and curriculum accessible and supportive. When applicable, SSCCC partners with outside resources, such as speech therapists, to support children's healthy development.

SSCCC has an on-going partnership with Child Development Consultants, LLC (CDC), that provides consultation to teachers and families when we believe a child would benefit from their expertise. CDC's staff includes trained occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists and behavior therapists. The team serves as a community resource for teachers, families and early care and education providers to support children's successful participation. Members of the CDC team observe children in the classroom and prepare a report for the family and teachers. They make specific suggestions so that teachers can differentiate their approaches for children who need additional supports. The decision to invite Child Development Consultants in for a consultation is made jointly between the family and SSCCC Director. Families sign a consent form prior to an observation. If a child is currently participating in therapy, we request that the family share this information with the Director, so we can support the child in the classroom.

## **Developmentally Appropriate Guidance**

The objective of "discipline" is to teach children to solve problems rather than to punish children for having problems they cannot solve. At SSCCC, our goal is to teach children how to get along with others, to solve problems using words, and to express strong feelings in acceptable ways.

We understand that discipline is helping children learn to live within their community, to develop self-control, and to respect the rights of others. To foster this growth and development,

children must know what is expected. They need routines, consistency and gentle reminders (along with good examples), as well as lots of positive reinforcement of acceptable behavior.

SSCCC teachers are well-trained, talented and experienced. Providing positive role models, establishing guidelines, and helping children learn to make good decisions on their own is the essence of our discipline policy. Any form of physical punishment, ridicule, or withholding of food or participation in activities is not acceptable.

We acknowledge that we may not be able to meet the needs of all children. When we recognize that a teacher's attention to one child's needs is adversely affecting needs and learning of other children, we may terminate the child's enrollment the SSCCC. A decision of this magnitude would not be made without repeated communication with the child's family and will probably include professional services of outside resource personnel.

### **Transitioning to a New Classroom**

Because we understand that familiar faces, location, expectations and routines build security in young children, SSCCC keeps transitions from one class to another at a minimum. The only children who always change classrooms are the Pooh Bears (2-year-olds) when they move to a mixed-age cohort. In some instances, other children may transition to a new room. SSCCC follows these steps to make the transition comfortable for child and family.

- The child will visit the new classroom starting with half-hour periods in the morning and the afternoon. The time will increase as the child becomes more comfortable.
- The child will be invited to eat lunch in the new classroom.
- The child will be invited to nap in the new classroom.
- The child will spend a few successful full days in the new classroom, returning to the old room as needed.
- The child and the new teacher will move the child's personal belongings to the new classroom.
- From that day, the child will be dropped off in the new classroom.

Children remain in their multi-age classroom until they leave for Kindergarten. Research shows that a strong bond between young children and care providers is important to a child's social and academic development. For this reason, SSCCC places children in cohorts which rarely change. Our goal is for children to stay with the same teachers from the time they are three (3) until they enter Kindergarten.

The potential benefits to children in mixed-age cohorts are many. A range of levels in the group facilitates children's individual development. Mixed-age cohorts resemble extended family and neighborhood groups, which throughout human history have informally provided much of children's socialization and education. Many young children now spend relatively little time in either extended family or neighborhood settings and, consequently, are deprived of the kind of learning made possible through multi-age interactions. Research on peer tutoring and

cooperative learning indicates that interactions between less-skilled and more-skilled individuals benefits all children, both academically and socially. Cognitively, children experience disequilibrium when they interact with children of other ages who approach problems differently. This may push them to think through and articulate problems and helps stimulate their mental growth. At SSCCC, we also find that children are kinder to each other and play together with more cooperation in our mixed-age cohorts.

## **Injury**

Because active children will get cuts and scrapes, all SSCCC employees are trained biannually in basic first aid and CPR. First aid, limited to cleansing and bandaging, will be administered for all minor injuries, along with lots of tender loving care (TLC). Families will be notified by telephone call of any injury to the head, face, or neck. For all injuries, families will receive a Child Incident/Accident Report at pick-up. The signed form will be filed in the SSCCC office. In the event of a serious injury, families will be notified immediately and may elect to seek medical care themselves or instruct SSCCC to call for an ambulance. In an emergency, SSCCC will call 911 and then contact the family with destination information.

## **Medication**

SSCCC may not dispense any medication, prescription or over-the-counter, without a properly completed MSDE OCC Medication Administration Authorization Form signed by the child's health care provider. (There is one included at the end of this handbook for your convenience.) All medications must be in the original container bearing the prescription label if applicable. The medication and completed form must be handed to the Director or placed on her desk in her absence. Once the form is reviewed and signed by the Director or another SSCCC employee who has completed the required medication administration training, the medication will be stored safely out of reach in the child's classroom. Medication will be administered per the health care provider's order only by employees who have completed the required training. Each dose will be recorded on the reverse of the Medication Administration Authorization Form along with any noted side effects. Once the course of medication is complete, the family may collect the medication or SSCCC will properly dispose of it. The Medication Administration Authorization Form becomes a part of the child's file.

## **Bullying**

SSCCC is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment that values diversity and commonality. SSCCC is also committed to fostering a climate where individuals are valued, and their safety and rights are protected. To that end, SSCCC prohibits acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation because they compromise the learning environment and well-being of children, families, employees, and the community. All acts of bullying should be reported to the Director immediately. Continued bullying behavior may result in expulsion or termination of services.

## Expulsion Policy

At SSCCC, our goal is to promote children's social-emotional and behavioral health and to appropriately address and bring resources to challenging behavior. However, as young children learn to develop social emotional skills, they may respond to situations with externalized behaviors (e.g., defiance, noncompliance and aggression). We attempt to create a developmentally appropriate program that meets the needs of each child and precludes the need for children to respond with externalized behaviors that are disruptive to the learning environment. Some of the methods used in our program are:

- Consideration of the individual needs of each child. This approach helps us to adapt and respond to individual variation.
- Utilization of positive guidance techniques: Children's desired behavior will be reinforced, and consequences for challenging behavior will be developmentally appropriate and consistent.
- Use of formal and informal screenings and observations: Early identification through formal and informal screenings and observations helps programs match children with the services that benefit children and their families.
- Exceeding required group sizes: Recommended and required teacher/child ratios and group sizes improve child outcomes, help to reduce behavior problems and improve the early childhood experience. SSCCC provides lower than required teacher/child ratios and group sizes in all classes.
- Using constructive approaches to redirection: Strategies such as group meetings and conflict mediation help to restore balance to the learning environment when young children struggle in large group settings.
- Engaging families: Children benefit when families and early childhood programs work together in partnership. Early childhood educators at SSCCC engage families to better understand the origin of behaviors and how families have addressed behaviors in the home setting. This information is used as part of the decision-making process in seeking supports for the child.
- Demonstrating cultural responsiveness: Intentionally teaching social skills, raising expectations of all children, and recognizing children's positive behaviors in the context of their own cultures.
- Accessing developmental, physical and mental health and other supports for children and families: There is a wealth of resources in the State of Maryland that can provide supports to the child, family, and program. SSCCC works with families to suggest and facilitate the use of a variety of options.
- Balanced scheduling: SSCCC understands and values the benefits children derive from play. Our daily schedules allow children to spend a substantial portion of the day in play (both indoor and outdoor).

Because of the long-term benefits of participation in high-quality early childhood programs, our goal is not to suspend or expel a child from care. Instead, early childhood educators at SSCCC attempt to collaborate with families to bring the needed resources and strategies to each situation.

Our goal is to resort to suspensions and/or expulsions only when there are extraordinary circumstances, or a determination of a serious safety threat is made. While SSCCC will make efforts to reduce or eliminate such circumstances and/or threats with the provision of reasonable modifications, we reserve the right to suspend or expel in any situation we deem necessary.

At SSCCC, our goal is to ensure that all our youngest learners have the tools and experiences they need to thrive.

## **Emergencies and Drills**

SSCCC conducts monthly fire drills so children can practice safe and orderly evacuation of the building. Other types of emergency drills are practiced on a regular basis. These include shelter-in-place drills (mainly for weather-related threats), lock-downs (for external threats), and evacuations to a secondary location (for unsafe building conditions). Our secondary location is the YMCA on Hastings Drive. In the event of an actual emergency, families will be notified via a Remind.com text and a follow-up email. Evacuation plans are posted inside each classroom door.

## **Social Events**

Building community amongst our families is important to SSCCC and we offer several occasions during the year when children, families and teachers can get together. Events are planned and organized by the Board of Directors and may vary from year to year. Traditional events include a Halloween Parade and Breakfast, International Potluck and Silent Auction, Annual Member Breakfast and a Year-End Celebration. To offset the cost of the SSCCC Year-End Event, families pay a small fee if they plan to attend. This fee is about \$30 for a family of four (4). Per-person fees apply for additional family members.

## **Fund Raisers**

In addition to the Silent Auction, the Board organizes a limited number of fund raisers, such as dine outs at local restaurants and accepting orders for mugs and other items custom-made by SSCCC children. An appeal for donations to the employee holiday bonus fund is made in November.

## **Mandated Reporting**

All early care and education providers are required by Maryland law to report any suspected cases of physical, mental or sexual and neglect to Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (240-777-4417). Once a report is made, SSCCC employees are expected to cooperate with any investigation undertaken by Child Protective Services or the police. While this is a delicate situation, affected families are asked to understand that no SSCCC employee is making allegations against them. We are merely looking

out for children's best interests and make no assumptions about in whose care the suspected abuse or neglect may have occurred.

*“Reporting does NOT require PROOF that child abuse or neglect has occurred. Incidents are to be reported as soon as they are suspected. Waiting for proof may involve grave risk to the child and impede services to the family. Witnesses to child abuse and neglect are rare. Professional judgment and knowledge should be used to evaluate any suspicion.”*

*“Please note that effective October 1, 2016, if a local department has reason to believe that a mandated reporter knowingly failed to make a report of suspected abuse or neglect of a child, the local department must file a complaint with the appropriate licensing board or employer of the mandated reporter. Anyone making a “good faith” report is immune from civil liability and criminal penalty.”*

<http://dhr.maryland.gov/child-protective-services/reporting-suspected-child-abuse-or-neglect/mandated-reporters/>

## **Alcohol, Cigarette and Drug Policy**

SSCCC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our children, employees and families. Therefore, SSCCC employees, families and guests may not use, possess, distribute, sell, or be under the influence of tobacco products (including vapes), alcohol or illegal drugs while attending any SSCCC sponsored function on or off the premises. The legal use of prescribed and over the counter drugs is permitted only if it does not impair one's ability to function effectively and in a manner that does not endanger other individuals. No medications may be stored on SSCCC premises, including in a family member's purse, briefcase, pocket or other belongings. Except for emergency medications such as Epi-pens and emergency asthma inhalers, no medications may be consumed in the presence of children.

## **Babysitting**

To maintain the professional status of SSCCC teachers and prevent any potential conflict of interest, babysitting of SSCCC children by our teachers is discouraged. Should you choose to hire a teacher, all discussions regarding employment and care must occur off-premises and outside the teacher's work hours. Teachers may not drop-off or pick-up children for whom they babysit or perform other duties for the child in attendance at SSCCC. Families must understand that the employment arrangement is at their own risk, and that such arrangements and payment for services are solely between you and the teacher. Private arrangements are not sanctioned by SSCCC and the family agrees to indemnify SSCCC and hold us harmless against any and all claims arising out of any such arrangement. Families who choose to hire SSCCC teachers must sign a waiver, which the teacher will provide. This waiver must be submitted to the Director before each babysitting occasion.