
St. Mary's Clinton Preschool

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2024 - 2025 School Year

WELCOME

Dear Family,

All children are special to us. In our preschool program, your child will be helped, with patience and love, to develop a positive self-image and to know that he/she is special and capable. As a result, a positive attitude about school and learning will be created.

St. Mary's Clinton Preschool is committed to a policy that there will be no discrimination because of race, color, gender, religion or national origin.

Goals

- To provide a safe and healthy classroom atmosphere.
- To develop a positive self-concept.
- To develop a trust in new adults as well as themselves.
- To develop relationships with their peers and to be able to communicate and respond with them.
- To experience satisfaction in music, sound, and arts, as well as creative and physical expressions.
- To acquire basic physical skills – both gross motor skills and fine motor skills.
- To promote sharing through language, feelings, ideas and materials.

Thank you for choosing St. Mary's Clinton Preschool. We look forward to providing your child with a caring and enriching environment.

Sincerely,

Teresa Howard, Director

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ABOUT US

Philosophy

We believe that each child is a unique individual. We believe that children can grow to their potential if they feel safe, secure and wanted. Our program provides an inclusive, caring environment that recognizes children's varied abilities, interests, needs and learning styles. We at St. Mary's Clinton Preschool believe that a child's "work" is play and learning occurs during developmentally appropriate child-centered activities. The staff acts as facilitators to encourage, promote and reinforce a child's attempts, questions, development and discoveries.

At St. Mary's Clinton Preschool we believe in the importance of socialization in early childhood. By socializing, a child will learn how to foster empathy, discover concepts of sharing and teamwork, grow more confident and get better prepared for school. We practice these concepts on a daily basis to help create friendships and therefore learn how to respect others.

We recognize that parents/guardians are the child's first teachers. Children learn best when families are involved in their educational program. We want to create a program where families and children feel at home and a part of a warm, supportive community.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote a character-based, academic environment while nurturing the gifts of each child.

The atmosphere of St. Mary's Clinton Preschool is comfortable, creative, non-sexist and children will have opportunities to increase their physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual well-being. The school is affordable and open to all families of all races and creeds.

Certification

St. Mary's Clinton Preschool was founded in 2009 at which time it was open to 39 families in two classrooms: a 4 year old classroom and a mixed 3 and 4 year old classroom. This program is licensed by New York State and run by the Syracuse Diocese.

St. Mary's Clinton Preschool is a member of Quality Stars NY which is New York's Quality Rating and Improvement System for early childhood programs, providing support and resources to improve and sustain high quality across New York State.

Definition of Family

In this handbook we refer to a family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest and responsibility of the child in our care.

Hours of Operation

Our school day is from 8:45 AM to 2:45 PM. We offer before and aftercare if needed. Before care is from 7:30 AM to 8:45 AM and aftercare is from 2:45 PM to 5:30 PM.

We follow the Clinton Central School Calendar for vacations, holidays and days off.

In case of inclement weather and Clinton Central School is closed, St. Mary's Clinton Preschool is closed. If Clinton has a delay, St. Mary's will open at 8:45 AM and before care will not be offered on that day. If Clinton closes early, St. Mary's will operate until 5:30 PM as scheduled.

Admission & Enrollment

All admission and enrollment forms must be completed and enrollment fee and first tuition payment paid prior to your child's first day of attendance. The tuition payment will be put toward tuition for June of 2025. If your child withdraws from the program for any reason, that tuition payment will be refunded if a one month written notice is given.

An enrollment fee of \$50.00 is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is non-refundable.

Based on the availability and openings, our facility admits children from 3 to 5 years of age. The child must be 3 years old on or before September 1st or 4 years old on or before December 1st.

A birth certificate, immunization record, recent physical and lead screening must be submitted no later than September 1, 2024.

Inclusion

St. Mary's Clinton Preschool believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in child care. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

Non-Discrimination

At St. Mary's Clinton Preschool equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity or religious beliefs. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Family Activities

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Staff Qualifications

We are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Typical staff certifications are as follows:

Position Title	Education/Certification
Lead Teacher	Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education (or other child-related field), Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education (or other child-related field or CDA Certification (Child Development Associate)

Caregivers participate in orientation and require ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism. Background screening is done on all staff members, substitutes, and volunteers according to the background screening documentation required by the New York State licensing regulations.

We strongly discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (i.e. babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by St. Mary's Clinton Preschool.

Children are supervised at all times. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

Child to Staff Ratios

Age of children	Child/Staff	<u>Number of Children in Room</u>
3 year-olds	<u>7:1</u>	<u>14 children</u>
4 year-olds	<u>8:1</u>	<u>16 children</u>
5 year-olds	<u>8:1</u>	<u>16 children</u>

Communication & Family Partnership

Communications. Any non-urgent communications between families and staff (including tuition payments) can be done with notes placed in your child's folder. Staff checks folders every

morning - please check them daily when your child returns home for treasured art projects and staff correspondence.

Bulletin Board. Located at the entrance of the main door with announcements about the program, local health concerns and a list of the St. Mary's Clinton School Board Members.

Classroom Newsletters. Newsletters will be done weekly and sent home in your child's folder providing families with classroom news, events and announcements.

Email. We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

Conferences. In-person family & teacher conferences are scheduled in November of the school year and the date is posted on the calendar. You will be able to sign up ahead of time for a slot that is good for you. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns. Written evaluations will be done by your child's teacher in January and May during the school year. These will be sent home (in the folder or via email) and if at that time you would like to meet in person, please notify your child's teacher and it will be arranged.

Open Door Policy

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked at all times.

Our staff will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.

Publicity

Occasionally, photos will be taken of the children at the center for use within the program or on our website. Written permission will be obtained prior to use of photographs.

Unless the family indicates that they want their child to participate, we will not use pictures and names of children for publicity.

CURRICULA & LEARNING

Learning Environment

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

Outings and Field Trips

Weather permitting; we conduct supervised outdoor play and/or walking trips around the neighborhood for all children. Children are accounted for at all times. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in the enrollment package.

Our field trips are ALL walking. Other than a neighborhood walk, you will be informed of any special field trip plans. You will not need to sign a special permission slip for these field trips. Please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking and make it difficult for your child.

Transition Periods

Your child's transition in child care should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Transition from home to program

Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the program, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At this time please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

Transition from one classroom to another

Prior to your child's transition from one classroom to another within the program, you and your child will be given an opportunity to meet new peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At this time please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

Transition to elementary school

Transition activities such as a field trip to a local elementary school, creating a mural of special friends and special times at our program will be part of your child's education. We will provide you with information on local schools, a registration packet from Clinton Central School, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary school.

Electronic Media

Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD). Screen time for 2 to 5 year old children should be only 30 minutes a week and only if the screen time is educational or moving based (to promote physical activity). Screen time will be commercial free and not used during meals or rest time. This is the policy that this program follows.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

Celebrations

Being part of the Syracuse Diocese and the Catholic Religion, St. Mary's Clinton Preschool does say blessings and the sign of the cross before snack and lunch as a group. We also perform the Nativity in a Christmas Pageant. We do encourage an understanding of and respect for different religions, cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community.

Rest Time

After lunch, all classrooms participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities to do at this time.

Toileting

In this program children need to be fully toilet trained. Our license does not permit us to change diapers or pull-ups nor do we have staff enough to do this. Accidents do happen but if accidents become routine your child will have to leave the program. We would offer you suggestions for another program that is more suitable to your child's needs or welcome your child's return when complete toilet-training has been accomplished.

GUIDANCE

General Procedure

St. Mary's Clinton Preschool is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our program works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people and property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Discipline Policy

We have created a discipline policy that reflects our philosophy of positive guidance with children.

Challenging Behavior

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self control and kindness.

Each student at **St. Mary's Clinton Preschool** has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent and understandable to the child.

The program's response to persistent, unacceptable, aggressive behavior is dealt with in the following manner:

- Positive redirection
- Verbal warning for specific unacceptable behavior
- Separation from the group and future consequences for repeated behavior
- Formal write-up given to Families
- Family conference to discuss corrective action to move forward with the individual child - timeline will be implemented
- If repeated, unacceptable, aggressive behavior persists, a different program will be suggested to better fit the child's needs. On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:
 - A child appears to be a danger to others.
 - Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
 - Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

We maintain a zero tolerance to bullying. If you have any concerns about this at any time, please report it to the Director of the Program.

Physical Restraint

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others and we may restrain a child by gently holding her or him only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

TUITION & FEES

The Director of the Program is responsible for collecting tuition/fees. He/she will be in charge of collecting tuition and other fees and contacting families regarding payment issues. If you have a question or concern regarding a payment or fee, please contact the Program Director.

Registration Fee

A non-refundable registration fee of \$50.00 is due upon registration.

Monthly Tuition Rates

- 5 Full Days - \$695.00
- 4 Full Days - \$650.00
- 3 Full Days - \$560.00
- 2 Full Days - \$420.00

Families' contract for a specific monthly schedule is indicated on the Registration form and Acceptance Letter. Payments are expected by the 10th day of each month. Payments made after the 10th day will be subjected to a \$15.00 additional late fee.

Tuition Deposit

A Tuition Deposit equal to one month of care is required at the time registration is confirmed. This deposit is applied to the last month of care. If the child withdraws from the program, a one month written notice is required to have the tuition deposit returned. If a one month written notice is not given when a child withdraws, the deposit will not be returned.

Methods of Payment

Families can pay by cash or check.

Returned Checks

All returned checks will be charged a fee of \$20.00. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on "cash only" status.

BEFORE AND AFTERCARE SERVICES

Offerings

Before and aftercare services are offered for the convenience of the working families to provide a secure, supervised environment for their children before and after regular school hours. It is not a drop-in program. If you need this service, you are asked, at the beginning of the school year, to fill out the Before and Aftercare Enrollment form. Please review the policy for this service which is included on the form. Monthly payment must be received for each child prior to attending that month. Hours of Before care are 7:30 AM to 8:45 AM and hours of Aftercare are 2:45 PM to 5:30 PM.

Late Pick-up Fees

Before and aftercare services are offered for the convenience of the working families to provide a secure, supervised environment for their children before and after regular school hours. It is not a drop-in program. If you are late in picking up your child, he/she will be taken to aftercare and you will be charged a doubled daily rate.

Payment for Tuition and Before and Aftercare Services

Payment for tuition and the before/aftercare service is due by the 10th of each month. If the payment is not received by the 10th of the month, a \$15.00 late fee will be added to these payments.

Additional Occasional Fees

From time-to-time there will be additional fees associated with special activities, bimonthly reading flyers or field trips. These fees are due prior to the event, activity or trip and payable by cash or check.

SCHOOL SCHEDULE AND EXTREME WEATHER CLOSINGS

School will be in session from September through June. We will follow the same school schedule as Clinton Central School. Training days may be slightly different but families will be notified well in advance to prepare.

If Clinton schools close due to inclement weather, St. Mary's Clinton Preschool also will be closed. If Clinton schools are delayed, Before Care will be canceled. School will begin at 8:45 AM. Stay tuned to cell phone alerts and TV stations for closings and delays. You will NOT be notified by the Director of the closing. If Clinton Central School has an early dismissal, St. Mary's Clinton Preschool will be open as usual with the school day ending at 2:45 PM and the Aftercare ending at 5:30 PM.

ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWAL

Absence, Illness or Late Arrivals

If your child is going to be absent or arrive late, please call, text or email us at stmarysclinontpreschool@gmail.com We are concerned about your child. If we do not hear from you, we will reach out to you.

Withdrawal

A written notice, one month in advance, is required by the program when a child is being withdrawn. Failure to notify will result in forfeiture of your initial tuition deposit.

Transfer of Records

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.

DROP OFF AND PICK-UP

General Procedure

Before care is open at 7:30 AM. Parents are expected to accompany their children to the classroom and sign them in.

Aftercare will close at 5:30 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time.

The School Day begins at 8:45 AM and ends at 2:45 PM. Upon arrival please accompany your child to their classroom and be sure the staff is aware of their entry. For pick up, come to your child's classroom and the staff will send your child to you.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In order to safeguard your child we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after 2 hours we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact Person pick up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

What to Bring

A supply list was given to you with your acceptance letter. If you need another supply list they are available on our web site or from the office.

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e clothes, sheets, blankets, snow clothes and boots, water bottles, lunch boxes, bike helmets etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. Rest sheets and blankets will be sent home at the end of the week and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the program.

Lost & Found

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-Found Box located at the hallway. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

Toys from Home

We request that you do not have your child bring their toys from home into the Program unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity. Friends are curious which could lead to damage or loss to their toys resulting in sadness and tears.

LUNCH AND SNACKS

Lunch

A bag lunch (including a drink) must be provided by each child's family. We do not "cook" food but we can warm it in the microwave. If your child has a "warm-up", please put it in a **separate** microwave-safe container to make it easier for staff to identify. Lunch-time supervision is provided by staff and volunteers. Children are expected to respect and obey these adults and to practice good manners while eating.

Snack

Children bring their own snacks. Please remember the snack should be nutritious and something to hold them until lunch. Suggested snacks are: fruit, cheese, crackers, vegetables, raisins, Ritz bits, muffins, granola bars, graham crackers, popcorn, etc. Please keep snacks separate from lunches so that the staff knows what you would like your child to eat at this time. Water bottles are used at snack time. An additional snack should be sent if your child will be attending after care.

Water Bottles

Water bottles are strongly encouraged for each child. For health and safety reasons we do not use the school water fountain. The children get thirsty and we encourage water often throughout their activities and with their lunch and snack. Please put water only in the water bottles. Please be sure to label the water bottles with your child's name-many bottles look the same.

HEALTH

Medical Statements, Physicals, Immunizations and Lead Screening

Upon enrollment, families are required to provide a written statement signed by a health care provider verifying that the child is able to participate in child day care and currently appears to be free from contagious or communicable diseases. *A Child in Care Medical Statement*

(OCFS-LDSS-4433) or its equivalent for each child must have been completed within 12 months preceding the date of enrollment.

A copy of your child's most recent physical (within the year) should be received no later than 30 days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for ensuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

The program requires a copy of the child's immunization record. Immunization documentation that each child attending daycare/preschool is required by New York State Public Health Law unless they have a true, valid medical exemption. Immunization records are checked yearly and parents are notified with a written notice if the record of immunization needs to be updated.

The program does require a report of a child's lead screening done during their toddler years. If a lead screening was not done then a note stating this from the family is necessary and will be kept in the child's file.

Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children; you may not bring a sick child to the program. St. Mary's Clinton Preschool has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to pick up your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher in the ear).
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled that can not be contained in the toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or undigested food during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written an order that a child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

-
- They are free of fever without medication, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
 - They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
 - They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
 - They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious,
- and;
- The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. We will ask you to fill out and sign a New York State required health care plan (OCFS-LDSS-7006) and an individual allergy and anaphylaxis emergency plan (OCFS-6029). A list of the children's allergies will be posted in each classroom and the lunch room. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies. Snacks and lunches are furnished by the family but at times there is a special occasion celebration where food from home may be offered to the children. Staff will ALWAYS check with families first, before the food is offered to the child.

Medications

Our Program does not administer prescription or over the counter medication to children.

Our Program **WILL** administer over the counter topical ointments, lotions, and creams, and spray including sunscreen products and topically applied insect repellent (with signed permission from the family- form OCFS-6010).

Our Program **WILL** administer epinephrine patient-specific auto-injectors, diphenhydramine in combination with epinephrine, asthma inhalers and nebulizers.

Our Program **WILL** administer stock non-specific epinephrine auto-injectors.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the program has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the Oneida County Health Department and our New York State Licensure. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus Influenzae (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Pertussis
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)

-
- Rabies (human only)
 - Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
 - Tetanus (including suspect)
 - H1N1 Virus
 - Any cluster/outbreak of illness
 - Tuberculosis

SAFETY

Clothing and Footwear

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, sand, water, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside at times - weather permitting.

One particular aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for outdoor play and walks and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities. If your child "insists" on wearing sandals or flip flops to school, please include a pair of sneakers in your child's backpack or to be left at school for the occasions when sandals and flip flops are difficult to wear.

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 90°F or less than 20°F degrees. Outdoor play will be canceled if the air quality rating is 100 or above.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in child care and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the program area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, followed by our attempt to contact the designated family member. If the designated family member cannot be reached, we will attempt to contact the emergency contact person(s) listed on the child's Emergency Form.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

Respectful Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor Program environment is smoke-free. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the Program's premises.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the Program's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

Dangerous Weapons

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities. If we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred, we, at St. Mary's Clinton Preschool, will report it. The Program staff are **ALL** Mandated Reporters. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our Program will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

EMERGENCIES

Lost or Missing Child

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located, the family and the police will be notified within the first 5 minutes of the search. We will continue to search after calling the family and the police and notify them if we are able to find the child.

Fire Safety

Our program is fully equipped with a newly installed fire alarm system and fire extinguishers strategically placed throughout the building.

Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a monthly basis. If there was a fire or another type of disaster that the staff and children could not return to the building, our first emergency shelter is St. Mary's Church located at 13 Marvin Street across from the school. If this could not be accessed, our second emergency shelter is Clinton Tractor and Implement Co. located down the road from the school at 31 Meadow Street, Clinton. Families will be notified as to our where-about's via cell phones.

Shelter in Place Drills

Shelter-in-place drills are conducted twice during a school year. The stage is our place to go and provisions of food, water and quiet activities will be made to the children.

Dangerous Person on the Premises

The doors to the outside are locked at all times. The building is equipped with a safety shield on the entry doors making it difficult for an unwanted intruder to enter. Safety glass is on all the classroom door windows and the classroom doors lock automatically when they are closed. The staff is instructed on what to do should an unwanted, dangerous intruder situation happen but this type of situation is not practiced with the children.

Emergency Transportation

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives if ratios of children remaining in the Program are within regulations. If ratios at the Program would not be within regulations if one staff member was to leave, the child would be transported alone in the ambulance.

PROGRAM POLICIES

Our Program policies not included in this handbook are reviewed and updated as needed. They are available for review upon request to the program director.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the Program prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have read the **St. Mary's Clinton Preschool Family Handbook**. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask Program Management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the **St. Mary's Clinton Preschool Family Handbook** that I do not understand.

Recipient (Please Print)_____

Recipient Signature_____ Date_____