



100 N. Turner Ave.
Anna, IL 62906
618-833-7158
www.annaheights.com/elc

Parent Handbook

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Dear Parents:

Welcome to Anna Heights Early Learning Center. Our program exists for you and your child. We will strive to provide the loving care and guidance that your child needs as he/she grows and develops.

As parents, you are your child's most important teacher. You play a vital role in our ministry to your child. This handbook is designed to help you understand our program, its mission, and the guidelines under which we operate. You are always welcome to visit, ask questions, and make suggestions. Cooperation between parents and staff will contribute to a successful experience for your child. Our church values children and believes in families. We sponsor this Early Learning Center program as a ministry of the church to provide a learning environment that will help children grow as Jesus grew. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

This handbook has been prepared so that you may know the policies and better understand the program as we work together to help your child through a successful year in our program.

Sincerely,

Darryl Williams

Pastor

Angela Harris

Center Director

Purpose Statement

The Anna Heights Early Learning Center is an extension of ministry to families by Anna Heights Baptist Church. To effectively work toward the common purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission, we commit to the following goals:

- Provide a nurturing, developmentally appropriate environment that encourages each child to develop mentally, physically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally.
- Provide individualized educational experiences to meet unique and developmental needs of all children.
- Provide ministry to families.
- Provide a witness of Christ and His church to the children's families.

In order to achieve these goals, we commit to provide:

- A quality weekday early education program built on developmentally appropriate practices.
- Curriculum that is biblically based and includes Bible stories and thought appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- Staff who profess Christ as savior and exhibit Christian traits in caring for children in interaction with families and coworkers.
- Positive guidance for children that encourages problem solving and managing emotions.
- Respect and understanding of others without regard to race, gender, nationality, religion, or background.

Educational Philosophy

A child develops mentally, physically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally. We are committed to providing biblically based, age-appropriate experiences to allow each child to progress in these areas at his/her own level of ability while enjoying feelings of success. This is primarily done through hands-on activities in learning centers and positive Christ-like role modeling of the staff. Parent newsletters will keep you informed about each unit designed for your child's class and give you ideas and opportunities to continue this educational process at home. Social skills are developed through sharing, taking turns, thinking, reasoning, and problem solving. Bible stories, thoughts, and verses are included in each teaching unit.

Children will be included in a variety of learning center activities which include art, books, blocks, puzzles and manipulatives, nature, music, dramatic play, and bible stories. Appropriate field trips will be taken in the community which parents are welcome and encouraged to attend. Children who are not enrolled on the day of a field trip may still attend with an adult volunteer.

All educational experiences will consider each developmental domain and individual learning styles. Children will be given opportunities to learn in a variety of settings ensuring that all learning styles will be met. All activities will consider NAEYC developmentally appropriate practice and guidelines set forth in the state standards for early childhood education and Division of Exceptional Children (DEC guidelines).

Policies

- Age of Child – Anna Heights Early Learning Center enrolls children ages 6 weeks to 6 years. School age children ages 5 - 12 years may be enrolled for after school and summer programs.
- Enrollment Information – All children must have on file:
 - Written enrollment application
 - Written agreements and consents for the following:
 - Field trips, including transportation arrangements
 - Health care and treatment, including emergency first aid
 - Child's involvement in research, if applicable
 - Use of photographs, film or video
 - School attendance away from center, including the time the child shall be released and the means of transportation the child shall use
 - Participation in athletic activities
 - Use of facility transportation
 - Reports of health examinations
 - Certified Birth Certificates
 - Up to date emergency contacts
- Health and Safety – Children who have a contagious illness or exhibit signs of illness (fever of 101* or higher, diarrhea, vomiting, or a suspicious looking rash) may not attend until they are symptom free for 24 hours. If your child becomes ill during the day, he/she will be isolated from the group and you will be called to pick him/her up immediately. Parents who are unable to pick up their child within an hour of notice will need to have an alternative person do so.
 - In the event of exposure to a contagious disease within the group, notice will be given to parents.
 - Program staff administers only prescription medication, with the exception of infants/toddlers who require OTC medication for teething or diaper rash. . Complete a medication form in the office and leave medication with office personnel (not in child's backpack). The medication must be prescribed for the child to whom it is to be given.

- Infants/toddlers who require an OTC medication for teething or diaper rash will be cared for following parent instructions and package directions. No other OTC medications will be given without a doctors note.
- In the event of head lice, our center has a "no nit" policy. Students found to have head lice or nits will be sent home for treatment and will only be allowed to return to school when ELC staff can determine the childs hair is free from lice and nits.
- The program exercises reasonable care and judgment in all matters related to safety. In all emergencies the program has permission to take such reasonable measures as are, in the judgment of the teacher or director, necessary for the welfare and safety of the child until a parent can be reached.
- *You will be charged for sick days when the center is open and your child is absent.*

- Hygiene:

All employees and children will wash their hands with soap and water routinely and frequently, at least at the following times:

- Upon arrival at the center
- Before and after each meal or snack
- After using the toilet or having diapers changed
- After handling pets or animals
- After wiping or blowing his/her nose
- After touching items soiled with body fluids or wastes
- Before and after cooking or other food experience
- After outdoor play
- Before and after using the water/sensory table

- Toilet Training:

- While all children develop at different stages, we anticipate students to be fully toilet trained by age 3. Students must be completely toilet trained before transitioning to the 5 year old room in the FLC.
- In order to ensure hygienic/sanitary facilities, children will be considered toilet trained only when able to go one full week accident free.
- Children having 2 or more accidents per day will be required to wear pull ups (provided by the parent).

- Accident/Injury – If your child gets hurt at the center we will first care for your child and treat the injury. After the child has been treated and cared for, the parent or emergency contact will be notified by phone of the injury if it warrants further care. If someone cannot be contacted by the center and if in the judgment of center staff, the injury requires a physician or hospital, the physician or hospital that was given on the consent form will be contacted at the parent’s expense. If hospitalization is required, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and stay with the child until a parent arrives and assumes responsibility.
- Arrival and Departure – Parents will sign the Child’s Sign In/Out Sheet when bringing or picking up a child, noting the name of the person bringing or picking up, time of arrival/departure, and any special instructions. Persons bringing or picking up a child will need to confirm that a staff member is aware of the child’s arrival or departure.
- Authorized Pick-Up – your child will only be released to persons listed on the Enrollment Form under Release of Child. A state issued drivers license or picture ID may be required if staff does not recognize or know the person picking up a child.
- Food –
 - Breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack will be served daily. Children may not bring food to the Early Learning Center unless your child’s teacher has requested it. **Please allow time for your child to finish breakfast/snack items from home prior to entering the facility.**
 - Dietary exceptions will be made only when medically necessary.
 - Birthday or special occasions/celebrations are acceptable opportunities to provide treats for students. Items brought should be purchased from a licensed kitchen or be pre-packaged and should be discussed with your child’s teacher in advance.
- Records – attendance, health, and identification records are kept for each child. All information and forms are required in writing prior to enrollment. All records will be kept confidential with access only allowed to appropriate staff.
- Clothes – Diapers and wipes are to be provided by parents. Washable play clothes are recommended for daily activities. Parents are expected to bring an extra set of clothes in a large ziplock bag labeled with the child’s name for emergency purposes. Please be mindful of the changing seasons when sending extra clothes.

- Please keep in mind that children will participate in outdoor play and classroom art activities when dressing your child. Dress your child appropriately to enjoy God's beautiful world.
- Outdoor Play – Children will be taken outside to play at least once a day as possible
 - Guidelines for the temperature and/or wind chill should be between 30 – 90 degrees. If near the extreme ends of this guide, time outside may only be 5 – 10 minutes to get fresh air and release energy.
 - Children who are not healthy enough for outdoor play (due to temporary cold/virus) should be kept home until able to resume regular activities.
- Discipline – The staff of Anna Heights Early Learning Center is committed to providing a positive learning environment and will use discipline procedures set by program policy to achieve this goal.

Hebrews 12:5 suggests that discipline takes place when a loving relationship exists.

A teacher has a head start on positive guidance when he or she:

- Understands how a child develops and learns.
- Knows what age-appropriate activities should be provided.
- Prepares an appropriate learning environment.

Childcare staff shall help individual children develop self-control and assume responsibility for their own actions. Classroom teachers will ensure that the following measures take place:

- Rules are posted with pictures and reviewed often. Limits and consequences will be clear and understandable to the child, consistently enforced and explained to the child before and as part of any disciplinary action.
- Discipline will be developmentally appropriate and logically relate to the child's inappropriate behavior.
- Firm positive statements about behaviors or redirection of behavior will be the accepted techniques.
- Removal from the group to help a child gain control will not exceed one minute per year of age and will not be used for children less than 24 months of age and will only be used when all other options have been tried.
- Children will not be disciplined for toilet accidents.

- Field Trips -
 - Parents will be given a minimum of one week notice of all field trips. Permission slips must be signed prior to day of trip.
 - Children requiring more than typical behavior support or who are not toilet trained will require an adult to attend all field trips in order to ensure that all students have appropriate supervision.
- Toys – No toys may be brought from home unless requested by a teacher. The center has a variety of toys available for children and will not be responsible for personal toys. If a child brings something from home he/she will be asked to store it in his/her cubby for the day until departure.
- Parent Meetings – The center director will provide/arrange parent meetings and training opportunities as requested by parents. If you have a topic of interest which you would like more information on please let the director know (preferably in writing). All parents are encouraged to attend parent meetings scheduled throughout the year.
- Progress Reports – Written developmental progress reports are provided twice each year. Parent conferences are scheduled as needed.
- Dismissal of a Child – The program reserves the right to dismiss any child if fees have not been paid or other conflicts arise that inhibit the educational experience or safety of the children or staff and cannot be resolved with parent participation (lack of compliance with handbook regulations, failure to complete required forms, consistent late arrivals, physical or verbal abuse of any person or property).
- Child Abuse & Neglect – All center staff are mandated by the state to report any suspected abuse or neglect.
- Conflict Resolution – If a parent has a question or concern about their child they should first contact the teacher in their child’s class. If they are unable to get their question or concern answered or solved they should talk to the center director.
- Attendance Policy -
 - Accounts are charged according to regular enrollment schedule regardless of student attendance.
 - If a child will be absent or arriving late parents are asked to call the center before 10:00 am so that we can plan accordingly.

- School age parents need to call both public school and the ELC if there is a change in schedule.
- After 3 days absence without a parent report, and ELC staff member will call parents to confirm absence and continued enrollment. If, after three attempts to contact the parent, there is no response from the parent a child may be dropped from the ELC enrollment after one weeks absence.

Tuition/Enrollment:

Rate Per Day

- Infants & Toddlers: \$32.50
- 2 year olds: \$26.50
- 3-5 year olds: \$23.50
- School age: \$23.50 summer
\$7.00 per day after school
\$16.00 per day only when public school dismisses early mid day
- Drop In Rate: \$2.00 additional charge will be added to regular daily rate.
- The ELC has a 2 day per week minimum enrollment policy and charges full day rates only, with the exception of after school care
- Charges are applied for all scheduled days regardless of absences. After school students will only be charged for prolonged public school closures (spring break, Christmas, etc.) if in attendance those days.
- Changes to student schedules are subject to availability. **The only days a child is guaranteed are those they are currently enrolled for** Schedule changes may be made with written request from parents and will be made as possible given a two weeks notice.
- In the event that a childcare opening is available, you have the option to pay a non-refundable holding fee of one months' full-time childcare in order to hold that spot for up to 8 weeks or for summer vacation.
- Fees are payable in advance in the office. Tuition should remain paid one week in advance. If payments fall two weeks behind students will be dismissed unless the parent/guardian takes the initiative to make definite arrangements for payment.

- Returned check fees will be \$30.00 per check. If two or more checks are returned parents will be required to pay payments with cash only.
- Assistance programs may be available to qualified applicants. See the center director for more information.
- Late Pick-Up Policy – Picking up a child after 5:30 pm will result in a late fee of \$1.00 per minute.
 - Two attempts to contact the late parent will be made.
 - If unsuccessful, we will call from the emergency pick up list provided by the parent.
 - Please keep your child’s pick-up list current
 - If no one can be reached to pick up your child we will continue to call until one hour has lapsed. At this time, we will contact our local police department and the Department of Children and Family Services and advise them of the situation.
 - Staff will in no way discuss or show any animosity regarding such situations.
- Withdrawal – Two weeks’ notice in writing is required for withdrawal and is to be submitted to the director of Anna Heights Early Learning Center. Failure to submit a two weeks’ notice will result in continued billing to cover the two weeks’ notice.

Hours of Operation:

The center opens at 6:30 am and closes at 5:30 pm Monday thru Friday. Your child may attend the center any time during the hours of operation.

- Holiday Schedule – The program observes the following holidays:
 - New Year’s Day
 - Good Friday
 - Memorial Day
 - July 4th Independence Day
 - Labor Day
 - Veterans Day
 - Thanksgiving (2 days)
 - Christmas (2 days)

Inclement Weather:

The center will be open if possible, during any weather conditions. Listen to WIBH 1440 AM/102.5 FM or WSIL Channel 3 for closing information or for a delayed opening if weather conditions are questionable. Parents may also check the ELC Facebook page for messages regarding schedule changes/school closings.

Daily Schedule:

The daily schedule is posted in your child's room. There is a balance of learning and quiet play, indoor and outdoor activities, and large/small group and individual experiences. The schedule also includes breakfast, lunch, and snack time as well as a rest period each day.

- Rest Time - All children enrolled in full day programming will be required to have a supervised rest period each day. Each child will be assigned an individual cot/crib. Children under 5 years old (including those in the infant room) will need their own crib size sheet (and blanket if preferred). These items will need to be taken home every Friday (or the end of your child's week) and laundered to meet DCFS requirements.

Risk/Pest Management Plan

The staff at AHELC are trained to react to and have procedures in place for the following situations:

- tornado
- fire
- gas leaks
- food/liquid spills
- choking
- child abduction
- supplies/chemicals
- foods/proper equipment use
- playground safety

procedures are documented in the staff policy and procedures manual as well as the DCFS manuals

The director also works in cooperation with church staff to determine when/how to actively control pests. Non-chemical methods will be used when possible. If pesticides are used they will follow the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act regulations, Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, and State and Local regulations. More information can be found on our parent board in the ELC office or contact the administrative staff to discuss.

*This document may be revised at the discretion of the director and governing board. If changes are made, that information will be provided to you in a timely manner.

Anna Heights ELC Parent Agreement

I, _____, whose child _____
is enrolled in the Anna Heights Early Learning Center, have received a
copy of the Parents' Handbook. I have read and understood the policies and
guidelines as described in the handbook, and I agree to abide by them.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date