

2019-2020 PARENT HANDBOOK

9/1/2018

NASA Goddard Child
Development Center



NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC)
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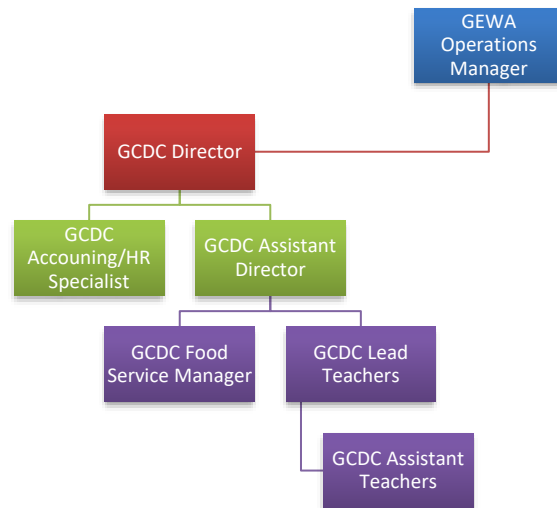
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Chapter 1: About Our Program

Welcome

The Goddard Child Development Center, Inc., (GCDC) opened its doors in June of 1973, committed to the purpose of combining quality childcare with excellence in early childhood education. We are an educational program for children ages 2 to 5 years of age. Located in Building 90 on the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) campus, GCDC can support 127 children.

For more than forty years, GCDC has been guided by the founding principle that high-quality childcare services should be affordable to all parents. GCDC is committed to satisfying the diverse needs of families within the community with the highest standard of child-inspired, professionally nurtured care, and opportunities for learning.



Nondiscrimination Policy

GCDC is operated on a non-discriminatory basis, according equal treatment and access to services without regard to race, national origin, color, creed, religion, sex, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or associational preference. People with disabilities are accorded equal treatment and access to services as long as the program can meet the needs of the child and the parent or family.

Open Door Policy

Enrolled families are welcome to visit GCDC at any time. If your child has trouble with parent visits during the school day, we will suggest ways to make these transitions easier. If you desire to meet with your child’s teacher or an administrator, an appointment is requested. You may call or email the teacher or administrator to set up a time that will work for both of you.

Program Philosophy

GCDC’s philosophy is to meet each child’s developmental and individual needs by creating a stimulating environment in which they learn, explore, and discover. Acting as facilitators in children’s learning, GCDC teachers provide support, encouragement, and individual attention to promote each child’s strengths and development.

At GCDC, we believe that children learn to be independent and confident learners when their social-emotional needs are met; therefore, we strive to create an environment where children feel safe, loved and have a sense of belonging. We support children’s social-emotional development through positive interactions with their classmates and teachers.

GCDC Structure

GCDC is a part of the Goddard Employees Welfare Association (GEWA) Exchange. As such, the GCDC Director reports directly to the GEWA Operations Manager

NASA GCDC Association

The general purpose of the NASA GCDC Association is to support the GCDC in all of its endeavors. The purpose of the Association is to:

- Promote and enhance the education of GCDC students;
- Promote open communication and cooperation between GCDC administration, GCDC parents, and the NASA GSFC Goddard Employees Welfare Association (GEWA);
- Provide volunteer assistance to teachers and other staff members; and
- Raise funds in support of the goals of the Association.

Furthermore, the purpose of the Association Board of Directors is to provide support and advice to the GEWA Operations Manager in overseeing the GCDC. Parent Association meetings are held monthly. All parents are invited to attend. Information about these meetings will be posted at GCDC, listed in the school newsletter and included in the weekly updates.

GCDC Association Board of Directors

The business and affairs of the NASA GCDC Association shall be managed under the direction of the Board of Directors. The GCDC Board of Directors shall be responsible, among other duties, for the following:

1. Monitoring the proper running of GCDC monthly;
2. Ensure the proper administration of all GCDC policies
3. Reviewing the equipment needs of GCDC and concurring the purchase of new equipment within approved budgetary guidelines.
4. Supporting the GEWA Operations Manager when hiring a new Director is required.
5. Evaluating the performance of the GCDC Director and providing feedback on the performance to the GEWA Operations Manager.

Chapter 2: Program Quality

Research tells us that children who attend high-quality child care programs are more socially and emotionally adjusted than children who do not. Quality programs meet established standards, are regularly evaluated, and seek continuous improvement. There are well-defined systems in place for measuring Early Care and Education (ECE) program quality.

Licensing

GCDC is licensed as a Child Care Center by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Our licensing number is 32975.

Nonpublic School Certification

GCDC is certified as a nonpublic school. Our certification number is 09-16-7877. The standards for a non-public school are more stringent than the licensing requirements for a child care center.

Accreditation

Program accreditation is a process by which ECE programs can significantly improve the quality of the services they provide. In this process, a program voluntarily pursues self-study, program improvement, and external program review to achieve and publicly confirm that it meets national or state quality standards. GCDC is accredited by both the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Asthma Friendly Designation

An asthma-friendly school supports the health and academic success of students through maximizing asthma management, reducing environmental asthma triggers in the school environment, and building asthma education and awareness programs for students and staff. MSDE designated GCDC as an Asthma-Friendly school in 2014.

Green School

The Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) has certified NASA Goddard Child Development Center (GCDC) as Green School. The Maryland Green Schools program is a nationally recognized program that encourages PreK-12 schools to increase awareness and understanding of environmental interrelationships that impact public health and our society, and that promote responsible environmental stewardship practices.

Maryland Excels

EXCELS is a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that awards ratings to child care programs that meet increasingly higher standards of quality in key areas. Similar to a rating system for restaurants (e.g., a five-star restaurant is far better than a one-star restaurant), EXCELS is a rating system for childcare. In Maryland, participating programs are rated on a scale of one check mark to five check marks with five check marks being the highest level awarded. A five check mark program is considered one of Maryland's highest quality child care programs. GCDC is a leader in the field and has been awarded the highest mark of quality, five check marks.

Chapter 3: Attendance

Students who regularly attend school learn more and are more successful than students who do not. Parents who make regular school attendance a priority help their children learn to accept responsibility. Attendance patterns are formed early in life. Children who develop good attendance habits in the early years are more likely to continue them throughout their school career. School attendance is important because students who are absent from school miss carefully planned sequences of instruction. They forego active learning experiences, classroom participation, and the opportunity to ask questions. They are more likely to fall behind and eventually drop out of school.

Hours of Operation

GCDC hours of operation are 7:15 a.m. to 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday. Families are not permitted re-entry into the building after 5:30 p.m.

GCDC is closed on all Federal holidays and all other times that GSFC is closed. Parents should refer to the school calendar for other GCDC closing dates, such as staff development days. School calendars are distributed to parents each school year. They may also be downloaded from the GCDC website and viewed on the GCDC Facebook page.

Early Dismissal

If GSFC closes early for any reasons, GCDC will close 30 minutes after the closing time announced by GSFC leadership. For example, if GSFC closes at 3:00 p.m., children must be picked up no later than 3:30 p.m. When early closures are anticipated, it is the parents' responsibility to monitor GSFC closure announcements. Parents must always keep all contact information current so that this information is available in the event of any emergency or early closure. Families can update emergency contact information via our website at any time.

Absences

Parents are asked to call GCDC before 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence to notify the teacher that their child will not be attending. Parents of Preschool 2 children are encouraged to use the Tadpoles app to mark their children absent for the day.

Arrivals and Departures

Children thrive in a well-ordered and predictable environment where daily routines, such as arrivals and departures, mealtimes, nap times, and toileting, are implemented consistently. Policies in this handbook help to preserve your child's daily routine.

Arrival Procedures

All parents must enter the building by scanning their GSFC badge over the badge reader outside the main entrance. If both parents are dropping off, both parents must scan their badge. This is a GSFC requirement and is used to monitor access to our secure facility. Parents with temporary badges should ring the doorbell and sign into the GCDC visitor's log until their permanent badge is issued. Please note, the door is very sensitive. Pulling or touching the door before being told that the lock has been released will cause an alarm to

sound. The doorbell can only be heard in the office. If the administrators are located in another part of the building, there may be a delay in our response to open the door.

Children who can walk independently should be encouraged to walk on their own so that they are in the habit of doing so each day. Children who are carried daily often have difficulty during emergency evacuation procedures. For everyone's safety, please encourage children to walk in and out of the building daily.

Once inside the building, parents should take each child to their assigned classroom and put away all of their child's personal belongings. Parents should not allow children to run through the building during this time. Children may never be left unattended.

After putting away all personal items, parents should then take their child to the area where GCDC personnel is supervising children. This may be another classroom or the playground. If the drop-off point is in a classroom, parents should assist their child with hand washing and apply sunscreen. If parents are visiting the classroom beyond just dropping off, parents (and any accompanying siblings) must wash their hands as well. Parents must be certain that a GCDC staff member sees and acknowledges the child before the parent leaves. Parents may not leave their children in classrooms with other parents. Parents must always leave children in custody and care of a GCDC staff member.

Parents are required to log their child into the GCDC attendance system every day using the computer in the atrium. If children are being dropped off by an emergency contact, parents should notify the office beforehand. GCDC prohibits sharing attendance system access codes with anyone.

Arrival By 9:30 a.m.

Each class at GCDC begins its day with a morning meeting or circle time. Early morning gatherings are one of the few times that teachers engage in large-group, teacher-directed instruction. During this central time of the day, teachers build schema for the rest of the day by introducing concepts, telling children their goals for each center during play, and reviewing basic concepts such as letters, numbers, letter sounds, vocabulary, weather, calendar and much more. A lot happens in this short period! Teachers then build upon this introductory lesson throughout the day.

We have found that children who are regularly present for morning meeting or circle time have a much better day and learn more throughout the school year than children who do not. When children routinely arrive later in the day, they often miss important concepts. While our teachers work with the students to help them catch up, it's simply not the same as participating in a dynamic morning meeting or circle time with their peers.

It's important to remember that when children's sleep and morning schedules are disrupted resulting in them arriving at school late, they are often more irritable throughout the day because it's difficult for them to get back on schedule with the rest of the class. Disrupted sleep patterns negatively impact their readiness to learn. For this reason, we encourage parents to help their children get the most out of the school year by having them here by 9:30 a.m. each day. Prompt arrivals ensure a less disruptive day for our teachers, better learning opportunities for your child, and better preparation for a traditional school day. For

similar reasons, we ask that parents not drop their children off between the hours of noon and 3:00 p.m.

Departure

Children must remain in the classroom/atrium until parents come to the classroom to pick up their child. A distinct “turning over of responsibility” is necessary. Parents should ensure that a staff member sees and acknowledges them before leaving with their child. We ask that parents not allow children to leave the classroom ahead of them. Unsupervised children in the hallways or atrium can lead to accidents, injury, or running out the frequently opening doors. These rules are in place to help keep children safe and ensure supervision requirements are maintained.

Because of the rubberized surfacing used on GCDC playgrounds, parents should not walk on playground surfacing while wearing high heels. Doing so punctures the surface. Parents wearing high heels should ask a GCDC member to help secure their child from the playground.

When entering or leaving the building, many children like to play on the stepping pods in the front garden. We ask that parents ensure children play with care as not to damage the plants, signs, or surrounding property. Parents must monitor children in this area at all times; children should not play in the crosswalk or parking lot. Children should be reminded to pick up any debris left behind before leaving the area.

Communicating with Teachers during Arrival and Departure

Transition times are an important time for everyone. Parents often want to share information with staff or learn about their child’s day during this time. We value the importance of communication between parents and staff; however, staff are generally not available for long conversations due to their classroom responsibilities. If you need more than a few minutes to talk to your child’s teacher, please call us or email the administrative staff. If the administrative staff can assist you, please stop by the front office.

Custody Agreements

Families must inform GCDC of any custody agreements involving children enrolled at GCDC. A copy of the agreement must be provided at the time of enrollment and with any subsequent change to the agreement. Without a custody agreement on file, GCDC cannot prevent a parent (custodial or noncustodial) from picking up a child.

Denial of Care

GCDC reserves the right to deny care at any time for any reason.

Government Shutdown

In the event of a government shutdown due to furlough or funding issues, GCDC will send an e-mail that provides specific information regarding the impact to GCDC operations.

GCDC parents remain responsible for any tuition due during a government shutdown since we are a non-appropriated fund activity. Parent tuition fully funds our program, and the

GCDC requires payments from its patrons to operate, maintain staffing, and pay any debts owed.

In the event, the GCDC is not able to use government-funded communication (e.g., e-mail, listservs, phones), GCDC patrons and employees can find current information via the GCDC Facebook page.

Parking

Parents must park legally during pick up and drop off either in the spaces in front of the building or one of the neighboring parking lots. The parking spaces in front of GCDC have a thirty-minute limit to ensure enough space is available for all parents. If parents intend to be longer than thirty minutes, parking in adjacent parking lots is required. When parking at GCDC, please be courteous and do not pull your car up so far that it covers the sidewalk. All engines must be turned off, and no children may be left in a vehicle unattended. As a reminder, the speed limit in front of our school is 15 miles per hour. Parents must adhere to the posted speed limit signs at all times.

Release of Children

If someone other than a parent (or person designated on the emergency card) will be picking up a child, parents must notify us in writing. Phone calls are acceptable only in emergencies. GCDC prohibits sharing attendance system access codes with anyone. Emergency contacts must sign the Visitor's Log Book located in the atrium and proceed to the office. GCDC administrators will check the person's identification and compare it to the emergency contacts listed in the child's file.

GCDC will not release children to anyone under the age of sixteen. We will not release children to parents if we suspect they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Unscheduled Closures

In the event of inclement weather, disaster, evacuations, or special events, GCDC follows the GSFC leave policy as indicated in the box below. To determine GSFC's status, call 301-286-NEWS or (301) 286-6397. GCDC's hours correspond to GSFC's operation status codes as follows:

GSFC CODE GREEN or BLUE—GCDC will open as usual
GSFC CODE YELLOW—GCDC opens 15 minutes after GSFC's announced opening of GSFC
GSFC CODE RED—GCDC will be closed

Chapter 4: Curriculum and Assessment

Children begin learning the moment they are born. Because of this early readiness to learn, high-quality early childhood programs are very important. For young children, everything is a learning experience. Exposing your child to a wide variety of positive experiences leads to lifelong learning. At GCDC, we use age-appropriate activities, such as reading books; playing games; listening to music; dancing; and visiting museums, parks, and playgrounds as the foundation of our teaching.

Preschool and Pre-K Curricula

The most important goals of our preschool curriculum are for children to get along well with others and become enthusiastic learners. We want children to become independent, self-confident, curious, life-long learners who can work well with others. We achieve these goals by creating purposeful and productive play experiences that help children grow in all areas.

GCDC uses The Creative Curriculum in all classrooms. The Creative Curriculum is a research-based curriculum that defines goals in the following areas of development: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Social Studies, and the Arts

We accomplish our goals through thoughtfully planned activities, carefully orchestrated classroom arrangements, age-appropriate selections of toys and materials, well-established routines, and engaging and meaningful interactions with teachers.

Assessment

Child assessments are defined as the planned and systematic process of observing, recording, and documenting what each child can do and how they do it. The results of assessments are used to adapt and improve the curriculum as well as to develop specific teaching approaches and practices and to refine instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of the children. The results are also used to provide the optimal learning environment and to inform and assess overall program development and improvement. Assessments may also be used to arrange for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic evaluation for a child when indicated.

Teachers complete informal assessments monthly. These assessments span across the four developmental domains: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. Results of assessments are shared with families monthly via a password secured website, Teaching Strategies Gold. We encourage all families to check their child's assessment data and take advantage of opportunities to partner with their child's teacher.

Assessment results are confidential. Information is shared only with those who have a right or a need to know (e.g., the child's parents, school administration, and the child's teachers). GCDC will share assessment data with specialists only with the parents' written permission.

Parents should direct all technical questions about Teaching Strategies Gold to Teaching Strategies by calling 866-736-5913 (7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday).

Developmental Delays

GCDC contracts the services of a part-time Child Development Specialist. Parents may request support from the Child Development Specialist via the GCDC Director.

The Director may, at any time, request that families seek professional support so that we may better meet the needs of each child.

Recommendations

On occasion, parents may request letters of recommendations to support applications to other schools. Parents must submit these requests and addressed/stamped envelopes to the office. Once the Teacher completes the forms, the forms are mailed directly to the requesting school. Neither the forms nor the copies are given directly to the parents. Please allow two weeks for this process. We understand that families may have several prospective schools for their child; however, we are not able to support more than four requests per child.

Chapter 5: Financial Matters

GCDC is a small institution that operates on a tight budget mainly derived from tuition payments. It is extremely challenging to operate the school in a fiscally responsible manner if tuition payments are not received when due. Timely payment allows GCDC to offer high-quality services, materials and supplies, and a well-trained and educated staff.

Deposits

Parents are required to pay a deposit in the amount of two weeks tuition for each enrolled child. Deposits are due at the time of enrollment. Parents must pay the deposit within two business days of accepting a space. GCDC will credit this deposit to the family's account when parents (with accounts in good standing) provide at least a two-week withdrawal notice.

Because of rate increases between the time of enrollment and time of withdrawal, the two-week deposit may not fully cover the last two weeks of enrollment. Parents are responsible for any difference between the deposit amount paid at enrollment and that owed at the time of withdrawal.

Donations

GCDC relies on the generosity of parents, grandparents, and friends to support an array of needs at GCDC. Not all contributions need to be financial. Support can take many forms, from volunteering to donating goods and services. Some donations may be tax deductible. Please see the GCDC Business Manager for a receipt for financial and material donations.

Flexible-Spending Accounts

Some employers, including the federal government, offer flexible-spending accounts as a benefit to employees. These programs allow employees to contribute money from their salary before tax withholdings, and those funds can then be used to reimburse the employee for out-of-pocket dependent care expenses. The GCDC Business Manager can support flexible-spending claims by providing tuition statements and signing required forms.

Fundraising

As in most independent schools, tuition alone does not fully cover the cost of operating our school. GCDC has a variety of fundraising programs intended to bridge the gap between what tuition and fees cover and the funding necessary to fulfill the mission and vision of GCDC. Parent support of these fundraisers is critical to GCDC success.

Late Payments

Tuition is due by close of business each Wednesday and is collected through Tuition Express via ACH payment. GCDC will charge a \$20 late fee to any accounts that are not paid in full by Wednesday of each week; the fee is collected via Tuition Express as part of the next scheduled tuition payment. GCDC may terminate families with balances that exceed their deposit.

If you believe you have been given a late payment notice in error or are unable to make your payment promptly, please contact the GCDC Business Manager to discuss the matter.

Late Pick-Up Fees

GCDC will charge families a late fee if children are picked up after GCDC's closing time. **We do not offer a grace period.** GCDC's regular closing time is 5:30 p.m., however, it can be earlier such as during holiday periods or inclement weather. Each late pick-up is considered an event. For example, the first time a child is picked up late will result in a late fee of \$10.00 for every 15 minutes after closing time; the second event will result in a \$15.00 charge for every 15 minutes after closing.

GCDC will erase each family's late pick-up record at the beginning of the school year.

Late fees are assessed on a membership basis, not on a per child basis. A member who is late picking up their children incurs one late pick-up event no matter how many children are being picked up. Parents are also required to sign the Late Pick-up Book. The GCDC Business Manager will bill accounts accordingly. GCDC will deduct late fees from the parents account with the next regular tuition cycle.

Monthly Statements/Tax Statements

Parents can download monthly statements/tax statements from their MyProcure Portfolio. Instructions for access can be obtained from the GCDC Business Manager

Payments

GCDC uses Tuition Express for all tuition payments. This system is used to process automatic withdrawals from any checking account. Parents must submit a completed Tuition Express Form to the GCDC Business Manager.

Scholarships

A limited number of need-based scholarships are available to qualified families. These scholarships are granted based upon salary guidelines and available funds and are funded by Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) donations. These scholarships are typically small, short-term supplements. To learn more about scholarships and how to apply, please contact the GEWA Operations Manager at pamela.l.guzzone@nasa.gov

Subsidy/Scholarships/Outside Tuition Support

Families utilizing subsidy, scholarships, and outside tuition supports must submit forms/documentation to the GCDC Business Manager for signature. Please allow 24 business hours for a response.

Termination of Contract/Notice of Withdrawal

Parents who are withdrawing their child from GCDC must submit a withdrawal form two weeks before the child's last day at GCDC. Withdrawal dates must fall on a Friday. Parents may submit withdrawal forms via our program's website. Once received, the advance tuition deposit will be used to pay the child's final two weeks of enrollment at GCDC. Parents are responsible for any outstanding balances before their child's withdrawal.

GCDC will seek the support of GSFC payroll processing to secure any funds due in the event families leave with a balance due. Other steps, as authorized by law, will be taken to secure money owed from families who are not GSFC Civil Servants (e.g., Contractors, employees from other agencies, etc.).

GCDC may terminate a child's enrollment by issuing a written notice to the parents if at any time GCDC deems a child's health or pattern of conduct adversely affects the children, staff or the efforts, efficiency, and mission of GCDC, or if the parents fail to meet their financial obligations to GCDC

Chapter 6: Food and Nutrition

It is our goal to ensure each child's nutritional well-being. During the school year, GCDC provides breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack along with milk and juice to the children. GCDC prepares, serves, and stores food according to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines, Maryland licensing, and NAEYC accreditation standards for food and nutrition.

Allergies

GCDC works with families and their child's physician to create an allergy action plan. This plan helps to ensure that everyone at GCDC knows about the child's allergies, typical reactions, and plans for responding in the event of an allergic reaction. It is the parents' responsibility to alert both GCDC administration and the child's teachers of any known allergies. Parents must document food allergies on their child's Emergency Form and Health Inventory.

When food allergies are known, parents submit a physician signed Food Allergy Action Plan; the original allergy plan goes to your child's teacher and a copy to the administration. Teachers will post a copy of the plan in the classroom. The Food Service Manager will also post the food allergy plan the GCDC kitchen. Forms are available in the Administrative Office. Parents must also provide printed copies of our menu with foods the child may not eat indicated. GCDC may provide substitutions for any snacks that children cannot consume at GCDC due to an allergy. When this is not possible, we may ask families to provide a substitute that meets USDA/CACFP guidelines.

If GCDC must provide more than one component per meal, families may not be able to participate in the USDA/CACFP food program at GCDC.

Choking Hazards

GCDC staff may not offer children younger than four years of age the following foods: hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds, whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, peanut butter, chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Food served at GCDC must be cut into pieces no larger than 1/2-inch cubes for toddlers and 2-year-olds, according to each child's chewing and swallowing capability.

Dietary Restrictions

GCDC will honor documented dietary restrictions. Parents are responsible for documenting the foods that your child cannot have on the monthly menu and providing an appropriate food substitute when necessary. GCDC may provide substitutions for any snacks that children cannot consume at GCDC due to an allergy. When this is not possible, we may ask families to provide a substitute that meets USDA/CACFP guidelines.

Meal Patterns

All meals served at GCDC must comply with the USDA's CACFP guidelines and established meal patterns.

Meal patterns are designed to help adults plan well-balanced, nutritious meals, and snacks for children. Meals and snacks planned with the CACFP meal pattern supply the kinds and amounts of foods that children require to help meet their nutrient and energy needs.

GCDC provides lunch to all students. An approved caterer prepares our meals and ensures that the meals meet the required Child and Adult Care Food Program Guidelines (CACFP). Parents can view our caterer's menus and corresponding allergy information on our website.

If the Federal Government is closed and GCDC is open, catered lunches may not be available. An example would be on days when the Federal Government is closed due to inclement weather, but GSFC and therefore GCDC, are open. On those days, parents will be required to bring lunch for their children. Parents must comply with meal pattern requirements when bringing meals brought from home and meet the set of food components, food items and minimum quantities required for lunch for the specific age group of their child(ren). For information about meal patterns requirements, visit www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Child_Meals.pdf

GCDC includes the cost of meals in each family's tuition. Tuition will not be adjusted if families opt not to participate in the school lunch program. Parents may only opt out of the lunch program when it is medically necessary to do so; when a family opts out, all meal provisioning, including breakfast and p.m. snack will be discontinued.

Modified Diets

If a child requires a modified diet for medical reasons, parents must state the reasons on the Emergency Form and Health Inventory. Any dietary changes that occur during the school year must be documented on the child's Emergency Form and brought to the teacher's attention as soon as possible. GCDC reserves the right to request that families provide all meals for their child if restrictions are cost prohibitive for our program. When this happens, there will be no reduction in tuition.

No Thank You Bite

Because we know young children must be exposed to new foods about fifteen times before developing a taste for it, we teach the children always to take a "no thank you bite" at mealtime. The children are expected to at least try everything on their plates. If they don't want to eat all of it, it's okay. They have to try at least one bite of the food in question, say "no, thank you," and then they can be excused.

Peanut Free Zones

GCDC understands the seriousness of anaphylaxis that may result when children with peanut allergies come in contact with peanuts or peanut products. For that reason, GCDC has designated "peanut free zones" throughout the building. Each classroom has a designed Peanut/Tree Nut Free Zone table within the classroom.

Special Occasions

Many parents wish to acknowledge and celebrate their child's birthday or other special occasions at GCDC. Parents must schedule all celebrations with their classroom teacher at least two weeks in advance. This notice is required; we cannot support parties without

proper notification. All birthday celebrations are held after an afternoon snack. A cake, cupcakes, or ice cream is appropriate.

For the safety of all, all baked goods brought in to share with your child's classmates must be store bought. Neither parents nor Teachers may serve homemade items to the children. Parents should also check with teachers to learn about any children in the classroom with allergies or special dietary needs. If parents decide to serve food as part of a birthday celebration, it must be accessible to all children, including those with allergies. Excluding children because of allergies is not permissible in our school environment.

Families must provide plates, cutlery, and napkins for their child's birthday celebration. Party favors, balloons, candles, and candy are prohibited. Classroom celebrations are not a substitute for a home or family birthday party, but a time to recognize each child's birthday within our program.

Families are responsible for their child's birthday celebration. This includes set up, facilitation, and clean up. Because of our limited space, no birthday celebration supplies may be stored at GCDC. Families must bring the supplies immediately before the start of the celebration.

If parents wish to invite children to a celebration outside of GCDC, the invitations must be given to the Teacher for placement in the children's mailbox. Each child in the class must be given an invitation if GCDC mailboxes are used for distribution.

Specialty Milk

GCDC provides 1% milk for all students. We also provide milk alternatives from an MSDE/CACFP approved list. GCDC provides alternative milk for children who have a medically documented need. GCDC cannot accommodate milk "preferences." GCDC cannot honor milk preferences--even if parents provide the milk alternative. For children with medically documented milk intolerances, we can only serve milk with enough nutritional substance to be approved by MSDE/CACFP. In general, rice and almond milk do not offer enough nutritional value to replace milk. Per MSDE/CACFP, we can only serve 1% milk, Lactaid and CACFP approved soy milk.

Chapter 7: Health Policies

Our goal at GCDC is to maintain a healthy environment where children and staff can thrive. Together, as staff and families, it is our responsibility to ensure that we are protecting children's health and controlling the spread of infectious illness.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Procedures

Reason this policy is important: Besides being illegal, child abuse and neglect interfere with healthy child development and later achievement in life. This policy may also be accessed on the GCDC web site at www.NASAGCDC.org under Enrolled Families/Form and Policies.

Defining Abuse and Neglect:

Maryland statutes define "Abuse" as:

- (1) the physical or mental injury of a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed; or
- (2) sexual abuse of a child, whether physical injuries are sustained or not."

Maryland statutes define "Neglect" as:

"[The] leaving of a child unattended or other failure to give proper care and attention to a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child under circumstances that indicate: (1) that the child's health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial risk of harm; or (2) mental injury to the child or a substantial risk of mental injury."

See Md. Code Ann. [Family Law] § 5-701.

GCDC Posting and Instruction Requirements:

In accordance with Maryland Regulation 13A.16.07.02(C), the GCDC Director shall:

- (1) Instruct the GCDC Staff to monitor all children daily for signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect;
- (2) Instruct staff about their legal obligations to report suspected child abuse or neglect directly to CPS; and
- (3) Post, near each telephone in the facility, the telephone number of CPS and GSFC Protective Services Division (for emergencies).

Mandated Reporter Law:

Maryland law identifies educators as mandated reporters and requires that educators who have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect: (1) notify the local department or the appropriate law enforcement agency; and (2) if acting as a staff member of a child care institution, immediately notify and give all information required by Maryland Law to the head of the institution or the designee of the head. See Md. Code Ann. [Family Law], § 5-704.

Accordingly, GCDC staff members who have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, shall: (1) notify the Prince George's County Office of Child Care, Division of Early Childhood Development (CPS) the GSFC Chief of the Protective Services Division; and (2) notify and give all information regarding the suspected abuse or neglect to the GCDC Director.

Maryland Regulation 13A.16.07.02 explains that when an employee has reason to believe a child has been abused or neglected, the GCDC Director “may not require an employee to report through [the GCDC Director], rather than directly to the local department [CPS] or a law enforcement agency.” Thus, GCDC staff members are not required to receive the concurrence of the GCDC Director before notifying CPS and the GSFC Chief of the Protective Services Division who will notify the NASA Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

Parent/Non-Mandated Reporter Law:

If a parent suspects that child abuse has occurred, they can notify CPS directly at 301-909-2450. Also, Parents are encouraged to notify the GCDC Director so that appropriate administrative actions can be taken at GCDC. If allegations from parents are received electronically by the GCDC Director, the Director will reply to the email and request that Parents contact CPS directly so the parent can complete the CPS intake process.

Parents may be required to give oral and written statements to the appropriate authorities (e.g., CPS, US Attorney, MSDE) as the investigation proceeds. The expectation is that the investigatory entities will communicate with parents and families directly with no involvement from GCDC.

GSFC Procedures:

Upon notification of suspected abuse or neglect, the GCDC Director shall immediately report the matter directly to CPS and GSFC Chief of the Protective Services Division who will notify the OIG and the Prince George’s County Child and Vulnerable Adult Unit.

Also, the GCDC Director shall provide notice of the suspected abuse to the following:

- GEWA Operations Manager
- Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Licensing Specialist
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (within 72 hours)

The GEWA Operations Manager shall also provide notification to the GSFC Associate Center Director and GSFC Chief Counsel as soon as practicable.

Upon 1) notification from CPS and/or MSDE that CPS investigation has been or may be initiated; and/or 2) a determination by the GCDC Director that the safety and health of a child and/or GCDC staff member is in danger, the GCDC staff member may be removed from the premises until there is a determination made by the GCDC Director that it is safe for him/her to return in concert with the Chief of the Protective Services. In making this determination (and assuming a CPS investigation was conducted), the GCDC Director must review any closure letter provided by CPS¹ to the GCDC Staff member.

Upon 1) notification from CPS and/or MSDE that CPS investigation has been or may be initiated against the GCDC Director; and/or 2) a determination by the GSFC Associate Center Director that the safety and health of a child and/or GCDC Director is in danger, the GCDC Director shall be removed from the premises until there is a determination made by

¹ Closure notices are not provided directly to GCDC; closure notices are sent only to GCDC staff members who are the subject of the investigation. Note that in some situations, GCDC may not be notified by CPS and/or MSDE that an allegations and/or complaint has been filed.

the GSFC Associate Center Director that it is safe for him/her to return. In making this determination (and assuming a CPS investigation was conducted), the GSFC Associate Center Director must review any closure letter provided by CPS to the GCDC Director.

Reports:

Maryland law states that a mandated reporter who provides notice of suspected child abuse or neglect to authorities is required to make both oral and written reports to the appropriate investigative and law enforcement agencies.

These statements will contain information to satisfy the minimum reporting requirements set forth by Maryland law:

- (1) The name, age, and home address of the child;
- (2) The name and home address of the child's parent or another person who is responsible for the child's care;
- (3) The whereabouts of the child;
- (4) The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect of the child, including any evidence or information available to the reporter concerning possible previous instances of abuse or neglect; and
- (5) Any other information that would help to determine the cause of the suspected abuse or neglect and the identity of any individual responsible for the abuse or neglect.

See Maryland Code Ann., [Family Law] §5-704(c).

Maryland law requires that educators also provide the statements to the GCDC Director. See Maryland Code Ann., [Family Law] §5-704. Parents/Non-mandated individuals may be asked to report, to the extent possible, the information noted above, either orally or in writing to CPS.

Parent and Staff Communications:

Within two business days after (1) notification to CPS of an allegation of suspected abuse by a GCDC staff member; or (2) receiving notification from a staff member or investigatory entity that an allegation of suspected child abuse has been filed with CPS, the GCDC Director will issue an email notifying parents that such an allegation has been made/received. The communication will confirm whether the staff member has been removed from the facility. The email will not provide the identities of the staff member or individual(s) who raised the allegation, and will not provide any specific details regarding the nature of the allegation.

Within seven business days of the allegation (or receiving notice of one), the GCDC Director, in coordination with the GSFC Chief of Protective Services, will conduct a meeting with parents of the impacted classroom(s) to provide them additional information about the investigation process.

Investigations of this nature are extremely challenging and complex. To that end, to protect the integrity of the investigation(s), both parents and GCDC staff members are strongly encouraged not to discuss matters relating to the investigative process with anyone except the appropriate investigative authorities. While the safety of GCDC children is of paramount importance, GCDC is not an investigatory authority and therefore will not have information that many parents and staff will seek in these situations.

Communicable Diseases

The Child Care Administration requires both staff and parents to inform GCDC if a child or staff member is infected with or has been exposed to a reportable communicable disease (e.g., conjunctivitis, chickenpox, hand-foot-and-mouth disease, strep throat, ringworm). GCDC cannot admit a child with a contagious disease during the period of communicability. Readmission to GCDC requires a written note by a licensed health practitioner, such as the child's pediatrician.

If a child or staff member has a contagious illness, the child or staff member must be excluded from GCDC for the period defined by the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Individual information sheets are available that speak to care and exclusion requirements for specific illnesses. Other symptoms of illness that require exclusion from GCDC include a change in bowel habits (i.e., loose stool that occurs more than twice or with other symptoms), vomiting, undiagnosed rashes, and cold symptoms that do not subside. A doctor's note will be needed indicating that the period of contagion has passed if symptoms persist after diagnosis of a communicable illness.

If a child is diagnosed with a contagious illness over the weekend or holiday break, parents should still notify the school so that proper parent notification can be processed.

Emergency Medical Treatment Authorization

Parents are required to submit a notarized Emergency Medical Treatment Authorization form upon enrollment.

Hand Washing

Unwashed hands are the primary carriers of bacteria and germs that cause illness. Children and staff are required to wash their hands upon arrival, after using the toilet, before eating, and when soiled. We ask that parents assist their child in hand washing every day upon entry into the classroom.

Health Inventory

Upon enrollment, parents are required to submit a Maryland State Department of Education Health Inventory form for each child enrolled. This form must be updated annually and as immunizations are administered. Failure to update medical forms within 30 days of expiration will result in termination from our program.

Tuberculin skin tests are required every two years for all children. Lead forms must be completed as part of the health inventory as well.

Immunizations

Families must submit documentation of age-appropriate immunizations as defined by MSDE or provide supporting evidence for cases in which a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family's beliefs.

Medications

Code of Maryland Regulation 13A.16.11.04 requires persons who administer medications in public and nonpublic schools to be trained and certified by the Maryland Board of Nursing as

a Certified Nursing Assistant. GCDC has staff members trained to administer medications on an emergency basis only (inhaler or epi-pen). GCDC requires a completed Medication form for all emergency medications. Emergency medication stored at the GCDC must have the original prescription taped to the medication. Refrigerated medicines may be stored in our locked box in the refrigerator in the upper level.

Pediatric First Aid and CPR

All GCDC staff members participate in annual training and hold certifications in pediatric first aid and CPR.

Pets

Other than fish, GCDC has a strict “no pets” policy. Furry or feathered pets are significant causes of allergic responses and can trigger severe asthma symptoms. Skin cells from pet dander can linger in rooms for significant periods; therefore, a strict no pet policy is enforced to assure the child care areas are free of pet dander.

Reduction of Indoor Asthma Triggers

Some of the most common indoor asthma triggers include environmental tobacco smoke (secondhand smoke), dust mites, mold, cockroaches and other pests, and household pets. GCDC works to reduce the presence of triggers in our program. Parents can learn more about reducing these triggers at home by visiting <http://www.epa.gov/asthma/triggers.html>

Sick Children

State childcare administration licensing regulations do not permit the care of sick children at GCDC. When notified of a sick child, parents must pick up the child within one hour. If GCDC cannot reach the parent or guardian, Administrative staff will decide whether or not to notify the emergency contact. Therefore, it is important that emergency forms are always up to date. Please stop by the office to change your child’s form when needed. GCDC established these policies for the health and safety of your child as well as the staff and the other children. Please do not ask staff to make exceptions.

If parents have shown negligence regarding the health of a child, the Director will have specific authority to determine whether the health of a child is suitable for attendance at GCDC. His or her opinion will take priority over that of a parent. If the Director deems a child too ill to be in attendance or that a child might infect other children, then the parent must promptly make other arrangements for the care of the child.

Smoke-Free Facility

GCDC is a smoke-free facility. Due to the acknowledged health threat to young children from exposure to tobacco smoke pollution, it is the policy of this facility to provide a smoke-free environment for staff, children, and parents. This policy covers the smoking of any tobacco product and applies to employees, parents, and visitors to the facility. There will be no smoking in any area of the childcare center at any time. This includes both indoor and outdoor areas. Field trips, walks, and all other off-site activities and functions will also be smoke-free.

Sunscreen

Parents are asked to apply their child's sunscreen before bringing them to school in the summer and spring. Sunscreen may be reapplied at GCDC by staff if the appropriate Medication Form for your child is on file. Parents are encouraged to carefully read all sunscreen labels as some sunscreens need to be applied at least a half-hour in advance. If possible, parents should purchase and provide sunscreen that is manufactured for immediate use.

Chapter 9: Parent Involvement

We firmly believe that families play an integral role in their child's learning and development. We value your participation in our program and rely on your shared input on the growth and development of your child as well as continuous communication and feedback with GCDC to ensure that your families' needs are being met.

GCDC provides many ways for parents to get information about their child's progress, general activities, and ways to become involved at GCDC.

Back-to-School Night

Good first impressions make a difference, and the first open house of the school year gives teachers a chance to gain parents' support. It also allows teachers an opportunity to create a personal connection with parents and establish ways for continued communication throughout the school year. Teachers provide an overview of the curriculum, classroom environment, daily schedule, goals and objectives, guidance and discipline, lunches, snacks, and naps. Parents provide valuable information about their child, and information about their families, and bring photos of their families.

Communication

Good two-way communication between families and GCDC is necessary for student success. Not surprisingly, research shows that the more parents and teachers share relevant information about a child, the better equipped both will be to help that child achieve in all areas of development. GCDC will provide contact information for teachers and program administrators upon enrollment and throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to communicate freely with Teachers or Administrators at any time.

Daily Message

Preschool 2 Teachers will use Tadpoles as a means of communicating with families about their child's habits such as eating, sleeping, drinking, pottyting, etc. You can also send brief messages to the Teachers through this app.

Email

GCDC recognizes that e-mail is a valuable communication tool. Staff members are provided with a GCDC e-mail account (firstinitiallastname@gcdc-nasa.org) to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of communication with parents. As a policy, GCDC staff will not respond to emails outside of business hours. If your email is complex, we may request a meeting rather than address multiple issues via email.

Facebook

GCDC maintains a Facebook account. It can be accessed at www.Facebook.com/NASA.GCDC. GCDC will not post photos of children without written permission from parents; the photo permission authorization is part of the annual registration process. Parents are encouraged to "like" our page as a way to receive regular communication about school events.

GCDC Electronic Mailing List

GCDC communicates with parents via an electronic mailing list. GCDC will automatically add parents to the "Members List" upon submission of a membership application. Upon enrollment, GCDC will automatically add parents to the "Enrolled list." Each classroom also has a mailing list for communication specific to their classroom. Parents are automatically added to the appropriate classroom mailing list upon enrollment and at transitions. Mailing lists may not be used for personal communications such as mailing invitations to birthday parties.

General Membership Meetings

Once a year, a general meeting of the membership convenes to review the past year's events and accomplishments and the strategic plan for the upcoming school year. Elections for new GCDC Association board members and the next year's Association budget are also voted upon by a quorum of the membership. The Association may schedule special meetings if urgent issues arise.

Information Sharing

Parents with children enrolled in the two-year-old classes will receive a daily report that shares information about their child's day.

Our newsletter, *The Lunchbox Press*, is distributed electronically monthly throughout the school year to all GCDC members.

The GCDC Parent Board, located in the atrium, contains information posted to comply with applicable regulations. Notices for communicable illnesses are also posted for two weeks on this board and throughout GCDC.

Teachers will share routine information through weekly notes and bulletin boards inside and outside each classroom. Also, there is a dry-erase board maintained in the atrium that provides important information daily or as needed.

Parents are responsible for reading bulletin boards, notices and newsletters, and taking appropriate action as necessary.

Mailboxes

GCDC mailboxes are to be used for official GCDC business only. Parents requesting to use mailboxes for distribution of materials **of any kind** must give the materials to the classroom Teacher; in all cases, enough materials must be provided such that a copy of the information can be provided to the family of every class member. The GCDC Director has final say over what can be placed in the children's mailboxes.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are one-on-one meetings that provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to engage in two-way communication about each child's developmental progress.

A formal continuum assessment is completed on each child twice per year for all enrolled children, once in the fall and again in the spring. Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled twice a year with parents to discuss their child's progress and development within the classroom. Conferences focus on the total development of the child, including physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Throughout the year, Parents are encouraged to discuss any matter they deem necessary with their child's teacher or the GCDC Director or Assistant Director. Due to student-teacher ratio requirements, if parents will need more than three to five minutes to speak with a teacher during the day, we ask them to schedule a time to meet away from the classroom.

Parent Areas

GCDC has a parent area located on the ramp connecting the two school wings. This area is a cozy place to read to a child who may be having a rough morning or transition issues. Parenting books are available in this area, as well.

Parental Input

Parents should feel free to contact the GCDC Administrative staff, the GCDC Board of Directors, or the Director with questions or suggestions about the operation of GCDC. There is a family suggestion box located on the parent information table in the atrium. Parents are asked to complete surveys and questionnaires during each year and upon exit from GCDC. Parents wishing to express concerns may request a conference with a teacher or the Director. If concerns are not resolved, a meeting with the GEWA Operations Manager may be requested.

Phone Calls

Teachers may call parents to share information about their child's progress or other concerns. When they are in ratio, Teachers cannot accept non-emergency phone calls. The best time to call your child's teacher is during naptime.

Volunteerism

All enrolled families are required to volunteer 10 hours per school year. Parents must complete four hours between the first day of school and the last day of the first semester. Parents must complete four additional hours between January 1st and the last day of school. Two hours of volunteer hours are required during the summer months. Families will be charged \$25 for each unmet volunteer hour requirement at the end of each reporting period.

All volunteer hours must be approved in advance by a member of the GCDC staff. Parents must document volunteer work by submitting a completed volunteer receipt to the GCDC Lead Team Coordinator after the volunteer activity. Families may check the status of their volunteer hours via GCDC's website.

Volunteer Opportunities

Families may learn about volunteer opportunities by visiting www.nasagcdc.org and clicking on the volunteer information page. Once there, click on the VolunteerSpot icon. This

database includes a real-time listing of all GCDC volunteer opportunities for the school year. It is updated each time new opportunities become known. Families may also initiate projects of interest by speaking with a member of the GCDC staff.

All volunteer hours must be completed before 4:00 p.m.

Accrual of Hours

In most cases, GCDC will calculate volunteer hours in real time. In other words, volunteers earn the number of hours or portion thereof worked.

Volunteer Awards

Although GCDC only requires ten volunteer hours per year, GCDC seeks to recognize those volunteers that go well above this requirement. GCDC is a President's Volunteer Service Award certifying organization. Volunteers that earn 100 or more hours at any time during their child's enrollment at GCDC will be awarded this prestigious honor. Therefore, it is critical that volunteers submit a volunteer service receipt for all volunteer acts performed at GCDC, even after completion of the 10-hour minimum requirement. For the President's Volunteer Service Award, hours do not reset each school year. Hours will continue to accrue and count toward this award for as long as the individual volunteers in support of NASA GCDC.

Chapter 10: General Policies

Our program emphasizes the positive aspects of your child's world while helping her or him learn to cope with negative aspects. We believe that a child wakes up each morning eager to learn and experience new people and new situations, and to be a confident individual, thriving in our complex world. Your child will learn to be self-reliant, observant, and inquisitive.

At GCDC, we will help your child use all five senses in learning to discover their world. Each classroom has a variety of materials arranged throughout 12 learning centers (interest areas). The centers include but are not limited to dramatic play, blocks, language-literacy, library, listening station, science, math, sensory, art, technology and media, manipulatives, and music and movement.

Language arts emphasizes sequential pre-reading tasks, phonics materials, such as word-picture cards, charts, and a variety of additional hands-on materials, which promote the understanding of print concepts. The language development approach emphasizes the understanding of written communication through hearing and discriminating the sound of language.

Mathematics, including counting, sorting, matching, discrimination of size and shape, addition, and subtraction is taught using manipulative materials. Math concepts are connected to all aspects of the learning environment as well as the lesson-planned activities. Children are taught to use logical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Our science and social studies lessons bring the real world to children. Your child's discoveries involving animal behavior, air, water, gardening, the community, and the world's people lend excitement and improved understanding of daily life.

Art, music, and movement education are integral parts of the center's curriculum and help to make a cultural contribution to a well-rounded program.

Anti-Bully Policy

GCDC is committed to providing a safe and nurturing school environment that values diversity and commonality. GCDC is also committed to fostering a climate where individuals are valued, and their safety and rights are protected. To that end, the GCDC prohibits acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation because they compromise the learning environment and well-being of students, staff, and community. We are an inclusive environment that promotes acceptance and respect for all.

Baby Sitting Services

GCDC strongly encourages its staff not to babysit children currently enrolled in our program. We believe this creates a conflict of interest. Should families enter into a babysitting agreement with a GCDC employee outside of business hours, GCDC not responsible or liable in any way for this private agreement.

Challenging Behavior

When challenging behaviors occur, the GCDC staff will work with parents to identify age-

appropriate solutions to the behavior. If children are sent to the office more than three times in a school year, the parent and teacher must develop a contract that identifies expectations and roles for both parties to help the child gain control of his or her behavior in the child care setting. It is important to note that GCDC must maintain childcare ratios at all times. If a child's behavior becomes so disruptive that it puts the other children at risk or takes the teacher out of ratio for extended periods, GCDC may request an evaluation from a qualified professional. If parents do not comply with such a request, the child may be excluded from care.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies to all documents and information collected and maintained at GCDC for your child. GCDC will not disclose information concerning an individual child or the child's parents or guardians to a person other than the staff or government officials acting in the course of their duties, unless the parents or guardians grant written permission for the disclosure, except as required by law.

Code of Conduct

At GCDC, our goals include teaching and reinforcing care, respect, and responsibility: (i) care for each other and our physical environment; (ii) respect for oneself and others, and (iii) responsibility for one's behavior. This is a continuous process that is intended to support and sustain all members of the GCDC community. These rules apply to all parents of the GCDC community at all times, whether at GCDC or interacting within the greater GSFC community.

1. Parents will follow all requirements noted in the Parent Handbook.
2. GCDC holds all parents/guardians to the same standards as GCDC Staff in demonstrating respectful communication for or about our GCDC children. Parents and GCDC staff will communicate and interact with each other politely and respectfully at all times, whether in face-to-face meetings, via email or other forms of communication. Respect for one another should be evident in tone and language as well as the content. Unfortunately, email does not convey tone and may cause the message to seem abrupt or confrontational when written in haste or frustration. Moreover, email can be printed or re-circulated and does not ensure confidentiality at times when such may be needed or required. Given these limitations, please consider scheduling a face-to-face meeting when wishing to discuss issues of significant concern with a staff member.
3. Parents will not attempt to speak to a teacher about GCDC matters when a teacher is conducting personal business at one of the GSFC cafeterias, credit union, gym or at nearby establishments in the Greenbelt area.

Under extreme circumstances of blatant misconduct by parents/guardians, GCDC reserves the right to terminate a child(ren)'s enrollment. Examples of behavior not tolerated by GCDC include:

1. Disregard for GCDC policies and procedures as outlined in the Parent Handbook;
2. Use of physical, verbal, written or electronic threats, bullying, cursing, or yelling at GCDC Staff, children or other parents;

3. A pattern of escalating and ongoing demeaning or insulting behavior towards GCDC staff, children or other parents; or
4. Non-payment of tuition.

If a parent/guardian is not abiding by GCDC policies or exhibits behavior that the GCDC Director determines to be unusually disruptive:

1. The GCDC Director will address the parent/guardian directly to convey this concern and the need for improvement.
2. If the behavior continues or if there is a repeat offense, the GCDC Director will provide a written warning to the parent/guardian, and provide a copy of that communication to the GCDC Association.
3. If the behavior continues following the issuance of the written warning, or if there is a repeat offense, an in-person meeting will take place attended by the parent/guardian, the GCDC Director, and the President and Vice-President of the GCDC Association.

Following this meeting, the GCDC Association President and Vice President will make a report and recommendation to all remaining members of the GCDC Association. Based on the report, any written information on the incident(s) provided by both (or all) parties, and the severity of the disruption, the GCDC Association will decide whether the family will have to withdraw from the center; and if so:

- A. whether the withdraw of the child(ren) will be immediate;
- B. whether the withdraw of the child(ren) will be with a two-week notice; or
- C. whether the withdraw of the child(ren) will be with a one-month notice.

A GCDC Association decision leading to a termination of enrollment requires the affirmative vote of a minimum of six (i.e., two-thirds) GCDC Association voting members. The deliberation and vote will occur during a closed session meeting of the GCDC Association.

If the withdrawal is immediate, no tuition will be refunded. If the parent/guardian refuses to attend the meeting without due cause, termination will occur within a week of the original request, without refund of deposit.

A GCDC Association voting member will recuse themselves from this process if:

- A. he/she is a member of the family being investigated;
- B. has a close personal relationship with the family being investigated; and
- C. has a child in the same classroom as the family being investigated.

The GEWA Operations Manager will replace the voting member who has recused themselves from the process. If a second voting member is recused from the process, the GEWA Business Manager will replace the second voting member.

GCDC Association decisions in these matters are final.

Conflict Resolution

Ongoing, two-way communication is the best method for preventing conflict, especially between parents and teachers. When members of the GCDC community disagree, each has a responsibility to consider the other's views respectfully, to act in the best interest of any children involved, and to assume that the other party is doing the same. Parents who have a conflict with any member of the GCDC community should first contact that person directly, respectfully, and expediently and try to resolve the issue. If the issue is not resolved or if it is not feasible to contact the person directly, you may contact the GCDC Director, who will work with both parties to resolve the problem.

GCDC follows all of the policies, guidance, and regulations of the Goddard Space Flight Center Facility. Goddard does not tolerate any instance of harassment, intimidation, bias, or unlawful discrimination and is committed to a violence-free workplace. GSFC is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace environment that encourages and empowers each to perform at his or her best. Parents should treat GCDC employees as GSFC colleagues and engage in collegial interactions at all times. GCDC employees have resources available to address conflicts just as civil servant and contractors do and may use any of the following to address conflicts.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), 301-286-0482

Ombudsman, 301-286-4467

Anti-Harassment Program, 301-286-6582

Equal Opportunity Programs Office, 301-286-0379

Dress

Play is the child's work. It is important that children come to school appropriately dressed for their work. This work involves painting, gluing, molding, building, climbing, running, and jumping; therefore, washable play clothes are most appropriate. Occasionally, clothing can become stained, as children need to feel free to explore and experiment. Children are required to wear well-fitting, closed-toe shoes on the playground. Shoes that do not fit well may result in injury.

We suggest sending your child to GCDC in comfortable clothing that you don't mind if it gets an occasional stain or dirt from your child's exploration. During winter months, please remember that appropriate winter garb, such as boots, hats, gloves, and scarves, is required to play in planned snow activities. Appropriate cold weather gear is required when the temperatures fall below sixty degrees.

All children should have a seasonally appropriate, extra change of clothing at all times. Children should have a full set of clothes to include shirt, pants, underwear, socks, and shoes.

Expulsion

At GCDC, we use prevention and discipline practices which focus on preventing behavioral challenges by supporting children in learning appropriate social skills and emotional responses.

At GCDC, our goal is to promote children's social-emotional and behavioral health and to address and bring resources to challenging behavior appropriately. 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 that we use 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: 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 match children with the services that benefit them and their families.
- Maintaining appropriate group sizes: Compliance with recommended and required teacher/child ratios and group sizes improves outcomes, helps to reduce behavior problems, and improves the early childhood experience.
- Using constructive approaches to redirection: Strategies such as class 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 should engage families to understand better the origin of the behaviors and how parents have addressed the behaviors in the home setting. This information is used as part of the decision-making process to support 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 culture.
- Accessing Developmental, Mental Health, and other supports for children and families: There is a wealth of resources in the state of Maryland that can provide support to the child, family, and program. We work with families to suggest and facilitate the use of a variety of options.
- Balanced Scheduling: Because children benefit from play, our classroom 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, we attempt to collaborate with parents to bring the needed resources and strategies to a situation. We hope that these efforts will result in suspensions and expulsions only being used where there are

extraordinary circumstances or a determination of a serious safety threat. While we will make efforts to reduce or eliminate such circumstances and threats with the provision of reasonable modifications, we reserve the right to suspend or expel in any situation we deem necessary.

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

Field Trip Policy

Field trips include walks around GSFC, as well as excursions away from GSFC. Each class will have two field trips away from GSFC each year. Individual classrooms may schedule additional field trips throughout the school year to supplement the program. On field trip days, GCDC is not open for care for children whose class is away on a field trip during the hours of the event, (e.g., bus departure from GCDC until bus return to GCDC).

Parents of two-year-olds must chaperone their children on field trips and are not given volunteer credit time for attending. Parents of children in all other classrooms may chaperone one field trip per school year. GCDC reserves the right to deny parent requests to chaperone.

Prompt arrival for field trips is imperative, as we cannot delay bus departure for late arrivals.

Each child must have a signed permission slip to attend field trips. GCDC provides bus transportation to and from each field trip, but chaperone space may be limited. If you are chaperoning a field trip, you will need to meet with the teacher before the scheduled field trip to review the field trip guidelines, receive the itinerary and pick up the first-aid kit specifically developed for field trips.

Once on the field trip, parents often wish to venture out on their own. We request that you do not separate from the group until your teacher has released you. Our field trips serve as hands-on learning opportunities to expand the lessons taught in school.

A headcount will take place before departure, upon arrival at the location, before departing the location and upon return to GCDC. For everyone's safety, field trip participants may not use two modes of transportation (e.g., ride the bus to the trip but home with a parent in the car or vice versa). Participants must ride the same bus on the return trip as they did when going to the field trip site.

All GCDC students and teachers must wear their class colored t-shirts. See the T-shirts section in this chapter for more information.

When offsite trips are scheduled, parents must provide their packed lunch. The lunch must be fully disposable and may not contain peanut products.

Guidance and Discipline

One of our teachers' main goals is to facilitate the children's development of responsibility and self-regulation. Teachers set clear, consistent, and fair limits for children's behavior

and hold them accountable to standards of acceptable behavior. To the extent that children are able, teachers engage them in developing rules and procedures for the class. Teachers redirect children to more acceptable behavior or activity, or use children's mistakes as learning opportunities, patiently reminding children of rules and their rationale as needed. Teachers listen and acknowledge children's feelings and frustrations, respond with respect, and guide children to resolve conflicts and solve their problems. GCDC will not tolerate physical abuse, verbal abuse, withholding, or the threat to withhold food.

Lost and Found

Lost and found items are placed in a large bin by the sign-in/out table located in the entrance foyer. Please check the box periodically for any of your child's belongings, as well as when you are aware your child has lost a particular item. Quite often, children will leave items in the receiving room when they arrive early or in the closing room at the end of the day. For any other personal items, such as ID badges, drivers licenses, and keycards that have been misplaced, please check with the Administrative Office.

Nap Policy

Naptime is from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. daily. The environment is prepared for naptime by reducing the lights, closing window treatments, and playing soft music to help children relax. Children are allowed to rest on their cot with their blanket and a soft animal or doll. Please note the following:

- Neither pillows nor pillow pets are allowed.
- The children are not required to sleep;
- All children must remain on their cot during naptime; and
- If a child does not want to sleep, the child may be given a quiet activity to do on his or her cot during naptime.

Cot sheets and blankets are sent home every Friday, when soiled, or the last day of the week that your child is in attendance at GCDC. Please launder all items and bring them back to GCDC upon your return. Licensing Regulation (Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.16.09.04) requires that all children have an adequate supply of clean bedding. If you fail to return your child's cot sheet to GCDC, we will attempt to provide a sheet from our clean used sheets; however, if they are not available, parents will be charged a fee each time that a sheet is not provided or available for your child.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important and integral part of a high-quality early childhood education curriculum. We ask that parents assist us in ensuring that all children can go outside daily by providing appropriate weather gear for their children. GCDC will not allow children to go outside if they do not have appropriate attire for the weather. Children will go outside on most days, except in rain, extreme cold or when the air quality is in the unhealthy range. Children must have outer garments appropriate for all weather. Mittens or gloves are needed on cold weather days. Boots and snowsuits are needed on snowy days when we go outside and play. Please bring them on the first day of snow. Please send an extra pair of

shoes to wear in the classroom. We try to keep the classroom floors clean and dry (wet floors are slippery and cause accidents). Sneakers or closed-toe shoes are required.

Conditions	Outdoor Play
Below 10 degrees F	Outdoor playtime will not be permitted. Alternative activities will be available.
Between 10-20 degrees F	Outdoor playtime will be limited to 10 to 15-minute increments. Children without proper attire will not be able to go outside.
Between 20-30 degrees F	Outdoor playtime will be limited to 20 to 30-minute increments. Children without proper attire will not be able to go outside.
30+ degrees F	Outdoor playtime will remain at the regularly scheduled playtime of 45 minutes to 1 hour. Children without proper attire will not be able to go outside.
Code Red	Outdoor playtime will be limited to 10 to 15-minute increments. On Mondays and Fridays, Sprinkle Time activities will be permitted at the regularly scheduled time.
Code Orange	Outdoor playtime will be limited to 20-minute increments. On Mondays and Fridays, Sprinkle Time activities will be permitted at the regularly scheduled time.
Code Yellow	Outdoor playtime will be limited to 30-minute increments. On Mondays and Fridays, Sprinkle Time activities will be permitted at the regularly scheduled time.
Code Green	Outdoor playtime will remain at the regularly scheduled playtime of 45 minutes to 1 hour.
UV Index between 1 and 5*	Outdoor playtime will remain at the regularly scheduled playtime of 45 minutes to 1 hour.
UV Index between 6 and 7*	Outdoor playtime will be limited to before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m. at regularly scheduled playtime of 45 minutes to 1 hour.
UV Index between 8+*	Outdoor playtime will be limited to 20 to 30-minute increments before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m.

Personal Items Needed for School

Everyday classroom items include:

- A complete set of extra clothing (appropriate for the season) to be kept on hand during the year. Please note if your child has an accident and we do not have a change of clothes for your child, you will receive a telephone call to either bring a change of clothes or pick up your child. If we have spare items available, we will use these items first.
- A small blanket for rest periods
- A small stuffed animal or soft doll for naptime, if desired.
- A bathing suit, towel, swim shoes, and a water bottle (summer only).

- A sweater or jacket for chilly days in the classroom. It is also good for outdoor periods in the spring and fall when children might not yet need coats in the morning or afternoon.
- Two-year-old room only: Items for diapering (disposable diapers, wipes, creams, etc.) The use of pull-up diapers is not permitted at GCDC. Bottles, pacifiers, and sippy cups are also not permitted in the center at any time. If you use these items for your child, you must leave them in your car. Parents must write the child's first and last name on belongings and clothing items with permanent markers so that they can be returned if misplaced. This is very important with articles of clothing, such as coats, sweaters, mittens, hats, boots, etc. Please check as the seasons change to be sure children have appropriate extra clothes for the season. Remember, children grow. If your child has not used the extra clothes for a while, she or he may have outgrown them.

Potty Training

Children enrolled in the two-year-old classrooms are not required to be potty trained, but will be assisted in potty training before they transition into the 3- year-old classroom. Pull-ups are not permitted at GCDC. With pull-ups, the child does not feel the discomfort of wetness, and the potty training process is slower. Once the decision has been made to start the potty training process, children are to arrive at school in underwear. Diapers or other forms of diapers should not return to school.

T-Shirts

Each GCDC class has an assigned t-shirt color. Each child is given a t-shirt upon enrollment. Students and teachers are required to wear their class colored t-shirt on field trip days. This is a safety precaution. It helps to ensure that teachers, parent chaperones, and trip supervisors can quickly identify students within each group. Parents are given one t-shirt upon enrollment. With transitions, parents must purchase a t-shirt in their child's new class color. Children who are not wearing a class colored t-shirt on field trip days will be given a new one, and the family's account will be billed for the new shirt.

Teacher to Child Ratios

GCDC ensures that sufficient staff with primary responsibility for children is available to provide frequent personal contact, meaningful learning activities, supervision, and to offer immediate care as needed. The ratio of staff to children varies depending on the age of the children, the type of program activity, the inclusion of children with special needs, the time of day, and other factors. It is GCDC's policy that all children must appropriately supervised by staff at all times. The following chart summarizes GCDC teacher and child ratios.

Classroom	Teacher: Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Comets	1:6	12
Little Discoveries	1:6	12
Milky Ways	1:10	17
Little Dippers First Semester	1:10	15
Satellites	1:10	20
Shooting Stars	1:10	17
Constellations	1:10	17
Rockets	1:10	17

Toys from Home

To support teachers in the classrooms, we ask that families not allow children to bring toys from home to school unless teachers have asked the children to bring something to share for share time or to support a learning activity or concept. This policy reduces the tears or conflicts over broken or lost items.

Transitions

Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with a new situation such as moving to a new classroom. Children’s classroom transitioning is based on a combination of their birth date and developmental maturity. To ensure an easier and healthier transition for your child, GCDC has developed a transition model that will allow children to feel more comfortable and confident in their new environment.

GCDC does not transition children during the school year. This eliminates disruptions to established classroom routines and procedures. Because tuition is based upon the level of care (e.g., student/teacher ratios), tuition rates remain constant for children enrolled in classrooms with a 1:6 ratio as long as they remain in that classroom. Tuition is not adjusted solely due to the age of the child.

Chapter 11: Safety and Security

Your child's safety and security are our number one priority. Health and safety policies provide specific guidelines to promote health and safety and prevent the spread of contagious diseases in the child care setting. Policies include specific guidelines required by licensing or regulations, best practices, and information specific to GSFC.

Badges

GCDC can sponsor/request badges for parents who do not work at GSFC. We will only sponsor one badge per family (except when neither parent works for GSFC).

Emergency Evacuations

In the event of an extreme emergency, in which GCDC (Building 90) is to be evacuated, all building 90 occupants will exit the building and proceed across the street to the sidewalk furthest away from our building and proceed to Building 18.

During a shelter in place exercise, parents should **not** leave their building to shelter in place with their child at GCDC. Due to limited space in building 90, we are unable to accommodate parents during these exercises safely.

GCDC participates in monthly fire drills (even during the winter months) and semi-annual shelter in place drills to ensure the children know the appropriate response to an emergency. As part of this process, children and staff will not take the time to don winter gear (e.g., coats, hats, gloves, etc.) Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom.

Lockdown Procedures

If the Goddard Security personnel institute a Center-wide lockdown, GCDC will also go on lockdown. GCDC Administrative staff will send an email to enrolled parents with further instructions. If the internet is down, we will contact parents via telephone where possible.

Secure Key Card Access

A key-card access system secures GCDC at all entrances. Upon enrollment, parents employed by GSFC will be given documentation to apply for key card access to GCDC. GCDC will submit this paperwork to GSFC Security. This process may take a few days. Parents who do not work for GSFC will not be issued a key card and must ring the doorbell for entry into GCDC. Parents are asked not to open the door for anyone if you are uncertain of his or her identity. Parents with access to our program are required to use their badge to access our building and should not rely on ringing the bell for access each day.

Video Monitoring

Our building is equipped with a state of the art security system that includes video monitoring. Cameras are located in the common areas (e.g., the atrium, near the front door and on the playgrounds) as well as within the classroom. GSFC Security manages and is responsible for this service; GCDC does not have access to any video recordings.

