



UnityPoint Health
Meriter

PARTNER OF **UWHealth**

Children's Center



FAMILY HANDBOOK

WELCOME

Welcome to Meriter Children's Center, a wonderful place for children and families. We are honored that you have chosen our program for your child.

For many years we have been a vibrant and joyful part of the Meriter Health Services community. We first opened our doors in 1988, in the Longfellow building, serving a group of 50 children and families. We quickly expanded the Longfellow program to serve 80, and in 1992 expanded to our Chandler Site to serve an additional 55 children and families. In 2012, we merged the 2 sites in preparation for our move in 2013 to our new home at the corner of Mound and Mills Streets.

Meriter Children's Center is open Monday thru Friday, 6:30am to 5:30pm. We offer full-time and part-time options to meet the unique needs of our community.

The Meriter Children's Center Family Handbook

is posted on the Meriter Children's Center department page on the **Meriter Children's Center website**. A printed copy of the Family Handbook is in the family resource area. If you would like to receive a printed copy of the Family Handbook, please let the Manager or Program Coordinator know, we'd be happy to provide you with one.

Table of Contents

WELCOME	2
The Meriter Children's Center Family Handbook	2
Our Mission	5
Our Values	5
Our Beliefs	5
OUR PARTNERSHIP	6
Your Family and the Meriter Children's Center Family	6
Family Involvement Opportunities	8
When Something Comes Up.....Resolving Issues, Conflicts, Concerns	9
Relationships with Teachers & Family	10
Relationships with Teachers & Children	12
Transitions	16
OUR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	15
Our Philosophy of Child Learning	15
Our Curriculum	16
OUR TEACHERS	25
Our Teaching Staff	25
Our Most Important Responsibility: Supervising Children	24
Child Guidance and Discipline Policy	29
DOCUMENTING & ASSESSING YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING/DEVELOPMENT	32
Children's Assessment Portfolios	32
PROTECTING CHILDREN'S HEALTH	39
Health & Wellness Practices & Policies	39
Infection Control Policy	43
Children's Nutritional Well-Being	47

Maintaining a Healthful Environment _____	49
Safety & Security _____	43
COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS _____	48
Community Partnerships _____	48
THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT _____	56
Our Facilities _____	56
LEADERSHIP and MANAGEMENT _____	57
Program Leadership _____	57
Policies & Procedures _____	58
The “Two-Week Request Timeline” _____	64
Fiscal Accountability Policies & Procedures _____	64
Health, Nutrition and Safety Policies & Procedures _____	65
Personnel Policies _____	66
Program Evaluation, Accountability & Continuous Improvement _____	68
Licensure and Accreditation _____	69
Family/Community Resources _____	71
HELPFUL HINTS _____	73



O ur Mission



to nurture



to inspire



to support



to educate

.....through play

Our Values

Meriter Children's Center is guided in everything we do by the fundamental values of the Meriter organization:



We serve our children, our families, each other and the community



Excellence is our Way of Life

Our Beliefs

We believe in caring for the development of the whole child – emotionally, physically, cognitively, socially – and in celebrating each child's unique sense of self. We nurture each child with individual, loving attention. We teach the skills and model the respect that fosters a sense of belonging in our “community” of classroom groups. Each day we present a variety of learning activities that are designed to meet the developmental needs of each age group, and to inspire joyful learning, at a child's pace, in many domains. We recognize that children come to us with varied skills, abilities and talents. We develop strategies to

The greatest poem ever known

Is one all poets have outgrown:

The poetry, innate, untold,

Of being only four years old.

Christopher Morley, To a Child

support each child in growing and learning to their full potential.

O UR PARTNERSHIP

Your Family and the Meriter Children's Center Family

Together, we have one of life's most important jobs to face – nurturing a child in their most significant years of life. You are your child's first teacher. You know your child and your family culture best, and we are eager to learn from the wisdom you bring to us. We know a great deal about children in general, about child development, and about education of young children. We look forward to the years ahead, sharing and learning from each other, so that together we can provide the best care and educational experience for your child.



Family Orientation Process

Enrollment begins with a tour of the center, an open discussion with the manager/program coordinator, and the opportunity to meet the teachers who will be working with your child. At the enrollment tour, families will be provided with an Enrollment Packet that provides a great deal of information about our program, includes many required forms, information about State Licensing and City of Madison Accreditation. Once you make the decision to enroll your child in Meriter Children's Center, the process of welcoming your family into the MCC family begins!



We want you and your child to feel comfortable here and ask that families visit the classroom and meet with the teachers prior to the first day of enrollment. In these visits, the foundation for our partnership begins, it is a time of sharing, listening, and seeking to understand. It is a crucial first step.

All Families Welcome

Meriter Children's Center strives to present a welcoming environment that is inclusive of all children, families, staff, Meriter and community visitors – respecting the diversity in ancestry, culture, race, national origin, family structure, religion, ability, language, creed, marital status, sexual orientation, age and gender that is represented in our community and in the broader context of our world.

Family Participation

Meriter Children's Center is a wonderful place for children and families. Families are invited to be actively involved in their child's daily life at the center. Our proximity to the hospital supports many families in day-to-day involvement in breastfeeding, classroom activities, and visits with their children.



Families are welcome to visit any time during the day to observe or join in activities.

Interpretive Services Available

Meriter's Interpretive Services are available to all families who are interested in finding out more about the Children's Center. If you know of a family for whom interpretive services would support their connection with the program, please connect them with Meriter Guest Services. Please let the Manager/Program Supervisor know when you have made a referral, to help us connect with the family.



Program Information

Much information about Meriter Children's Center can be found at;

<https://www.unitypoint.org/madison/childrens-center.aspx>

The Center provides updates via the app, HiMama! This app is used to share information on

upcoming events, program information and/or changes, and to share daily information regarding your child and their day.

Each classroom has an information board that provides information specific to the classroom and special activities...please check this board daily.

Child's Cubby –Parent Information

Important information for families is placed in your child's cubby. We ask that you check this area daily for important notices, fill out any necessary paperwork, and return to the center within a week.

Family Involvement Opportunities

Parent Involvement Committee

We encourage families to become involved in our center by participating in our Parent Involvement Committee (PIC). The PIC serves as an advisory and support group for center management, teachers, and families. The PIC consists of eleven members. Seven members, one from each classroom of children enrolled in the Children's Center; four members are program staff (manager, program coordinator and 2 teacher liaisons). PIC members serve 15-month terms, starting in October and ending in December of the following year. The group's role is to provide a strong communication link about the family perspective on the program, plan social and fundraising events, and hold informational meetings. The PIC works closely with the manager, program coordinator, and staff to provide a high quality, child-centered environment for our children.

The Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) meets bi-monthly on the odd numbered months. Meetings are open to all families; meeting times and places are posted on the MCC website. Fundraising proceeds are used to finance activities or programs that benefit children and staff of the center.

Program Events

Each year the Parent Involvement Committee in coordination with the center staff, plans a few special events for children and families. Events such as our MCC Family Picnic, Graduation Celebration, and Week of the Young Child celebrations have been fun traditions and enjoyable ways for center families and staff to have fun, eat, mingle, get to know each other, and build community throughout the program. Family volunteers help orchestrate these events; we traditionally have a great turnout! We encourage families to consider volunteering your time and talents for one of these events.

MCC Fundraising

The PIC sponsors several fundraising events each year. These events provide funds for program family events, special programs, field trips and classroom learning materials. Participation in these fundraising events is optional, however, the success of each fundraiser directly adds to children's programming. We encourage families to participate.

When Something Comes Up

....Resolving Issues, Conflicts, Concerns

We live in a wonderfully diverse world, and families (and staff) come to MCC with very personal perspectives about raising children. These perspectives are deeply rooted in each family's values. Our "culture" at MCC is built on the premise of high-quality childcare experiences and extraordinary customer service, however it is inevitable that at some point an issue, conflict or concern will arise.

In keeping with our belief of building strong partnerships with families, we encourage you to let us know of any time you have an issue, complaint or concern. Together we can work to resolve issues and build a stronger relationship. We ask families to please address the issue by first talking with the person most involved. If

resolution is not achieved to your satisfaction, please reach out to the Supervisor and/or Manager.



Contact the Program Supervisor @ 417-5258



Contact the Manager at 417-6962

Relationships with Teachers & Family

Daily Communication/Sharing Information

Daily communication between families and teachers is essential to our providing good care for your child, so plan to take time at drop-off and pick-up each day to connect with your child's teacher. We ask that families offer information about the child's day, mood, meals, naps, health, family activities, or other special information that will help teachers understand your child's needs for the day. Teachers will provide families with similar feedback and share the important and interesting information about your child's day in the classroom.

Consulting on Important Child Issues

"It takes a whole village to raise a child" is a wonderful African proverb. As children grow, exciting new abilities emerge, and some come with challenges and frustrations. As families grow, situations may arise that may have a profound effect on a child – for example, the arrival of a new sibling, or the loss of a family pet. Both families and teachers play an essential role in supporting a child through life's challenges and milestones. By talking and working together, we can share ideas and resources, and find ways to bring out the best in a child.

Arrival and Departure Time

Arrival time is the start of your child's day at the center and is an important "transition" time of the day. Once in the classroom, sign your child in on the roster sheet and then take time to help them make the early morning adjustment and separate well from you. A simple routine always helps; the consistency can be reassuring to your child. Perhaps help them transfer their

personal belongings into their cubbies, walk in and greet the teacher. Teachers will help facilitate a gentle separation from you, and help your child reacquaint with classroom friends each morning.



We ask that you call us, by 9 am, if your child will not be in attendance (or arriving late) on any scheduled day. We will begin calling to locate you, including emergency numbers. These steps are required by WI State Licensing to aid the in protection of children.

Departure time is another important transition for you and your child. Please arrive with enough time. Greeting your child with a hug, listening to the news about their day, and helping them finish and put away their activities gives your child some time to think about going home, making the transition a little easier. Before you leave, check the bulletin boards for any informational memos, join your child in discovering what items in their cubby should go home with you, and be sure to notify teachers that you are leaving with child.



Children **must be** accompanied by an adult to the child's room and picked up by an authorized adult (at least 18 years of age) at the center. Please remember to ALWAYS make sure your child's teacher is aware of your child's arrival & departure.

Early Arrival/Late Departure

Our staffing patterns are based on the expected arrival and departure times submitted on children's schedules. Our ability to accommodate early arrivals or late departures is dependent on our staffing patterns. Please check with your child's teacher if you need to bring your child in early or are running late at the end of the day. Due to licensing restrictions, we must have all children out of the center by 530pm. If your child is scheduled until 530

pm, please plan to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to allow ample time for departure. **There is an early arrival/late departure charge that will be enforced, as outlined in the parent agreement.**




Classroom Activities

Our classrooms are as much a place for you as they are for your children. Our proximity to Meriter makes for some very special opportunities for families. We love when families join us for activities in the classroom! Your participation can be as simple as rocking your baby, having snack with us, reading a story, or helping to build a block structure. Families wishing to share talents, traditions, or tales are well appreciated too!

Family & Teacher Conferences

Family & Teacher Conferences are important building blocks in our relationship with families and are critical opportunities for families and teachers to collaborate on behalf of the child. We host Family & Teacher Conferences twice a year, usually in the fall and again in the spring.

Our Family & Teacher Conferences are meaningful and fun. Our focus is to:

-  talk about goals for your child's development, share ideas for how we can best support those goals here in our classrooms and at home.
-  celebrate your child's accomplishments – their development, growth & learning in our program and at home.
-  share precious stories about your child – exciting milestones, developmental leaps from home and the classroom.

Families may, of course, connect with teachers at any time to set aside time to meet and discuss your child's progress.

Relationships with Teachers & Children

♥ ***"It's through human relationships that a child first learns love, compassion, generosity, and creativity." Fred Rogers***

Infant/Toddler Program - Continuity of Care Model

Experiences in the early years of a child's life build a foundation for lifelong learning and living. Children at this early age benefit greatly from stable relationships with important people in their



lives. A strong, healthy relationship with significant adults - families & teachers - serves to support healthy development of a child's sense of trust, self-esteem, and autonomy. In our program, we honor the importance of relationships in our Continuity of Care Model, where the

infant/toddler children, families and teachers remain together for the first two years and are then supported as they transition into the young preschool program.

Young Preschool Program- Two-year-olds.

Children in our young preschool room begin their transition to learning to be more independent and focus on more self-help skills in preparation for preschool. Children ages 2-3 work on skills such as putting on their own shoes, coats and drinking from cups without lids. They build their self-esteem and social skills by building those early problem solving. The classroom's focus still focuses on the social and emotional growth, while supporting these new learners as they begin to flourish and stretch themselves to learn new skills and become more independent. Potty training often begins in the classroom, teachers will work with each family.

Preschool Program - Mixed Age Group Model.

Children in our Preschool Program grow and learn together in a mixed-age classroom of 3-to 5-year olds. This makes for a rich environment of social learning and supports a child's opportunities to be a mentor, a leader, a learner, a friend. In the Preschool Program, children, families, and teachers remain

together from the first days in the preschool program until the transition to kindergarten.

Transitioning classrooms

We will carefully plan all transitions, introducing children very gradually to their new classroom and new teachers. We will also plan thoughtfully for the adult side of the transition, working together to bridge this relationship change. Before the transition occurs, “new” teachers will begin to connect with “new” families on a casual, day-to-day basis, to build that important familiarity. We may purposefully combine classrooms at the beginning or end of the day, to familiarize children, families and teachers with the new routines and points of connection.

Transitioning from the Young Preschool Program to the Preschool Programs

The move from the Young Preschool Programs to the Preschool Program is a significant change for all. This is the largest group setting they will be in while at Meriter Children’s Center. Adjusting to this will take some time for everyone. We understand that this transition won’t be easy, and there will be some regression in behaviors. Teachers will work closely with families to support this transition to make it as smooth as possible.

Transitioning to Kindergarten

A child’s graduation to Kindergarten is an exciting event, one that fills teachers and families with great pride. It is also a significant transition, to a “new world” and a more complex school environment with greater responsibilities. This transition can be stressful, scary, and unnerving (to children and adults!). Working together, we can help children and adults say goodbye to the comfort and security of MCC and successfully enter this next phase of learning.



- ✎ As Kindergarten registration draws near, let us know. Teachers will begin talking about Kindergarten with the children in the classrooms, to help prepare them and provide a place where they can talk about their feelings openly.
- ✎ Rituals and celebrations are an important part of this transition. Make a big deal about little things like getting a new backpack, school supplies, and new school shoes. Join us in celebration at our Graduation Event. We will all be there with Kleenex and cameras.

O UR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Our Philosophy of Child Learning

At Meriter Children's Center, we provide a meaningful learning environment for all children, from our infant program through our preschool program.



In celebration of children, we honor the importance of play during these early learning years of a child's life.

"The gift to each child in the world should be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout a lifetime." Rachel Carlson

Honoring Play

We honor PLAY as the most meaningful learning experience in a child's life. Years of research about how young children learn document the many benefits of play for children's intellectual, social, emotional, physical and language development. Children play in many ways – exploring, experimenting, manipulating, collaborating, or discovering alone. Children are active learners – they use all their senses to make discoveries, gather information, and learn new things about the world.

Children are instigators of their own learning, they choose their own direction and let their natural inquisitiveness guide them. Teachers present the learning environment that supports, inspires and extends their learning. To facilitate a rich play experience, teachers carefully plan and present a wide variety of interesting materials, activities and conversations to deepen children's understanding of the world, and build their skills and knowledge.

Our Curriculum

Our curriculum at Meriter Children's Center is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and designed to promote positive outcomes for all young children. Our curriculum is based on ***NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice*** and the ***Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards***.





Meriter Children's Center offers a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum in an educationally and emotionally balanced program. Our child-centered environments offer warmth, friendliness and freedom for children to explore and learn about the world around them. Important qualities outside of academic readiness are instilled through a program based on curiosity, experimentation and hands-on learning.

You may wonder.....

"What can my child learn in a play-based curriculum?"

The Answer: EVERYTHING!!!

When your child participates in group activities, they are learning:

-  To listen and to understand spoken language
-  That their ideas are important
-  New vocabulary
-  To cooperate and to take turns

When your child plays on climbing equipment, they are learning:



- 👉 Self confidence
- 👉 Physical strength, coordination, and balance
- 👉 To cooperate with others
- 👉 To solve problems

When your child engages in dramatic play, they are learning:

- 👉 To use their imagination
- 👉 To develop their creativity
- 👉 To practice what they see others do
- 👉 To cooperate and share
- 👉 Self-help skills

When your child reads books, they are learning:

- 👉 That reading is important and enjoyable
- 👉 That letters on a page represent words
- 👉 New vocabulary
- 👉 To express their thoughts, feelings and ideas
- 👉 To listen to spoken language
- 👉 To create their own stories
- 👉 To use more complex language patterns in her own speech
- 👉 To follow the development of thoughts and ideas in the plot of a story
- 👉 To handle books with care



When your child participates in creative arts, they are learning:

- 👉 To express their imagination and creativity
- 👉 Concepts of size, shape, color and location
- 👉 How to create patterns and designs
- 👉 To distinguish patterns from background
- 👉 About different textures
- 👉 To hold a drawing tool and control its pressure
- 👉 Eye-hand coordination
- 👉 An acceptable way to make a mess and to clean up



When your child engages in sensory play, they are learning:

- 👉 Concepts of size, shape, color, quantity, volume and temperature

- ✎ Conservation (the amount of a substance remains the same even when the shape changes)
- ✎ To control the small muscles in his or her fingers and hands
- ✎ To use tools
- ✎ Eye-hand coordination
- ✎ To observe changes
- ✎ New vocabulary
- ✎ To verbally express what they see, hear, smell and feel

When your child plays with blocks, they are learning:

- ✎ To explore cause and effect
- ✎ To use the physical representations of addition and subtraction
- ✎ To develop eye-hand coordination
- ✎ To create, repeat and extend patterns
- ✎ To develop problem solving techniques
- ✎ To differentiate between sizes and shapes



Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

Meriter Children's Center has adopted the ***Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)*** as our framework for providing a learning environment for children from infancy through preschool age. The WMELS, guided by research and supported by content experts from institutions of higher education in the state, are designed to provide early learning opportunities that support children's continued success in school and future life. The basis for the development of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards is a set of guiding principles that specify beliefs and values about young children in Wisconsin. The primary principles are as follows:

- ✎ All children are capable and competent.
- ✎ Early relationships matter.
- ✎ A child's early learning and development is multidimensional.
- ✎ Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development.
- ✎ Children are individuals who develop at various rates.

- ✎ Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns.
- ✎ Children exhibit a range of skills and competencies within any domain of development.
- ✎ Children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment.
- ✎ Parents are children's primary and most important caregivers and educators.

A complete copy of the **Meriter Children's Center Curriculum Guide** is posted in the Family Resource area. More information about **Developmentally Appropriate Practice** may be found on the NAEYC website at www.naeyc.org or www.rightchoiceforkids.org. A complete copy of the **Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards** may be found on the State of WI website at www.dpi.state.wi.us/ccic.



Celebrating Our Diverse World

Meriter Children's Center staff believes in promoting a center-wide environment of acceptance. We want all who enter the center to feel love, respect, and acceptance of themselves and others.

We welcome all children and families and celebrate the richness of diversity in cultural, ethnic, religious backgrounds, family structures, or ability differences.

Our center values both our unity as a group and our individual uniqueness. In each classroom, as well as center-wide, there is a positive attitude of openness and acceptance toward all children and families.

We want the children of the Meriter Children's Center to gain a healthy self-esteem and learn respect for and awareness of people and cultures of the world. We want to foster a center-wide attitude of understanding, acceptance, and sensitivity to all.

Anti-Bias Curriculum

An anti-bias approach is integrated in all aspects of our classroom & curriculum. We actively and intentionally identify and counter any action or interaction that feels degrading with respect to gender, sexual orientation, age, language, ability, race, religion, family structure, background or culture. We take seriously our responsibility to help prepare our children to be successful in functioning as a contributing member of a diverse society.

Celebrations

At Meriter Children's Center, we honor celebrations, traditions and rituals that center on everyday life, milestones, points of learning, children & families, wonder and a child-centered world. One of our highlights of our celebratory year is "Week of the Young Child", celebrated in April. In general, we do not focus on activities or celebrations around holidays connected with faith/religion, in recognition and respect that not all families celebrate these holidays.

We are interested in learning about diverse family traditions and encourage families to share their family's traditions with the class.

Curriculum Planning

Each Meriter Children's Center classroom develops its own unique lesson plans, guided by Frog Street, the center's philosophy, and blending teachers' expertise and teaching style with children's unique styles, interests, developmental capabilities, and personalities. The lesson plans are developed with age appropriate ideas, materials, and activities. All center teachers have knowledge of a variety of curriculum approaches and draw from many of these to build a lesson plan that will best enhance the growth of the children.

Lesson plans are documented and posted in the classroom for families. The style of documentation may vary from room to room. As children move through the program, teachers will

communicate their different lessons to the families via HiMama!
And daily communication.

By giving each classroom the opportunity to develop and implement independent lesson plans, Meriter Children's Center feels that the unique and exciting learning environments created will foster the growth of the children, families, and staff to their highest potential.

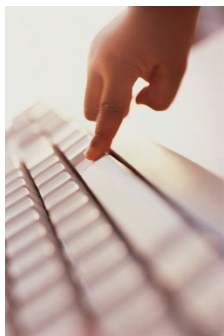
Inclusion Practice: Providing for Children with Special Needs

Meriter Children's Center strives to maintain an inclusive setting in which all children can succeed. Since all children are individuals, we believe in developing the whole child - emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially - in accordance with his or her own needs and styles. We feel strongly that children with special needs thrive in an environment that supports their independence and encourages them to pursue their own interests. To accomplish this, we maintain positive connections and plan for a child's development as a team that includes the child, the family, the program, and any support professionals involved in the child's care. The many resources available through the Meriter system strengthen our ability to provide for a variety of special needs.

If you have a concern about your child's development, having a conversation with your child's teacher is an important place to begin to seek ways to bring out the best in your child and find the support they need to develop their full, most glorious potential. Together we can talk about what we observe, where issues may lie, and look to our resources for support.

We are committed to working collaboratively with all families and support service providers, as a team, on behalf of the child.

Technology in the Classroom



Technology is a part of our learning environment. All children have opportunities to access developmentally appropriate technology in our classrooms. For example, in the infant/toddler rooms you will see cause & effect toys, in our preschool classrooms we have computers where the teachers help children look up answers to their questions, and in all classrooms, we listen to global music and recordings of children's literature.

O

UR TEACHERS

Our Teaching Staff

The Meriter Children's Center teaching staff is the heart of providing excellent care for your children.

Our team of dedicated, experienced teaching staff, with strong qualifications in early childhood development and education, provide high quality learning experiences. Teachers are carefully selected through a process that emphasizes education, experience, skill, and quality of interactions in working with young children and their families.

Classroom Teaching Team



All classrooms have a core team of Classroom Teachers, who hold primary responsibility for all aspects of relationships with children, classroom environment, teaching, management, family partnerships, and planning. Teachers' schedules are designed so that, as much as possible, a classroom teacher can be present for family connections at the beginning and end of the day.

Teacher Planning Time

Teachers are provided with specific times to meet as a team, or work individually, to reflect, assess, and plan for a rich classroom learning environment. Our Resource Teachers will step into the classroom when teachers are away on planning time.

Resource Teachers

A team of Resource Teachers supports the classroom team by stepping in whenever additional teaching staff is needed (staff breaks, planning time, days off, high attendance times, field trips). Resource Teachers have the pleasure of getting to know each child, and their family, in our program.

Teaching Staff Certification

All teaching staff hold early childhood teaching certification thru *The Registry*, and are required to complete training in CPR, First Aid, SIDS, Shaken Baby Syndrome, and Child Abuse. Criminal Record Checks are conducted on all staff, in accordance with WI State Licensing and Meriter Corporate Policy.



Dedication to Teachers' Continuing Education

We are committed to high quality programming and following best practices in the field of early childhood education. It is crucial that we, as early childhood professionals, keep informed of new developments and discoveries, new trends in the education of young children, and new approaches in building family partnerships.

All staff are required to complete a minimum of 15 hours of continuing education each year. We encourage staff to attend and present workshops, take classes, and visit other early childhood programs. Meriter Children's Center hosts scheduled Staff Education Days each year, in addition to monthly Staff Meetings.

Professional Development Responsibilities

Teachers fulfill annual professional development responsibilities, outside of the classroom teaching responsibilities, to contribute to their own professional development and the development of the program and field. Teachers may serve on program improvement teams, serve as a mentor for a student teacher, present a workshop, or participate in early childhood initiatives in efforts to continue in their growth & development.

Private Care Arrangements

Families often ask about staff's availability to babysit after-hours in their home. Meriter Children's Center does not recommend or refer staff to families and is not liable for the conduct of those who enter into a private childcare arrangement. Private childcare arrangements should not be made while the staff member is working; please contact them during non-working hours. Staff telephone numbers are confidential; please do not share staff telephone numbers with other families.

If staff and families enter a private childcare, the boundaries of the professional relationship change. Both parties are responsible for ensuring that no breaches of confidentiality occur regarding any information about the children, families, or staff of the center. It is inappropriate and unacceptable to discuss center issues in this context.

Our Most Important Responsibility: Supervising Children

At Meriter Children's Center, staff focus on fostering close relationship with children, engage in interactions often, and support optimal learning. The Children's Center staff carefully supervise the behaviors and activities of each child and all children, within sight and sound at all times, to ensure their health, safety and well-being.







We implement specific child tracking systems to ensure that we always know the whereabouts of children and are accountable for their safety. Families play an important role in these systems as well. Families hold responsibility for documenting their child's arrival and departure on the classroom sign-in sheets, attached to the clipboard which always accompanies the children.

Child Guidance and Discipline Policy

Meriter Children's Center strives to support each child's sense of individual worth and healthy self-esteem, while fostering a sense of community belonging and respect for the rights of others. We believe that young children develop optimally through close, trustworthy, affectionate, positive relationships with other people, particularly other adults. To truly support the child and foster their healthy socio-emotional development, a collaborative partnership between families and teachers is essential.

Families know their child best; teachers are very knowledgeable about children's development and education. Families and teachers working collaboratively helps the program best meet a child's needs. To support consistency between home and center and build a true partnership on behalf of the child, families are asked to provide teachers with information about their child.

We ask that families make an effort to:

-  help us understand the uniqueness of your child, their personality, temperament, and personal needs;
-  help us understand your family culture, values, and things that are important to you;
-  tell us about the child guidance techniques you use at home, what's working, and what's not (we can work together on some new ideas!);
-  let us know when special circumstances come up (such as moving to a new home, special visit from relatives, serious illness, new family arrangements), that may






affect your child's well-being (we can work together to support them through these transitions);

- 👉 keep us informed of any illness/health issues, allergies, or special needs that develop;
- 👉 discuss, plan, and coordinate with teachers the best way to handle routines (such as toileting, eating, napping, transition, etc.) - consistency between the home and center can make for an easier life for children & families;
- 👉 be actively involved in establishing goals for your child's development while in the program through daily conversations with teachers, parent-teacher conferences, and ongoing communication;
- 👉 be actively involved in working through any challenging issues that arise with your child through daily conversations with teachers, parent-teacher conferences, and ongoing communication.

Meriter Children's Center uses the following strategies to promote healthy social and emotional development and to guide children's behavior:








- 👉 we actively teach children the skills they need to be successful in social relationship, communication and emotional regulation
- 👉 we help children negotiate their interactions with one another
- 👉 we guide and support children to:
 - learn about themselves and others, play cooperatively, and use problem-solving skills
 - use language to communicate needs and express emotions in appropriate ways
 - interact in a respectful manner with all staff and children
- 👉 we serve as model for desired and acceptable behaviors

-  we respect all children's feelings and teach respect for the rights of others
-  we engage children in the community of the classroom
 - participation in decision-making, caring for the classroom
 - encouraging children to listen to each other
-  we proactively plan to prevent, and quickly respond to, potential problems
-  we provide a consistent, "yes" environment, with reasonable and developmentally appropriate expectations
-  we use effective strategies to encourage children's use of acceptable behaviors
 - applying logical or natural consequences
 - redirection – directing a child's attention to another activity
 - offering choices

At Meriter Children's Center, punishments that are humiliating or frightening to children are prohibited, even at parental request.

Examples of prohibited actions include:

-  spanking, hitting, pinching, shaking, or inflicting any other form of corporal punishment;
-  verbal abuse, psychological abuse, coercion, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family;
-  bonding or tying to restrict movement, or enclosing in a confining space such as a closet, locked room, box, or similar cubicle;
-  withholding or forcing meals, snacks, or naps;
-  punishment for lapses in toilet-training.

Typical Developmental Challenges

In these early years of life, children are learning how to get along, how to express themselves, and how to behave in socially acceptable ways. Learning the social ways, like learning to tie one's shoe, takes time and practice, and we adults are the children's 'coaches' for learning this important life skill. As you can imagine, having a group of children together for many hours a



day, all struggling to learn the same social skills, can present some challenges.

In toddler/twos classrooms, some behaviors such as biting, temper tantrums, pushing, pulling hair, defiance, screaming may present in the group. In our preschool classrooms, behaviors such as hitting, throwing toys or sand, pushing, defiance, lapses in toileting, yelling or using “potty words” may present in the classroom. Preschool children also have a natural curiosity about their own - and their friends’ - bodies. These are not unusual behaviors – in fact they are typical behaviors of the age, and at times may “wave” through the classroom. Our teachers skillfully facilitate a child’s learning to express themselves in more socially appropriate ways.

You may also experience some of these behaviors at home. When those challenging stages begin, be sure to let us know - working in unison can help extinguish inappropriate behaviors and facilitate a child’s learning appropriate behaviors more successfully. Teachers are a great resource for helpful strategies, articles, websites, and of course, understanding & support.

Some of our favorite resources that you might find helpful:
“Love at First Bite: The Problem of Biting in Young Children” by Lorna Aaronson – <http://dpi.wi.gov/ccic/ccicrbit.html>
“Parenting Counts” Parenting information from the Talaris Institute <http://www.talaris.org>

When Challenging Behaviors Present....What We Do:

Our Philosophy of Inclusion & Respect

We recognize that children come to us with varied skills, abilities and talents. When challenging behaviors present, we develop a plan with specific strategies to support each child in growing and learning to their full potential. In these plans, teachers:



first and foremost, work intentionally to prevent challenging or disruptive behaviors

- ✎ respond to a child's challenging behaviors in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and other children in classroom, with respect and calm.
- ✎ provide the child with information needed to learn the acceptable behavior.
- ✎ respond in thoughtful, consistent and individualized ways
- ✎ develop strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior, specific to the child and circumstances, that focus on
 - reducing the challenging behavior
 - teaching the child social, communication and emotional regulation skills
 - using environmental modification, activity modification, adult or peer support

When persistent, serious, challenging behaviors are present, the teachers, family and, if involved, other support professionals work as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success in the program. Sometimes learning new ways to behave or express emotions takes time and much practice, with great patience from the adults. We recognize that it may take time for these behaviors to resolve.

Simultaneously, teachers implement strategies in the classroom for all children to provide a safe and secure environment, support each child's needs being met, and offer all children the opportunity to learn how to get along in a world filled with people with diverse personalities, temperaments and social skills. With support of classroom teachers, all children learn to express themselves, engage in problem-resolution, establish boundaries, develop coping strategies, and learn to get along.

In addition, MCC management works carefully with teachers to provide resources, support, and specific training if needed. We may link with specialists in our professional support network for advice, consultation, ideas and resources.

Confidentiality

When challenges present, we ask that families work with us regarding concerns or issues. Let us know if there is something

bothering you about your child's care in the classroom. We will do our best to explain how we are approaching the situation. We may not, however, discuss another child's situation without that child's specific parental consent. (Nor would we discuss your child's circumstances or behavior with another family). We will do all we can to address your concerns, reassure you that we have plans in place, and develop strategies with your own child's welfare in mind.

The Daily Classroom

When you first visit your child's classroom, the teaching team will



provide you with a “Welcome to the Classroom” newsletter, describing the philosophy of the classroom, the teachers, the daily schedule, routines, curriculum features, and all sorts of interesting things about the classroom.

Our daily schedule, routines, groupings, and timelines are all important components in achieving learning goals. We aim to provide an environment that is predictable, consistent, and harmonious,

and that builds a strong sense of community in the classroom. Our days are planned at a child's pace – taking time for enjoyable moments, individualization, engaged interactions, and facilitating learning. We will support a child's home routine and schedule as much as possible in our classroom environment, for consistency. Our routines support a child in taking responsibility for their part in the world. Just like at home, we have “chores” such as cleaning up our toys, clearing away our dishes after meals, and getting our cots ready for naptime. The goal is for a child to internalize expectations, to master their environment and learn the “socially acceptable” expectations of our world.

Making Learning Meaningful for All Children

We joyfully honor each child in our classroom by integrating their unique interests and needs into our curriculum, routines, activities and events. We carefully observe and listen to children, and in doing so grow to understand where they are, and what they are interested in. This makes for a rich learning environment that is based on a child's real world.

Field Trips/Outdoor Activities

Outdoors, a child's spirit is set free. They can run, scream, jump, bounce, inhale the sights, sounds and smells of nature, and experience all kinds of interesting things. We play outdoors twice each day on our playgrounds, weather permitting. Our outdoor time is an extension of our learning environment – where science, nature, math, physics, gross motor development, exploration, and social relationships all come together.



Please dress your child in clothing appropriate for 45 minutes (or more!) of outdoor play. During inclement weather (*heavy rains, temperatures over 90°F; wind chills below 0°F for children 2 or older; wind chills below 20°F for infants & toddlers*) we play actively indoors in our gym.



For our Preschool class we plan outdoor activities and field trips throughout the year. Certainly, field trips seem to be much more fun with families on board – we welcome and encourage you to join us! The Madison community has wonderful places for children (the Library, UW Geology Museum, Madison Children's Museum, parks, Vilas Zoo), many of which are near the center. We also venture out into the broader community by leasing "the big yellow school bus" and visiting places such as the pumpkin patch, nature centers, etc.

These field trips provide a rich community experience for your child and present new information about the world.

Our field trip permission form will authorize your child's participation. Families will be notified in advance of field trip dates and destinations, form of transportation, and estimated departure and return times. Families wishing to join our field trips accompanied by siblings under the age of 3 years are asked to use their own vehicle (and car safety seats) for transportation.

Meriter Children's Center will only transport children using the a chartered school bus, or a Meriter bus that meets the WI DOT definition of a bus with a seating capacity of greater than 15, per State Licensing regulations. Emergency contact information will accompany each child.

DOCUMENTING & ASSESSING YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING/DEVELOPMENT

Children's Assessment Portfolios

While your child is with us at Meriter Children's Center, we will pay particular attention to their growth, play, learning, development and accomplishments over time.

We have adopted the Children's Assessment Portfolios method of documenting each child's progress while they are here with us. Children's Assessment Portfolios are a structured way for us to



focus on capturing “authentic moments” of learning in the child's natural environment. We do this by collecting samples of a child's work, documenting developmental achievements, taking photos of children engaged in learning activities, and writing anecdotal descriptions of significant moments in their play/learning day.

Children's Assessment Portfolios help us tell the complete story about your child's play/learning experiences here at MCC. These compilations present a window for parents and teachers to peer into the child's day of learning - yesterday, today, and many days on end. Portfolios are a confidential document to be shared between family and staff only.

We present these portfolios during our ***Family & Teacher Conferences***, held twice each year. And as your child grows into their next phase of life learning we will present you with a delightful memoir of their time with us – to add to your keepsake collection!

Referrals & Consultants

While our teachers are specifically trained in child development and early childhood education, there may be times when we link with specialists in our professional support network for advice, consultation, ideas and resources. We may bring in consultants (City of Madison, UW -Extension, Wisconsin Child Care Improvement Project, other Early Childhood Education specialists) to observe the classroom/program and advise us on ways to adapt our environment, teaching practices or strategies to better serve children and families.

There may be times when we work in partnership with families to seek consultation about a particular child's growth and development. With family permission, we may refer a child to specialists such as the Birth-to-Three Program, Imagine a Child's Capacity, Rainbow Project, School Districts, Meriter Physical Medicine & Rehab staff, or other medical staff for observation, information sharing, assessment, evaluation or consultation. When a child is benefitting from support services, Meriter Children's Center staff is committed to being a part of the support team, and will work in collaboration with service providers on behalf of the child.

PROTECTING CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Health & Wellness Practices & Policies

Mothers and Breastfeeding



Our proximity to the hospital supports mothers who wish to breastfeed during the day. We can work with you to coordinate feeding times, and there is a space in each classroom for privacy. We have refrigerators in each infant classroom to easily accommodate storing breastmilk. Please provide breastmilk stored in ready-to-feed sanitary containers, labeled with your child's name and the date.

Health Information

It is required that each child have an initial physical examination not more than 90 days prior to nor 30 days after the first day at the center. Families must submit a health record form to the center, signed and dated by a physician, physician assistant, or health check provider, for the child's file. Health reports are to be renewed at least once every two years for children over 2 years of age; once every 6 months for children under 2 years of age.



Health & Emergency Care Plan

It is critical that families provide staff with information about any allergies, disabilities, or special needs that might affect the child's participation in the program and provide us with specific instructions for managing those needs. Information is to be provided on the Health & Emergency Care Form, which is updated every 6 months, and includes medication forms for those with chronic health conditions.

Allergies, Special Diets and Special Health Needs

Meriter Children's Center is linked with a variety of Meriter support services that can assist in providing for individual children's special health or developmental needs and provide specific training for our staff. If your child has allergies, medical needs, a health condition, disability, or other special needs, let us know how we can best support your child in our program. We will ask families to provide written instructions on how to provide for the child's needs, precautions, response actions, and other necessary information upon enrollment, and ask that the information be updated periodically.

Immunization Record

It is required that we have a current record of your child's immunizations on file at the center. Please update this

information as your child receives additional immunizations over time.

Animals & Pets at MCC

Children adore animals and pets provide valuable learning opportunities for children. Some classrooms may have a small pet, fish, or insect as part of the science curriculum, and children may be involved in the observation and care of that pet.

Information on pets currently living at the Children's Center may be found on the MCC Program Information Bulletin Board, and we will inform parents of any new pets prior to adding them to the classroom. The Vilas Zoo is in our neighborhood, and we frequently visit the animals to see what they are up to. Please be sure to inform your child's teacher of any pet allergies, or if you prefer that your child not participate in the care of our pets.

Nap Time/Rest Time

Children have very active, and sometimes long, days in our program, and have a physical need to "recharge their batteries" at some point in the day. Children who nap/rest are typically much

happier in the afternoons, have more energy, and more able to cope when challenges arise.



All children under 5 years of age who have been at the center for four hours or more are provided with a nap/rest period. This includes a 20-minute relaxation time (with books/music/story tapes) followed by a 30-minute nap/rest period. Some children will nap for a half hour, some of course will nap for longer periods. Infants will sleep several times during a day, and toddlers may take one or two naps.

Children rest on individual cots (infants in cribs) in the classroom, supervised by staff. In the infant program, we follow SIDS protocols and place infants to sleep on their backs.

We ask that you provide a sheet and blanket from home to “personalize” rest time. You may also want to send along a special “cuddly” just for rest time. Families will be asked to take home sheets and blankets once a week for laundering.

Administering Medication

No medication (including prescription and non-prescription medications, diaper or hand lotions, vitamins, herbal remedies, sunscreen, or insect repellent) can be administered to a child without prior written consent of the parent.

Non-prescription (over-the-counter {OTC}) medications must be in the original container, including the dosage and directions for administering, and labeled with the child’s first and last name. If the OTC label indicates that physician should be consulted for dosage, parents must sign a statement indicating that the physician has been consulted and the dosage is consistent with the physician’s recommendations.

Blanket authorizations, or instructions to administer an OTC medication “as needed”, will not be permitted. Meriter Children’s Center will not administer OTC cough and cold products, including decongestants, expectorants, antihistamines, and antitussives to children under 2 years of age.

Authorization forms are available in each classroom and must be filled out completely for administration instructions. Medications must be in the original container, labeled with the child’s name, birthdate, name of the medication, and include dosage and directions for administering. Staff will maintain records of when medications are administered and provide families with that information at the end of the day.

Sunscreen, Diaper Lotions & Insect Repellant

Sunscreens, diaper lotion and insect repellent may only be applied with written consent of the parent and must be labeled with the child's first and last names.

When children are playing in the sun, they must wear sun-protective clothing, applied skin protection, or both. Applied skin protection will be either sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher that is applied to exposed skin.

The State of WI DHFS Department of Public Health recommends the use of insect repellents due to a high risk of insect-borne disease. Repellents containing DEET* are recommended, to be applied only on children older than two months. Insect repellent is to be applied no more than once a day.

Up to date information regarding insect repellent can be found on the *Center for Disease Control* website: www.cdc.gov and the *WI Dept of Health Services* website: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov.

Smoking and Firearms Prohibited

Smoking and firearms are prohibited in all areas of the Children's Center, including anywhere in the facilities, on the playgrounds, parking lots, or any adjacent grounds.

Infection Control Policy

The health of children, families, and staff is important to us all. In a child care setting, where groups of young children and staff spend many hours together, good infection control and health practices are essential. Viruses, infections, and contagious diseases can spread quickly in this environment. We work hard to encourage healthy habits, respond quickly to the needs of ill children, and minimize exposure to germs.

The Children's Center provides a system of infection control practices to protect children and staff in the program.

Cleanliness and Hand washing

The Meriter Children's Center takes special care to ensure that toys and equipment are kept clean and germ-free. Infant toys are cleaned and sanitized daily; toys in other classrooms are washed periodically as needed. We use a three-step sanitizing process after each diaper change to keep our diaper changing areas clean. Staff washes hands thoroughly to inhibit the spread of germs and use gloves for an added layer of protection. Hand washing techniques are taught to children at an early age and used consistently in the classrooms before and after meals, when toileting, and many other times throughout the day. All soiled clothing, including cloth diapers, will be placed in a protective waterproof bag and secured in a container for parents to take home.

Observation and Isolation

Teachers observe children throughout the day for signs of illness. Should a child become ill while at the center, staff will contact families to come pick up their child. The child will be offered a quiet place to rest, away from other children, until families can arrive.

Children with Illness

A child showing any signs of illness should not be brought to the center. Families are asked to call the center to notify us that your child will not be in attendance. Children in attendance will be participating in all activities of the day, including outdoor play. If you feel your children are not well enough to participate in all activities, it would be in their best interest to keep them home.

Guidelines for Excluding Ill Children from the Center

In order to protect your child, other children, and staff, the Parent Advisory Council has endorsed this set of guidelines on illness - guidelines based on recommendations from

the City of Madison Department of Public Health and Meriter's Infection Control Program.

*Please see attached illness guidelines.



Exposure to Communicable Diseases

Staff will inform families when children have been exposed to any communicable disease at the center. We ask that families notify us of any exposure outside of the center.

Because we are a childcare program, we may be required to report certain instances of communicable disease to the City of Madison Department of Public Health. The Meriter Children's Center does so in conjunction with Meriter's Infection Control Program. The manager or program supervisor will inform families any time it is necessary to make such a report.

Exposure to Blood and Other Potentially Infectious Materials

Meriter Children's Center practices Meriter's Standard Precautions Procedures any time there is a presence of blood or other potentially infectious body fluids. Should an exposure occur, Meriter's Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Procedures will be followed, and Meriter Infection Control Program will advise us on steps to take to protect children and staff.

Children's Nutritional Well-Being

Nutrition and Meals

Meriter Children's Center provides your child a nutritious, well-balanced breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack, in accordance with the *WI DPI Child and Adult Care Food Program*. Meals are prepared on site by our kitchen coordinator; menus are posted in each classroom. Any menu changes for the day are noted on the

Menu posted in each classroom and also noted on the daily sheet; infant and toddler families are provided with daily information about foods and quantities eaten.

Staff serve meals family style in the classroom at no more than 3-hour intervals, serving child-sized portions, and encouraging conversation, independence, and learning self-help skills.

Special Dietary Needs

Menu accommodations can be made for allergies or special dietary needs.

Families will be asked to provide dietary information and recommendations for menu substitutions, we will work closely with Meriter Food & Nutrition Services to serve nutritious alternative. Families may be asked to provide supplemental food items, and/or instructions from the child's health care provider, as necessary. Some food allergies may require us to take preventive measures to protect children, such as designating a "peanut-safe" zone for children with peanut allergies. *Please note that Food & Nutrition Services prepares our meals in a facility that prepares foods containing nuts and peanuts.*



Food items brought from home to supplement a child's menu must be labeled with the child's name, dated, stored in a sealed container, and refrigerated if perishable. No food items may be stored in a child's locker or cubby.

Our Kitchen Coordinator

Our Kitchen Coordinator holds responsibility for the food service at MCC. 4 hours of continuing education training in areas of menu planning in collaboration with Meriter Food & Nutrition Services, prepare and serve meals to the classrooms, proper food storage and sanitation procedures, and may at times facilitate

nutrition activities in the classrooms is completed on an annual basis.

Special Treats

Many families enjoy bringing in a special treat for their child's classroom, in celebration of a special day (birthday, traditional celebration) or just for the fun of it. We encourage families to consider healthy snack foods for treats (juice bars, frozen yogurt, wholesome breads and muffins, carrot cake, oatmeal raisin cookies, etc.). Simple celebrations are the best in a classroom with young children - we ask that families consult with classroom teachers about special celebration activities.



Please note the following requirements for foods brought from home/special treats:



We do not accept foods/treats that are home-made...special treats must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers (commercial bakery-sealed boxes are ok!)



We do not accept any snack/treats that contain peanuts or tree nuts due to the prevalence of allergies.

Providing Breastmilk for Infants

Each infant classroom has a refrigerator and freezer to accommodate storing breastmilk for babies. Please provide breastmilk in individual containers labeled with your child's name and date.

Maintaining a Healthful Environment

Cleaning and Sanitation Services

Meriter Environmental Services department provides us with daily cleaning & sanitation services. Each day, after the center is closed, environmental services staff arrives to thoroughly clean

and sanitize each classroom, the bathrooms, hallways and gym areas. Supplemental cleaning, carpet shampooing, and floor polishing is scheduled on a regular basis.

Please Remove Your Shoes

In the infant classrooms, we ask that everyone (staff, children, families) remove your shoes prior to entering the classroom, or cover your shoes with our lovely “blue slippers” located outside the classroom. This helps us to maintain a clean floor surface for those crawling babies.



Safety & Security

Injuries and Accident Reports

Any time a child is hurt or injured at Meriter Children’s Center, the teacher most immediately involved will fill out an accident report. Families will be notified of the injury and asked to sign the report on the day of the incident. Families receive a copy of the accident report; a copy is placed in the child’s file and a report is entered in the accident log in the classroom.

Accident and Medical Log

The center maintains a log of accidents, incidents, and medications administered. These logs are confidential; families may request a copy of any entries involving their children from the manager or program coordinator. These logs are reviewed periodically by staff to identify areas where program improvements may provide a safer environment.

Emergency Information

Upon enrollment, families provide the center with emergency information. The enrollment form information includes home and

work addresses, telephone numbers where families can be reached, alternate emergency contacts, physician's name and phone number, insurance information, and persons authorized to pick up the child. Families shall provide the program with accurate and updated emergency information, including changes in the information provided at enrollment. Families should remember to notify staff of a telephone number where they can be reached when away from home or work phones.

Emergency Medical Situation

If families cannot be reached in a situation when a teacher feels immediate medical treatment is necessary, she or he will contact the child's physician for instructions and follow the physician's advice. Staff will also notify the families' office/department of an emergency situation. If necessary, Madison Fire Department paramedics will be called to transport the child to the Meriter Hospital Emergency Room. If a life threatening situation arises, staff will immediately call for assistance from the Meriter Code Response Team and the Madison Fire Department paramedics. A list of emergency phone numbers for community services are posted by each classroom phone.

Sign-In and Sign-Out

Parents are responsible for posting sign-in and sign-out times for your child. Individual classrooms will use an attendance tracking form to verify an official count of which children are under the care of the Meriter Children's Center. This system is crucial for keeping track of children in our daily routines and when emergencies arise. Should a child go missing, we will follow the UPH-Meriter emergency protocol.

Persons Authorized to Pick-Up a Child

Staff will only release children to an adult (at least 16 years of age) who is authorized by you to call for them (written authorization on the enrollment form). Any change in who is authorized to call for your child must be submitted in writing. Be certain that adults

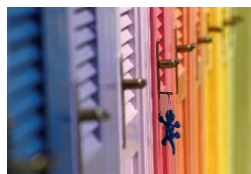
you authorize to pick up your child are aware that they are on the list, as they will be called in the event you can't be reached, and your child needs to be picked up (i.e., illness, end of day lateness). If staff do not know the person, we will ask them to present a photo ID when they arrive.

Arriving Under the Influence

If a parent or other person authorized to pick up a child arrives at the center appearing to be under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs, the staff will contact one of the following: Meriter Security, Madison Police Department, and/or Dane County Social Services.

Closing Time

Our center closes promptly at 6 p.m. Families are encouraged to arrive early and spend time visiting with your child and teacher before closing time. Closing staff will help children gather their belongings a few minutes prior to locking classrooms at 530 p.m. Please remember that many teachers need to catch buses, take evening classes, work second jobs, or have family obligations, and will need to leave promptly at closing time.



Child Abuse Reporting

It is the policy of Meriter Children's Center that all staff and volunteers act to protect the health and welfare of a child by reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. The State of Wisconsin mandates that all child care staff be observant of and report all suspected cases of abuse and/or neglect of a child to Dane County Human Services, Child Protection Services.

Confidentiality Policy

It is the policy of Meriter Children's Center to maintain and protect the confidentiality of records for and information about children, families, and center staff, and to respect each person's

right to privacy. While we realize that requests for information about families and staff are often made with good intentions, please recognize that we may not provide information to others without specific consent of the families or staff involved.

We maintain a confidential enrollment file for each child for the duration of his or her enrollment in the program. Required enrollment information, along with records of accident reports, incident reports, medication records, progress reports, and other pertinent information, are kept in these files. Families, upon request, may have access to all records and open reports maintained on their children.

Security

Meriter Security provides on-site security services, available at all times. Security officers periodically walk through the center, provide advice, are immediately available for any security issues that arise, and at times provide educational opportunities for the children.

A Security System is installed for safety and protection. MCC uses a card-reader system. Your employee ID will be coded upon enrollment, and we will issue one Family ID card, which will offer access to the program during operating hours. In addition, we also use a doorbell/video monitor system is used for visitors and occasional “guests”.

We require your written permission to allow friends, family members or co-workers to visit, observe, or stop by to say hello with your child.

Exit Doors & Playground Gate Safety

For the safety of all children, we ask families to be diligent about closing doors and playground gates when coming & going.



Family Access

At all times when a child is present, at any time during the operating hours of the program, parents & legal guardians have the right to visit their child and pick them up. The exception would be if a Court Order was issued to limit such rights; families must provide a copy of the Court Order for enforcement.

Parking Lot Safety

Please watch your child carefully in the parking lots. Keep them close by your side for their safety. We ask you not to let them run ahead to your car. Please do not leave parked cars with the engine running while you drop-off or pick-up your child.

Emergency Situations

Families play an important role in helping us be prepared for emergency situations. Each child has emergency information (a copy of the enrollment form) in the classroom; we ask families to provide us in writing with accurate and updated emergency information including changes in address, home phone numbers, work phone numbers, emergency contacts, physician's name and phone number, insurance information and persons authorized to pick up your child. It is critical that families inform staff of where they can be reached (telephone number) when away from home or work phone.

Fire and Tornado Drills

Meriter Children's Center practices monthly fire evacuation drills year-round, and monthly tornado evacuation drills during tornado

season. Emergency supply kits are located in each of our safety zones.

Disaster Plan

Meriter Children's Center plays a role in the Meriter Disaster Plan. In case of a community disaster that would require hospital employees to be called in to work, the Children's Center may be called upon to provide child care services for enrolled families. Families may call the center to make arrangement for child care services available as our staff, space, and resources permit.

Emergency Evacuation Plans

In the event that it becomes necessary to evacuate the classrooms or building, the Meriter Hospital Atrium is designated as our alternate indoor location. If it is determined that we are unable to return to the building after evacuation, Meriter Hospital Switchboard will support us in contacting parents.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Community Partnerships

"Our neighborhood" at Meriter Children's Center is the Meriter UnityPoint Health Services community, the Madison community, and the Early Childhood community. We actively engage in celebrations, fundraising, adventures and events in our community to strengthen the fabric of our program. We seek support, training and guidance from our many community resources to strengthen our ability to foster healthy development and learning, and to support families in raising happy, healthy children. We serve as a model high quality early childhood program for the community, hosting tours, presenting workshops, collaborating, and mentoring student teachers in their teaching practicums.

Community Resources

We have many strong family support services and consultants in our community. Reference to many of our Madison Community Resources may be found on the final page of our Family Handbook.

Our Community Events bulletin board features many of the local Madison museum exhibits, concerts, theatre, and special events for families. This information can be found in the Family Resource Area.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

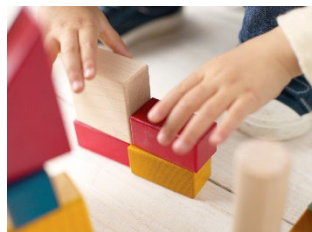
Our Facilities

Meriter Children's Center is in our child-centered, special designed building on the corner of Mills and Mound streets. Building features include:

- 2 playgrounds (Infant/Toddler and Preschool)
- Indoor Gym
- Family Resource Area
- Fully ADA compliant
- Interactive children's garden
- Interactive Art and Music Studio

Equipment, Materials & Furnishings

Classroom materials are carefully selected by staff to match the developmental needs of children in the group, to inspire learning, and to create an aesthetically pleasing, responsive classroom environment. We seek materials that are sturdy, durable, and of high quality. Our art materials are non-toxic, specially produced for the early childhood classroom. Meriter Children's Center subscribes to the Consumer Products Safety Commission (www.cpsc.gov) for information on product safety and alerts.



Toys from Home

Children often like to bring a special item from home to share with their friends. Sometimes, this can be heartbreaking when a special toy becomes lost or damaged. We ask that families check with the classroom teachers about bringing in items from home. Some classrooms ask that this be limited to special occasions, and that children leave their items from home in the car, or in their cubby. Of course, a beloved stuffed animal or soft toy that holds special significance as an attachment object, is welcomed.

Facility Monitoring

We work closely with Facilities Management to ensure a safe & healthy environment for children, families & staff. A site inspection is conducted annually (and ongoing as needed), to monitor for important environmental components such as air quality, water quality, mold, and radon. Our program uses Integrated Pest Management techniques to safely control pests in our buildings. Building reports are kept on file in the Children's Center Office.

L EADERSHIP and MANAGEMENT **Program Leadership**

Meriter Children's Center is a department of Meriter Hospital, part of the Human Resources Division. We report directly to the Chief Human Resource Officer. The Children's Center Manager oversees the Children's Center Department. The Program Coordinator oversees the waitlist, enrollment and program needs. Our Administrative Resource Teacher serves as administrative support to the management team and takes responsibility for the site if the Manager or Program Coordinator is away from the center. A team of teachers serve in an "in-charge" capacity should all the above be away from the center.

Our Open Door

We invite families to share ideas, questions, concerns, perspectives, insights, or cute stories about your child with our program leadership at any time. Our service to families is always with an open-door, and we welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively on ways to better our program. There are multiple ways to connect with us – via hallway conversations, phone call, email, note, meeting – and if we are not available at the moment, we will do our best to set aside time as soon as possible for a good discussion.

Policies & Procedures

Meriter Children's Center policies and procedures in this Family Handbook are provided in condensed version. Full copies of the policies and procedures are available in the office for families to view- if you'd like a copy, please ask. Frequently referred to policies are available on our MCC website.

Policies and procedures are written by MCC management, with input from staff and parents, and in consultation with our Meriter and community experts. The Parent Advisory Council reviews all policies pertaining to families prior to final draft. Meriter Administration reviews and gives final approval of all Children's Center policies.







Enrollment Policy

Meriter Children's Center is a program offered as part of its Employee Benefits and Services program. Enrollment is open to all employees of Meriter Health Services to provide child care services for employees during Meriter employment. In addition, starting in the fall of 2013, we opened our program to accept community families as well. Enrollment in each age group is limited. Once enrollment is full, a waiting list will be established for future enrollment. Full-day enrollments are not to exceed 9.5 hours per day. Children must be enrollment for a minimum of 2 full days each week.

As an enrollment opening occurs, parents will be contacted from the waiting list. Siblings of currently enrolled children are given priority on a first-come, first-serve basis, for enrollment openings. New families will then be contacted - on a first-come, first-serve basis - for any remaining enrollment openings, with Meriter families getting priority placement.

A non-refundable \$100 registration fee, a non-refundable 1st week's tuition deposit, and completed Enrollment Form are required for enrollment in the program. Families may enroll their child provided that the child will be scheduled to attend within two weeks of the enrollment opening date. A \$250 per week hold fee is required. Holding an enrollment opening beyond the two-week period will require payment of full tuition.

Forms Required for Enrollment (color-coded)

-  Enrollment Form (blue)
-  Health Report (yellow)
 - updated every six months for infants & toddlers
 - updated every two years for children over the age of 2)
-  Immunization Record (green)
 - updated annually
-  Health Care & Emergency Plan Form (orange)
 - updated every six months
-  Permission Form (purple)
-  Child Intake Form (white)
 - updated every three months for infants & toddlers
 - updated annually for children over the age of 2

Waiting List Policy

We maintain a waiting list, by age group, for future enrollment. Families may place their name on the waiting list for children ages infancy through 5 years. For children due to arrive, families may



place their name on the waiting list when pregnancy is confirmed, or when the adoption or guardianship process is officially initiated.

We will contact families from the waiting list as openings occur. Enrollment priorities are defined above. Families have the option to decline enrollment one time and maintain their place on the waiting list. The second and following times a parent is offered enrollment and declines, their name will be placed on the bottom of the waiting list as of that date.

Admissions Policy

It is the policy of Meriter Children's Center to provide equal opportunity to any child and family in regard to admission into the program, except where it is a reasonable and necessary age requirement. The center does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, creed, handicap, political persuasion, national origin, or ancestry.

Physically, emotionally, and developmentally disabled children will be accepted into the program, where the physical setting is accessible to the child, and the staff has the necessary training to provide appropriate care. In cases where the program will not meet the needs of a disabled child, staff will make an effort to refer the family to a more appropriate program.

MCC Family Agreements

Families enrolling their children at Meriter Children's Center are asked to sign an annual MCC Family Agreement, outlining the contract for enrollment. This ensures that the center has the

appropriate spot for your child, and that staffing requirements for quality childcare are met.

Probationary Period

There is a three-week probationary period after the child begins at the center, during which time either the family or center staff may decide that this arrangement is not appropriate. The child may be withdrawn from the center during the probationary period without advanced notice. The registration fee is forfeited; tuition fees will be refunded from the agreed upon last day of enrollment. Tuition fees are due prior to the last day of care. If families decide to withdraw their child from the center after the probationary period, a 30-day minimum written notice is required.

Center Hours

Meriter Children's Center is open Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. year-round.

Center Closing

The center is closed for the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving and Christmas. If a holiday falls on a weekend, it will be observed on either the preceding Friday or the following Monday according to Meriter policy. The Center may also close additional holidays when determined by hospital administration.

The center will close for Staff Education Days as defined in the MCC Family Agreement and closes early (at 4:45pm) once a month, for Staff Meeting Nights.

Should the Meriter Children's Center cease services and close operation, families will be notified at least 30 days in advance and tuition fees will be refundable from the last day of enrollment.

Winter Weather/Snow Days

MCC will be open during inclement weather and snow days. We ask that you use good judgment in traveling with your child. If another family member is home and able to take care of your child, it may be safer to keep them at home.



Termination of Enrollment Policy

Family Initiated Termination of Enrollment

When a family decides to withdraw their child from the center following the three-week probationary period, a **30-day written notice, including the child's last day of attendance, is required.** Tuition fees are non-refundable through the last day of the 30-day notice. Any credit balance will be refunded within 30 days after termination.




Mutual Decision Between Family and Center to Terminate Enrollment

If center staff and families concur that the placement is inappropriate for the child or family, the 30-day notice may be waived. Tuition fees are refundable from the agreed upon last day of attendance. Any credit balance will be refunded within 30 days after termination.

Termination of Enrollment: Child Focused

Our policy is to provide the best care possible to children enrolled. There may be times, however, when the center cannot adequately meet the needs of an individual child. Termination of a child's enrollment may be necessary; when it is being considered, center staff will initiate a conference with the family to discuss the situation, options, possible solutions, and create a plan of action. In deciding, the following will be considered:

- 👉 staff's ability to meet the child's needs;
- 👉 the extent of problematic issues and their impact on the classroom;

-  resources available to the center and demands on staff resources;
-  potential dangers to the child or others;
-  families' willingness to cooperate in problem-solving.

If the decision is made to terminate a child's enrollment, the center will try to refer the family to community resources and more appropriate programs. The family and center staff will decide upon a final day of attendance. Tuition fees are refundable from the agreed upon last day of attendance. Any credit balance will be refunded within 30 days after termination.

Termination of Enrollment: Family Focused

Termination of a child's enrollment may be necessary due to circumstances involving families (such as failure to pay tuition fees, failure to provide required information, failure to comply with program policies, etc.). In such cases, the center will notify families of the enrollment termination date. Tuition fees are non-refundable through the last day of enrollment. Any credit balance will be refunded within 30 days after termination.

When a family member terminates employment with Meriter or a Meriter Associate organization, the services of Meriter Children's Center are available if a new parent agreement is signed to reflect the change to the Associate tuition rate. The manager or program coordinator must be notified immediately and provide a two-week written notice.

Scheduling Policy

A child's enrollment is defined in the MCC Family Agreement. Schedule for drop-in care are accepted in advance but are not guaranteed until confirmation is received from our Program Coordinator. Requests for changes in schedules and additional

childcare days may be submitted within the current scheduling procedures and guidelines.

The “Two-Week Notice Timeline”

The center completes its staffing schedules on Tuesdays (e.g., August 4th) for the period two-weeks following (e.g., August 17-21). All children’s advance **Ad-on schedule requests** for that week are due **no later than 9 a.m. on Tuesday**, so that we may be able to schedule sufficient staff to maintain quality staff-to-child ratios, and process staff requests for time off.

Fiscal Accountability Policies & Procedures

MCC Family Agreements

Upon enrollment, parents (the Meriter employee holds primary responsibility) will be asked to sign a MCC Family Agreement, outlining the enrollment agreement for the year. MCC Family Agreements are renewed annually; interim changes may be made with thirty-day written notice, as enrollment patterns allow.

Tuition Payments

A biweekly tuition rate is calculated for each child, based on current tuition rates, choice of enrollment options, and the number of contracted childcare days. No credits are offered for vacation days, sick days, holidays or days when the Children’s Center is closed. Tuition payments are due in advance, on the first day of the biweekly period. Payment is made with an electronic funds transfer, but Tuition Express, from a designated checking account. *For information on how you can save on childcare expenses through Meriter’s Flexible Spending Account (pre-tax deductions for dependent care) contact the Human Resources Benefit Manager (extension 6052).*

Tuition Accounts/Billing

Tuition Accounts are maintained and updated on a biweekly basis. Families are provided with a quarterly tuition account summary (please review for accuracy) and an annual tuition account summary (please save for tax purposes). Tuition charges, payment agreements, late fees and additional charges are outlined in the Parent Agreement.

Tuition Assistance

Some families may be eligible for tuition assistance thru the State of WI Shares Program/County funding (242-7441) the City of Madison Child Care Tuition Assistance program (266-6520), or the UW-Madison Child Care Tuition Assistance Program (CCTAP) (265-9662). We are happy to work with families on processing these funding accounts, please let us know if you are receiving funding from one of these sources.

Meriter Pre-Tax Flexible Benefits Program

Employees of Meriter are eligible for savings in childcare tuition costs thru the Meriter Pre-Tax Flexible Benefits Program. For more information on this valuable benefit, please contact the Human Resources Benefits Manager at x6052.

Health, Nutrition and Safety Policies & Procedures

Health, Nutrition and Safety Policies & Procedures

Meriter Children's Center has in place policies and procedures to guide us in providing a healthy, nutritious, and safe environment for your children. Policies and procedures are written with support of Meriter Infection Control Program, Food & Nutrition Services, Security, Risk Management, and Environmental Services, and following the requirements and recommendations of State Licensing and City of Madison. Policy summaries are provided in this Family Handbook. Full copies of our policies are available for review in the office.

Our Support Departments

Meriter Children's Center appreciates the support of the Meriter departments that serve us regularly: Facilities Management, Security, Infection Control Program, Nursing Education, Food & Nutrition Services, Risk Management, Human Resources, Finance and Payroll, Volunteer & Guest Services.

Community Supports

Meriter Children's Center links with many community organizations in our quest to provide a high quality child care environment, including Community Coordinated Child Care (4-C's), UW-Extension, City of Madison Child Care Unit, Dane County, Madison Fire Department, Madison Police Department, WI DPI – Child & Adult Care Food Program, and the WI Department of Public Health. We are active in many Early Childhood professional networks and organizations including Child Care in Health Care, WI Early Childhood Association, WI Child Care Administrators Association, and the WI Child Care Improvement Project.




Emergency Preparedness




Meriter Children's Center works closely with Meriter Risk Management, Security and the Safety Committee in developing policies and procedures for Emergency Preparedness.

Personnel Policies

Meriter Children's Center is committed to providing high quality child care services by a highly qualified team of warm, caring, experienced professionals. Our Personnel Policy facilitates effective program administration, enhance understanding of expectations, and serve as a basis for effective and consistent communication among staff, program and families

Each staff person holds professional responsibility to:

-  uphold the Mission, Values and Vision of Meriter Health Services;
-  support the Meriter Children's Center Mission and Philosophy;
-  comply with Meriter Health Services and Meriter Children's Center Policies;

-  comply with DHFS Licensing Standards for Group Day Care Centers;
-  comply with City of Madison Accreditation criteria;
-  follow the Meriter Corporate Code of Ethical Conduct.





Gift Giving/Receiving Policy




Meriter Children’s Center has established clear guidelines on gift giving and receiving from or to children, parents, and/or families. The guidelines support professional relationships between families and staff and comply with the *Meriter Corporate Policy #A-15 “Gifts & Gratuities”*.

We recognize that parents are likely to be Meriter employees and can be perceived as co-workers, however within this setting, families and staff are in a customer/client relationship. While gift giving is usually meant to express gratitude, provide recognition, or help celebrate events, these same gifts can have other, unintended impacts – they can be perceived as displays of favoritism and/or create a sense of obligation to reciprocate.

Meriter Children’s Center staff may not accept any cash gifts, gift cards, or gifts that have monetary value. Small gifts of appreciation that are intended for the entire staff (such as flowers, bagels, or chocolates) may be accepted. Certainly, small mementos of appreciation, which have deep meaning for us all, yet have little or no monetary value (such as a child-made trinket, hand-made ornament, written words of appreciation, a photograph of your child) may be accepted.

Other Ways of Expressing Gratitude or Recognition

-  tell others about your positive experience with the Children’s Center
-  send a note of appreciation to Meriter Administration and Meriter Human Resources
-  recognize staff thru Meriter’s “Extraordinary Customer Service” program
-  make a donation to Meriter Foundation – Children’s Center Fund

-  contribute to the MCC Parent Advisory Council Teacher Holiday Gift Fund
-  make a donation to a local charity sponsoring children and families, in honor of Meriter Children's Center staff.
-  make a donation directly to the classroom – classroom materials, toys, games, supplies, learning materials, equipment, furniture (no cash or cash equivalent gifts such as gift cards, please).

Program Evaluation & Accountability

Annual Family Program Evaluation

Each year families are offered an opportunity to give us formal feedback on the quality of our program, services, and families' satisfaction with our center. A Family Program Evaluation survey is sent to each family - we invite and encourage families to give us open and honest feedback. Evaluation results are reviewed with staff and serve as a guide as we plan for improvements in the next program year.

The Parent Involvement Committee provides parent perspective on program improvements, based on the Parent Program Evaluation results, for the upcoming year. The PIC often allocates some financial support for program improvements such as new equipment, classroom materials, family resources, special programming, and family events.

External Review of the Program

Meriter Children's Center invites external review of our program on an annual basis. WI State Child Care Licensing and City of Madison Accreditation systems monitor our program's compliance with standards and regulations and provide valuable feedback on ways to improve our program.

Licensure and Accreditation

Wisconsin State License

Meriter Children's Center is licensed by the *State of Wisconsin Department of Children and Family Services* to care for up to 80 children between the ages of six weeks and 6 years old. We operate Monday through Friday, year-round, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Families are welcome to view a copy of our state license, which we display at the main entrance, front desk. Any licensing violations cited by DCF in its most recent inspection, and any notice of enforcement action, will be posted next to the license.

A copy of the Wisconsin DCF 46 Licensing Rules for Group Day Care Centers and a copy of this Family Handbook may be found at the front entrance check in station. Information about WI State Licensing can be obtained by calling the WI Dept. of Children & Families at 608-266-2900 or on their website:

www.dcf.wisconsin.gov.

City of Madison Accreditation

City of Madison Accreditation is a voluntary process designed to promote the optimal development of the child. We undergo an annual review with an emphasis on direct observation of the program in action with children. Observations are done by specially trained professional staff of the Madison Child Care Unit.

Information about Madison

Accreditation can be obtained by

calling the Office of Community Services at 266-6520, or found on their website: www.ci.madison.wi.us/commserv.



YoungStar Quality Rating

YoungStar is a program of the WI Department of Children and Families created to improve the quality of childcare for Wisconsin children. YoungStar evaluates the quality of care given by regulated childcare providers and rates them from 1 to 5 stars, with 5 stars being the highest rating. A provider's star rating is based on:



- Education Qualifications and Training
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Professional and Business Practices
- Child Health and Well-Being Practices

Meriter Children's Center proudly holds a 5 Star Quality Rating.

FAMILY/COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Meriter's Employee Assistance Program (877-757-7587)

provides 24-hour professional and confidential assistance to Meriter employees facing a situation or personal issue that seems to be more than they can deal with on their own.

United Way Dane County: 211

United Way 2-1-1 is a community resource line, providing 24-hour, 365-day a year, free and confidential information and referral services for people in Dane County, Wisconsin, who need help or who want to give help. Your confidential link to over 2600 Dane County Services (Outside Dane County, Cell and Pay-Phone use **(608) 246-HELP [246-4357]**)

www.unitedwaydanecounty.org

Canopy Center/Parental Stress Center

2120 Fordem Avenue, Suite 110
241-4888
Parent Stressline:(608) 241-2221
www.canopycenter.org

The goal of the Parent Stressline is to reduce child abuse and neglect, as well as the stress in families that can lead to child abuse and neglect. The Parent Stressline is an 18-hour, 7-day a week listening service staffed by trained parent advocates. It is available to parents and caretakers who are experiencing stress or who just need someone to listen. Parent advocates strive to assist callers with finding solutions to their problems, and make referrals, as needed, to Canopy Center programs or other appropriate community services that are equipped to meet the needs of the caller. Parent advocates are recruited from the community and must complete an initial day and a half comprehensive training, as well as on-going seminars, to continue the education needed to serve callers on the line.

An essential service offered by the Parent Stressline is the promise of anonymity and confidentiality. Callers are asked no questions that will provide the Canopy Center with identifying information about the caller. With few places to go “just to talk” this practice offers a unique service to parents and caregivers in our community.

Family Enhancement

2120 Fordem Avenue, Suite 210
241-5150
www.familyenhancement.org

Family Enhancement works with parents to strengthen families so that children will become healthy, capable, and responsible adults, ready to raise and support future generations of children. The focus behind all of Family Enhancement’s programs is to work with parents to enhance their parenting skills, confidence and understanding of child development so that they are better able

to meet the needs of their children. Family Enhancement brings information, ideas, activities and recommendations from more than three decades of experience working with families to help parents develop and strengthen their parenting skills to become positive, nurturing parents.

Wisconsin First Step

1-800-642-7837

Wisconsin First Step is a statewide Information and Referral (I&R) hotline that serves families with children who have special health care needs. The line is operational 24 hours/day, 7 days a week. Parent Specialists with specialized disability expertise and having a child with a special need answer the line Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Meriter's Community Health Education Center, located in the Meriter Atrium, offers a wide variety of Family Education workshops, and houses an extensive Parenting Resource Library for all families to access. Some of these resources funded thru the Meriter Children's Center Parent Advisory Council.

*“May you wish upon a thousand stars.
May you catch a million fireflies.
May you return home with loads of pearly shells,
pressed flowers, and pink sand.
And may you realize just how much you learn
when you look at life through the eyes of a child.”*