

UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center Family Handbook



Home of the Bobcat Kittens

September 2025

On behalf of the UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) Staff, we would like to extend to you a sincere and warm welcome. The ECEC is here to provide a high-quality educational program for the children we serve. We offer parent support through many opportunities throughout the program year and can offer various other resources and referrals.

If you ever have anything that you would like to discuss with us, please feel free to stop by the front office or email us at ecec@ucmerced.edu.

Our program operates with the concept that staff and parents are partners in the development of children. We believe that parents are children's first teachers, and we respect the values and the teachings that come from home.

We look forward to a wonderful program year together.

Sincerely,

Danielle J. Waite, Ed.D., Director and Amanda Pia, B.A., Assistant Director

Physical Address:

5200 North Lake Road, Merced, CA 95343

Center Phone Number:

209-228-5437 (CAT-KIDS)

Center Fax Number

209-228-5439 (CAT-KIDZ)

License #

Infant: 243808513

Preschool: 243808514

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Section I

Mission Statement

The UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center is a high-quality program for young children of UC Merced parents and the local community. We respect each individual while providing a safe, happy, creative, and nurturing environment. We provide developmentally appropriate engaging activities and natural learning experiences for children to instill an enthusiastic attitude for knowledge.

Philosophy

The UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) provides a warm, interesting, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment where each child can explore and grow. Each classroom has been designed to be a welcoming environment for the children and families, as well as provide a comfortable place for the teachers to work in. We do not use flash cards, letters of the week, thematic topics, or cookie cutter (all children produce similar) art projects, which are often found in childcare programs. We use our education, experience, and expertise to provide opportunities to stimulate your child's engagement in learning. Classroom teachers and families will partner together to ensure that communication between home and the ECEC is continual, for this dialogue is for the child.

With the ECEC as a part of the child's life, there is the invitation to all families to participate at the center throughout the year during daily activities or special events. Conferences are held upon enrollment and at least twice a year, or more frequently at parent or teacher request.

Using the children's interests as our foundation for an emergent child-initiated curriculum, we provide an environment in which we support enabling children to meet the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) measures and the California Infant/Toddler and Preschool Learning and Development Foundations and Frameworks. The curriculum processes documents how our teachers individualize for a child, plan for a group, and make the learning experiences more relevant by framing learning in the children's interests. This learning and development are documented our Documentation Displays showing how new lines of inquiry are discovered. This is where the teachers document while children work to reflect on their experiences and on their thinking while planning future opportunities of exploration. The ECEC Curriculum Sheet is displayed for families to see what types of activities and learning opportunities are planned for the classroom.

The ECEC classrooms explore all the learning and developmental goals through children's work – which is play. We watch and assess the play to learn their interests,

play urges, their social, cognitive, and motor skills, and support play experiences through different modalities for them to work on a particular set of skills and/or knowledge. We support play through the providing of materials, experiences, opportunities, and even thought-out provocations. Remember play = work at this age.

The ECEC is also committed to sustainable practices. Throughout our program you will find activities from recycled or repurposed materials for the children to use. We collect items from garage sales, secondhand stores, from families, the UC Merced community, and other donations.

The infant room maintains a ratio of one adult to four infants (1:4). Each classroom has a pair of qualified co-teachers and a classroom support teacher is shared with another classroom. A strong nurturing relationship between the early educator and child is essential, so the child (and family) feels safe to explore, develop, and learn. With the partnership formed, the child is the focus. Each routine and care giving ritual is individualized for that specific child, his/her temperament and needs. Language and non-verbal communication are both key in the infant classrooms. Children are responded to and their needs addressed individually as the child dictates. The co-teachers work together to plan and implement a variety of activities for the children to develop their whole selves, as an individual and within the group. Each infant's routines and family practices from home are incorporated as much as possible into the care giving at the ECEC. This consistency of the routines, schedules, transitions, and practices from home to the ECEC helps the infants establish security and keep their patterns consistent and predictable.

The toddler classroom: where everything is something worth exploring. These classrooms are filled with ongoing activities and a rotation of materials for the children. The toddlers are given many activities and materials that are open ended, to allow them to explore concepts and relations of materials to one another. The toddlers are in a larger classroom than infants, one teacher to every six toddlers, as they are ready to work on their skills and independence. The ratios ensure that all routines and transitions are smooth. Routines such as dressing, self-service for daily routines, napping, and toilet training are integrated throughout the classroom. The toddler seeks independence. Learning how to negotiate this want to be independent and satisfy their personal needs and wants with the other children within the classroom is a large part of the social dynamic of group care. This becomes a primary task, of how to negotiate materials and space with peers. The toddler classroom is also rich in language. This is when adults spend much of their time role modeling language for children, giving them the language for them to be able to communicate their needs better on their own.

The preschool (prek) classroom is where exploration becomes more formalized. Being older, they have mastered the milestone of initiating toileting on their own and are ready for more advanced physical, social, and cognitive skills. The children are learning basic skills they will need for Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten: familiarity of routines, social skills in a group setting, math concepts, language arts, cognitive skills, fine and gross motor skills, and problem solving within a nurturing environment designed just for them. The children will be studying an interesting topic, such as insects or balls, and while exploring this topic, be exposed to different planned activities and materials that encourage their development in all developmental domains and areas. This planning is carefully thought out by their teachers. Each teacher in the classroom is the primary care giver to a group of approximately ten to twelve children. The teacher's responsibility is to develop activities and provide materials in the classroom that will encourage each child's individual developmental needs, as well as meet the needs of the classroom overall with the other co-teacher. Each activity, from playdough, playing with others making sand cakes, to building a city in the block corner, provides the child with many developmental growth opportunities.

Continuity of Care

The ECEC practices "continuity of care". We work hard to support your child's time here at the ECEC by providing a familiar face in their classroom each day once they start at the ECEC. A primary teacher or a familiar floater is placed in the next aged classroom so you and your child have a level of familiarity in their new "bigger" classroom. Ideally an infant teacher moves to the toddler room, a toddler teacher moves to the prek and a prek teacher moves into the infant room each August. Continuity of care is considered in the early childhood education field to be a "best practice", and we take pride in offering this to our families.

Program Goals

A primary goal of the program is to offer a high quality ECEC that permits the children to discover and learn, to become decision makers and problem solvers, and to feel good about themselves. The ECEC uses the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC) accreditation criteria throughout all components of the program.

Additionally, other program goals for the children are for them to develop in the areas of cognition (thinking), language arts (talking), literacy (reading), social/emotional (relationships) and physical development (moving and doing).

The program supports children's social and emotional development by facilitating the

following: building trust, planning routines and transitions so they can occur in a timely predictable and unhurried manner, and helping children develop emotional security and facility in social relationships. The program provides for the development of each child's cognitive and language skills by using various strategies: including experimentation, inquiry, observation, play, and exploration, ensuring opportunities for creative self-expression through activities such as music, movement, and dialogue, promoting interaction and language use among children and between children and adults, and supporting emerging literacy and numeracy development. The program promotes each child's physical development by providing sufficient time, indoor and outdoor space, equipment, materials and guidelines for active play and movement.

Other program goals are:

- Ensure a high quality integrated interactive child centered early childhood education program for the families of UC Merced and families of the community of Merced.
- Provide an on-site quality early care and education program for staff, students, and faculty of the UC Merced campus. This resource is to support UC Merced recruit and retain parents of young children.
- Have a location for UC Merced students to do their assignments or observations that focus on young children under the age of six (6) year old.
- Respect each child as an individual, who is an integral part of their family.
- Create a warm, interesting, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment for each child.
- Provide each family and child with responsive early childhood teachers who are qualified, educated experienced early childhood professionals.
- To maintain individual creativity while learning to work cooperatively with others.
- Facilitate social, emotional, intellectual, and physical growth through daily interaction with adults and children other than family members within a group setting.
- Embrace the diversity and the richness of multitude of cultures represented at UC Merced and the families served at the ECEC.
- Meeting the adult needs of the parents whenever possible.
- Provide a program that is developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate.
- Be inclusive of children with special needs.
- Encourage the respect for the feelings and rights of others.
- Promote and maintain practices that are healthy and safe.
- Provide access for research with parental informed consent.

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is fundamental to your child's experiences and learning while in the program. We strive to make the classrooms a welcoming place for both the children and family, with home-like touches.

The rooms are for the children to freely explore and experience, the only limitation being one of safety. Age-appropriate materials that are interesting to children are at the child's level, for easy and accessible self service.

The classroom is divided into strategically located interest areas, so learning experiences do not interfere with or interrupt one another. Noisy activities (blocks, dramatic play) are separate from quiet activities (book reading, writing, and art).

The early educators will rotate materials often to keep the children interested in all areas, as well as increase the difficulty to challenge them mentally and physically.

Outdoor Environment

This environment serves as an outdoor classroom for the children to explore and learn in. The teachers use this environment not only to allow the children to play and run around in, but they also plan activities that extend the learning from the classroom to a different environment and to include different elements. There are active and quiet activities outside, as well as opportunities to "get a little messy".

Gardening is seasonal for the children outside. There are ongoing discussions about leaving blossoms on the fruit trees so they can mature into edible fruit and how to best care for the vegetables and flowers growing in our planter boxes.

Curriculum

The curriculum that the UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) is using is a mixture of different philosophies, pedagogy, and practices. To state it simply, we believe children learn through play. Teachers document their planning of curriculum, which impacts both the classroom and outdoor environments, as well as the planned activities and provocations the teachers may set up. This process is captured on our ECEC Curriculum Sheet and reflected in our documentation of the learning happening in the classroom (classroom displays and photos/notes sent digitally). The displayed documentation link the learning experiences to the DRDP assessment, the Frameworks and Foundations, or overarching developmental need/interest the children are working on.

This curriculum process is based on different child development theorists and current research as to how children learn. The curriculum also considers the following: individual interests and uniqueness, gender, temperament, learning styles, life experiences, culture, special needs and second language learners. Teachers are trained to recognize these aspects of each child and welcome them into the classroom.

Throughout our curriculum, the partnership between the family and the teachers is the most important component to the successful foundation for the children to best prepare him/herself for future learning.

Assessment System

A research-based assessment system developed from the California Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division. We implement the Desired Results Developmental Profile assessment system and integrate it fully with our curriculum. It is an assessment continuum with specific measures and developmental areas that is specifically designed for children from birth through age 8. DRDP has been used in the field with young children throughout California and corresponds with the California Preschool Foundations, which is aligned with the California Department of Education K-12 Standards. Using the DRDP as the assessment will give the teachers a viable tool to assess the children and plan for their immediate developmental success, as well as prepare the children for Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and beyond.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

During orientation, a teacher in the classroom will start as your child's primary care giver and will meet with you personally for newly enrolling children. This will be the time the teacher will review the Family Questionnaire, and you can share your desires for your child within our program. This is an information sharing session and will help transition your child into the classroom and ECEC. The primary teacher can shift over time with staffing rotations.

Conferences are scheduled two times a year or more, depending on the age of your child and personal need. The first formal assessment conference will be within 60 days of your child beginning the program and the second will happen during our fall (late October) and spring (early May) conference times. In these conferences, you will meet with your child's teacher to discuss your child's strengths and appropriate developmental goals.

Discipline Statement

We believe that children learn acceptable behaviors by modeling those around them—the other children and staff when they are in school and from their parents and others at

home. We have established a few basic rules which will help your child enjoy security that will enhance his/her learning. In addition, we have adopted Conscious Discipline to also provide language and strategies for teachers and children to work through situations.

We will not allow behavior to continue if your child hurts him/herself or someone else or that property will be damaged. We expect our teachers to implement this policy with the constructive techniques listed below:

- Redirecting the child's attention from disruptive behavior to an acceptable activity.
- Discussing the outcomes of negative behavior, with teacher sitting or kneeling at the child's level.
- Talking it out—the teacher would sit down and help the children put their thought/emotions into words.
- "Cool off" time when needed, for a minute or two, before talking with the teacher and/or other child. This allows the child to cool down and come to resolve the conflict when he/she feels themselves to be ready.

Discipline methods such as time out, exclusion, sent to the office, threats to call parents, or any forms of corporal punishment/violation of personal rights will **not** be allowed in the ECEC.

Staff will ask to conference with you if behaviors have escalated or if we need parent partnership to assist with your child's behaviors at the ECEC.

Biting Policy

The UC Merced ECEC will implement the policy according to the age of the child, developmental level and number of incidents.

Biting is more of a concern in children ages 3 years and higher. Any instances of biting in preschool aged children will result in meeting with the biter's family to discuss the circumstance of the incident and to determine if outside resources need to be contacted.

In children from infant through the age of two, the following procedures will be followed. Biting is not uncommon in the early ages but will be documented and tracked. Teachers will be responsible for informing the biter's family of the incident(s) immediately. The teachers will pay close attention to the biter to determine the cause of the biting and to attempt to deter any future incidents. Most young children will bite on occasion, but the severe biter (chronic, routine, frequency over time or hard biter) will have the following procedures:

- Meeting scheduled with the parent to discuss the situation.

- Depending on the severity – the following may happen:
 - Biter is asked to go home for the day.
 - Suspension for a period.
 - Outside support/resources brought in to assist.
 - Possible eventual termination, due to injury of other children.

The victim of the biter is also attended to in the following manner for all ages. Parents will be informed upon arrival that their child has been bitten and be given a completed Accident/Incident Report. The name of the biter will not be released to the parent by the ECEC staff, as we do not want something that is within the range of normal behavior used against the biting child or their family. At the time of the incident, the victim will be treated (bite area washed and iced) and comforted. The biter will participate in this (if age appropriate) to help them develop empathy and an understanding that they were the reason for the response of the victim (crying, hitting back, etc.). If the victim instigated the bite (example: stole a doll, wherein the other child bites her to get the doll back), the staff will discuss this with both children to illustrate the reason she was bitten, but also letting the biter know that there are more appropriate methods in getting her doll back.

Daily Schedule

Infant Classroom

Morning	Classroom Opens/Greetings Following the Infants Individual Schedule Explore Indoor and Outdoor Environment Feeding, Diapering, Hand Washing, Napping, Cuddling, Activities, Songs, Stories and Personalized Care
Afternoon	Following the Infants Individual Schedule Explore Indoor and Outdoor Environment Feeding, Diapering, Hand Washing, Napping, Cuddling, Activities, Songs, Stories and Personalized Care
Closing	Classroom Closes/Have a Good Evening

Infants that have teeth and are eating table foods, begin to follow the toddler classroom schedule more closely than the infant classroom schedule. The meals and naps become more regular and predictable.

Toddler Classroom

Morning	Classroom Opens/Greetings Explore Indoor and Outdoor Environment Diapering, Toileting and Hand Washing, Activity Time, Circle Time and Story Time
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9:00	Morning Snack
12:00	Lunch
Afternoon	Naptime
	Wake Up and Cuddle Time
	Diapering, Toileting and Hand Washing
	Afternoon Snack
	Explore Indoor and Outdoor Environment
	Read Stories or Quiet Play
3:30	Afternoon Snack
Closing	Classroom Closes/Have a Good Evening

Preschool Classroom

Morning	Classroom Opens/Greetings
	Explore the Indoor and Outdoor Environments
	Group Time, Choice and Activity Time, Story Time, Toileting and Hand Washing
9:00	Morning Snack
12:00	Lunch
Afternoon	Nap/Rest Time
	Wake Up, Quiet Time, Toileting and Hand Washing
	Afternoon Snack
	Explore Indoor and Outdoor Environments
	Read Stories or Quiet Play
3:30	Afternoon Snack
Closing	Classroom Closes/Have a Good Evening

All Classroom Schedules are subject to change depending on the needs and interests of the children in the class.

With two classrooms per age group, the classrooms will alternate their outside times in the morning. We keep same age classrooms separate for a majority of the day and may combine if numbers are low.

After wake-up and snack (3:30 start time) both classrooms may have time outside weather permitting.

Hours of Operation and the Program Year

The ECEC is open five (5) days per week during posted program times on the ECEC website. The ECEC operates around the UC Merced Campus calendar, observing many of the same closures the Campus observes.

The program calendar is posted on the ECEC website. The calendar shows all partial and full day closures.

ECEC Staff

The UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center has taken great care in finding educated, talented professionals to work in each classroom. All the teachers have a minimum of an Associate's degree or the required experience and units to qualify for the California Department of Education, Commission on Teacher Credentialing Child Development Teacher permit or higher.

All the staff maintain their Child Development permit status through further education or professional growth activities. Continuous learning is the requirement from the California Department of Education for their permit and for NAC Accreditation.

ECEC Student Aides are students who are hired by the ECEC to maintain child:adult ratio during teacher break times and to support the classrooms throughout the day. They are never left unsupervised with any child and do not participate in child toileting/diapering.

ECEC staff, teachers, student aides, and student volunteers are all required to show proof of Pertussis and Measles immunizations and must update their Flu Shot status annually. They are also all fingerprinted and associated with the ECEC License.

ECEC staff, teachers, or student aides are not allowed to babysit after work hours or care for the children of families enrolled at the ECEC. This has been determined to be a potential conflict of interest.

Parent Participation

Parents/guardians are a vital part of our program. We expect you to play an active part in your child's ECEC through a variety of ways. If you have any talents or skills that you would like to share, please feel free to share them with your child's teachers and they will help you plan activities. Children enjoy having a parent work in the classroom and the opportunity to share experiences with them. It gives you an opportunity to see your child interact with his/her peers and learn who his/her friends are. Through your participation in the classroom, you will also learn from our ECEC staff on different strategies for conflict resolution and how to support children's learning through play.

Section II

Enrollment Information

The UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center offers child development services to families with young children six weeks through five years of age (until First Grade entry). The program does not discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability, in determining which children are served.

The ECEC intends to serve as many families as possible; however, priority will be given to siblings of children currently enrolled in the program and UC Merced affiliated families. Siblings (twins included) will also be eligible for a 10% reduction in tuition for the oldest sibling. A \$50 one-month discount will be deducted from your tuition for your referral of our program to any newly enrolled family. If you are currently enrolled in our program and are expecting, please let the front office know and we will add your coming baby to our waiting list. There is no need to do a new waiting list application, since it is a family list, not an individual child list.

The waitlist for enrollment is maintained by the ECEC. This list will be updated and reviewed periodically. Your name will be placed on the waiting list upon submittal of the UC Merced ECEC Wait List Application online and payment of your application fees. Your child will be on the waiting list and prioritized by the date received. Please realize that children who are on the waiting list for less time than your child may be admitted prior to you. We need to enroll children depending on the age of the child and the slot/classroom that is available.

Immunizations

California State Law requires children entering school to be fully immunized at the time of enrollment and must maintain their immunized status while enrolled. Students lacking one or more required doses, but who are not currently due for a dose, may be conditionally admitted until the remaining dose or doses are due. Immunization is not only for the individual receiving the vaccination, but for the community that they are participating in. At the ECEC, we require all families to have their children immunized.

Students who are not adequately immunized will not be admitted to school. The law (SB 277) allows for physician elected medical exemptions.

Annual Updates

We encourage parents to update their family file when any changes occur. At least once a year, parents will be asked to review certain portions of their files to review and make any updates as necessary. **Parents must inform the program immediately of a change**

of address, phone number, work/training status or schedule.

Contract Hours Needed for Services

Full-time contract hours are available, and part-time hours may be available on a limited basis. Part-time hours will be allowed only if there is another child that we can coordinate your needs with. Full-time children will have priority over part-time children. UCM students who have been granted a part-time contract will be guaranteed these hours for the duration of the current semester. We cannot guarantee that specific part-time schedules will have a match for future semesters. Priority is given to UCM full-time families. Part-time contract holders will have the first option to move to full-time depending on their enrollment date.

Fee Information

Tuition payments are due in full as per your agreed upon schedule (monthly or bi-weekly). *There are no discounts for holidays, vacations, sick days, or unexpected closures of the ECEC.* The tuition has been rated as monthly, so tuition amounts are the same for short months as for long months.

Students: Students receive discounted tuition through the support of the ECEC Student Fee. To qualify for the student discount, the student must be a currently enrolled student of UC Merced. Upon graduation the tuition rate will revert to the standard UC Merced rate (pre-discount) for one month. The student discount is available year-round, if the student is enrolled at UC Merced. For periods of time between semesters, the discount is still applicable if the student parent is enrolled for the next consecutive session. It is not available during the summer months if the parent is not enrolled in a summer session. Should a student withdraw from courses, they will be responsible for the full tuition for the affected months of care to qualify for future student discounts.

Subsidized Families: Families receiving subsidy for services from an alternative payment (AP) program will be responsible for all tuition costs and other acquired fees not paid for by the AP program. For UC Merced student families, the student fee discount may cover what the AP program does not cover, and you will be notified should you have any payments that you need to address.

Late Fees: Payments are due monthly and are due by the end of the 5th day of being posted on CashNet/Transact. If payment is received between the 6th and the 10th day after posting, there is a late fee of \$25, which will be posted to your next month's tuition. If payment has not been received in full by the 10th day, you will be refused services, and a letter will be issued informing you of your termination for failure to pay. Bi-weekly (following UC Merced bi-weekly pay schedule) payments are due within two

business days (the following Friday) of the pay date. A late fee of \$25 will be assessed if tuition is paid after midnight on Friday, which will be posted to your next month's tuition. If payment has not been received in full by the end of business Monday, a letter will be issued informing you of your termination for failure to pay. Late payment will only be accepted three times, the fourth will result in the loss of services.

Children's Trial Period

To meet your needs and those of your child, the program will implement our child trial period policy. This policy, effective upon program acceptance, is applicable to ALL children and will be implemented on a case-by-case basis.

The Director has the right to place your child on a trial period at any time, if there is a need. The purpose of the trial period is to assess if the program can meet your child's individual needs and to find out if this is the best place for your child based on his/her unique needs. During this period, we will observe your child and confer with you on a regular basis. **Each child and his/her needs will be addressed individually.**

The program's intent is to assist each child and his/her family. All actions and meetings will be documented with our Family Action Plan, where we will document discussions and plans to assist your child's success in our program. If we cannot meet the child's needs, and/or if your child has needs that exceed this program, then we will assist you in finding other childcare services, as well as providing a community service agency listing.

Attendance

Please call the center or let a staff member know if your child is going to be absent or off your regular routine. You can also email eccec@ucmerced.edu and let the front office staff know of your child's absence or late arrival. We communicate changes in schedules, illnesses, and other absences to the teachers. If you plan to pick your child up early, please also inform the teachers. This is to ensure that they have not gone on a campus walk and are here at the ECEC when you arrive.

Please make sure that your child attends the program regularly. Following your schedule gives your child a sense of predictability and a daily routine.

Sign In and Out

Each child must be signed in and out every day in his/her classroom for every scheduled program day. **Full signatures and times are required on sign in/out attendance sheets.** These daily signatures must be the same as you sign all your legal documents. Failure to sign in/out will follow the monetary penalty. Teachers will

review the sign in/out sheets daily looking for parents/guardians who failed to sign in the appropriate place. The first time they will take a highlighter to mark the missing signature area for the parent to sign. This is the first and only warning. The next three (3) missing signatures will be a \$5 fine each. The fourth (4) and any additional missing signatures will be a \$50 fine each.

We do not allow for signing children in or out during campus walks. Teachers do not take sign-in/out books with them on walks.

A nursing mother who uses the Lactation Room or parent who wishes to take their child from the classroom during the program day must sign their child out and then back in. Licensing mandates that when a child has been signed in, they must remain under the visual supervision of a staff member. Thank you for being conscientious of this requirement.

Please make sure a staff member in the room recognizes your arrival or departure. If you are unable to pick up your child, he/she will be released only to adults (18 years or over) designated on the **emergency release form** or other adults you designate in writing in advance. Please inform all designated adults that photo identification is required, as well as proper child safety seats.

Those parents who may have custody issues should consult with an attorney regarding legal protection for their children. Parents must provide us with court orders so that we can enforce your legal rights, should the need arise.

Arriving and Leaving

When you arrive at the ECEC with your child, please allow for some time to spend with a little routine or a special moment. At pick up time, take a few minutes to allow your child a chance to clean up what he/she was working on or to show you the painting or discovery of the day. When you sign out your child, you acknowledge that you are now responsible for him/her.

Children are not allowed to open any of the doors. The doors of the ECEC are heavy and often there is a vacuum effect which makes the doors slam unpredictably. We do not want any children's fingers to be injured.

Please do not let your child leave the ECEC without you, even after signing him/her out for the day, even if there is someone waiting for them in the front office or parking lot, keep them with you.

Late Pick-Up

Your child learns the routine of the day and when his/her classmates are picked up in relation to when you arrive. If you think that you may be late in picking up your child, please call the ECEC immediately, so we can reassure your child.

All late fees will be assessed to your next month's tuition billing. You will see them when you log into your family account.

For half-day children, you will be considered a late pick-up if you arrive after 12:30 p.m. We want half-day children to be leaving before 12:40, so those children who nap can settle down into their afternoon routine. Parents leaving after 12:40 will be charged a late fee as the families after 5:30. The fee will be \$15 for leaving between 12:40-12:50 p.m. and an additional \$2 per minute thereafter.

For full-day families, late pick-up are instances where you leave the ECEC after closing, so please ensure that you arrive at the ECEC prior to closing. This is so you can collect your child, his/her belongings and sign out prior to the closure of the ECEC. Cat Cards are used to "time stamp" your departure from the ECEC. One teacher will be up front to let you in (the door locks automatically at closing) and the other teacher will be bringing your child up front. Upon arriving in the classroom, you will sign a statement acknowledging your tardy pick up, sign your child out and leave with your child and belongings.

On your third (3) late departure, you will be required to meet with the Director to review your needs and schedule.

Late departure after day closure will result in a fee of \$15 for the first 10 minutes and an additional \$2 per minute thereafter. This charge is to be paid, even if you have called the ECEC and informed staff of your late arrival. At the assigned closure time, staff will begin to call from your child's authorized list to find an adult, if they have not heard from you. If no authorized adult can be found, the UCM Police Department will be called. When you pick up your child after hours, you will be asked to sign a **Late Fee Agreement Form**. This is an acknowledgement of your late time and what fee is required. This form will be delivered to the front office and payment will be discussed with you. Failure to pay late fees will lead to termination of services.

The staff at the ECEC are considered "off work" at closing. All late fees are used to compensate the teachers for their extra work hours.

Loss of Child Development Services

The following are reasons for the loss of Child Development services at the center:

- Five (5) consecutive days of absence without notification.
- Delinquent fees.
- Failure to submit required documentation/paperwork when required.
- Inappropriate adult behavior that disrupts the ECEC.
- Inappropriate child behavior that disrupts the ECEC or endangers self or others.
- Domestic problems, which interfere with the ECEC's operations.
- Inability to locate the parent while the child is in care.

Prior to termination of services, apart from extreme circumstances, the Director will meet with you to discuss the potential of losing services. We will give you up to two (2) weeks notice of your termination date and this will allow you to make other arrangements. Upon receipt of your written notice, you may request a hearing. Once your services have been terminated by UC Merced ECEC, you will not be eligible for services for six (6) months.

Withdrawing from the ECEC

If you choose to withdraw your child from the ECEC, you will be required to give one month's written notice (email meets these criteria). During that time, we will assist you in preparing your child for the upcoming transition. If you need to leave suddenly and are not able to give the ECEC a one-month notice, you will be required to pay the tuition for that one month.

If you need further explanation of the waiting list and prioritizing of children to enroll, please feel free to ask.

Fieldtrips

The children will take periodic nature/community walks, which are often on campus or the surrounding neighborhoods. If we go off campus, you will be notified regarding the specifics of the fieldtrip and you will be asked to sign a permission slip for this event. Please complete the Fieldtrip Permission form when requested by ECEC staff.

If your child's class went on a campus walk and you were late that morning, your child would be welcome to stay in another classroom until they return. When there is a scheduled off-campus fieldtrip and you do not feel as though you would like your child to participate, your child is welcome to go to another classroom as a "special visitor" while your child's classroom is off-campus. We understand that some parents are hesitant about off-campus trips.

Health and Safety

Every morning staff will check your child's health status upon arrival at the ECEC as per Community Care Licensing regulations. This health check is informal, but if your child is showing signs of illness, he/she may not be admitted to the program. If your child becomes ill while at the ECEC, you or other authorized persons will be called and required to pick up your child promptly depending on the severity of symptoms.

We cannot accommodate requests from parents to keep their children indoors, because we must maintain staff-child ratio. Children will be dressed warmly in inclement weather and will not be permitted outside in the rain, except for under patio/covered areas or with proper rain gear to cover them with. In warm weather, children will be encouraged to play in water and in the shade areas, to help keep them cool. Daily schedules will change due to the weather. We may go outside earlier in warmer weather or stay indoors during a rainstorm.

There will be days where the air quality is unhealthy for children. Working with Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S), we will closely monitor the air quality with the link on their website. A reduction of outdoor time and encourage less strenuous activities on unhealthy days for sensitive groups days (yellow – AQI 75-100), since children are part of that group, and we will remain indoors when the AQI reaches 101 or higher (www.airnow.gov).

The staff have been certified in first aid and pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) procedures. They will fill out accident reports for any incident, both minor and major. If your child needs immediate medical/dental attention and you cannot be reached by phone, your child will be taken to the doctor or hospital, which is designated on your emergency release form. In the event of an emergency, we will call 911 and you will be immediately contacted. Up to date contact information is very important so we can always reach you. **Please make sure we always know where you are while your child is in our care. Make sure the Emergency Release form is updated and accurate.**


Staff are trained in procedures to maintain a healthy environment through cleaning and hand washing, as well as with universal precautions. Although it is impossible to completely prevent the spread of disease in any setting, we will do our best to limit it.





To ensure the health and safety of all children and staff at the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) by providing clear guidelines on when children should stay home due to illness and when they can return to the program.




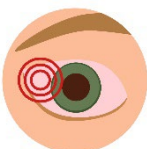
General Guidelines Regarding Illnesses




1. **Participation and Care:** Children should stay home if they cannot participate meaningfully in activities or if staff cannot provide appropriate care without compromising the health and safety of other children. Your child may be sent home for not being able to participate due to a symptom (examples: painful diaper rash, gooey eyes with sticky lashes, or overly tired and not participating).
2. **Notification:** Parents/guardians will be notified if their child exhibits any signs or symptoms of illness. Parents must pick them up within 30 minutes or have a representative from their Emergency Contact list pick them up. The ECEC will start calling other representatives should it take longer than 30 minutes or we are not able to reach a parent. Should you have a preference in ways we contact you, please let us know. We will exhaust all possibilities before calling from your list of authorized adults.
3. **Return to ECEC:** Your child *will not be allowed to return the following day* if sent home for illness symptoms. The exceptions are lice and ear infection with medication and improvement of symptoms (see below for details).
4. **Medical Professional for Diagnosis:** If your child is sent home for an unknown or possible contagious ailment, we require an in-person diagnosis from a medical professional. **Telehealth diagnoses will not be accepted.**
5. **Sick Siblings:** We understand that you may need to bring a sick sibling with you at drop off or pick up. We ask that you do not bring them in the classroom if there is front office staff available to watch them. We are happy to have them up front or we can come out to your vehicle. If there is no other alternative, we ask that those 2 years and older are masked and that they stay by your side, not touching materials or interacting with others.


Symptoms and Exclusion Criteria





Sign/Symptom	Symptom definition and additional criteria for when the child should stay home
Abdominal pain/stomachache 	Definition: Pain experienced anywhere between the chest and groin; pain may be continuous or may come and go. May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pain is severe enough that child has difficulty participating in routine activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain starts after an injury • Bloody or black stools • Diarrhea (see Diarrhea) • Vomiting (see Vomiting) • No urine for 8 hours (dry diaper, or ask older children if they have urinated since they woke up) • Fever (see “Fever” for return guidance)
<p>Cough and cold symptoms</p>  	<p>Definition: May include runny/stuffy nose, sore throat, sneezing, congestion, body aches, and/or cough, typically lasting up to 7–10 days.</p> <p>May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever (see “Fever” for return guidance) • Difficulty with or rapid rate of breathing (see “Difficult or noisy breathing”) • Cough is severe or child cannot catch breath after coughing • For a cough suspected to be associated with asthma: coughing that cannot be controlled by the medications that the child care or school has been instructed to use
<p>Diarrhea</p>  	<p>Definition: Stools that are more frequent (typically at least two more than normal) or less formed than usual <i>for that child</i> AND not associated with a change in diet. Note that young infants may normally have frequent, somewhat watery stools, particularly if breastfed.</p> <p>May attend* school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stool not contained in the diaper or toilet (when toilet-trained) • Stool looks like it contains blood or mucus, or appears like sticky black tar • Yellow skin/eyes (jaundice) • Diarrhea that occurs during an outbreak, and exclusion is recommended by the local health department
<p>Difficult or noisy breathing</p>	<p>Definition: Wheezing (high-pitched sounds) that can be heard when a child breathes in or out, chest retractions (see below) OR</p>

 	<p>extra effort is required to breathe.</p> <p>May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheezing that is new for the child or cannot be controlled by medications the child care/school has been instructed to use for known conditions (e.g., asthma plan) • Skin or lips seem purple, blue, or grey, depending on skin tone. 🚫 • Fever (see “Fever” for return guidance) • Behavior changes • Very rapid breathing or increased effort to breathe, such as chest retractions (space between ribs sinks with each breath), belly breathing (belly goes up and down with breathing) • Breathing problem that causes child to have pursed lips, difficulty speaking, or difficulty feeding <p>Note: Seek medical attention for new symptoms such as wheezing or breathing difficulties, even if mild.</p>
<p>Earache</p> 	<p>Definition: Pain (dull, sharp, or burning sensation) experienced inside the ear.</p> <p>May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever (see “Fever” for return guidance) • Behavior changes • Pain prevents participation in routine activities
<p>Eye irritation, pink eye, or drainage</p> 	<p>Definition: Red or pink appearance to the white part of the eyeball. Child’s eye may also be itchy, have crusted/matted eyelashes, more watering than normal, or yellow/white drainage.</p> <p>May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems seeing (vision changes) • An injury to the eye involving forceful impact to or penetration of the eye • Pain or discomfort the child cannot tolerate <p>Note: Pink eye (i.e., conjunctivitis) is inflammation of a layer that covers much of the eyeball. It is most often caused by a virus, and children with viral pink eye typically get better after 5-6 days without</p>

	<p><i>antibiotics. Staying home from school or child care is not necessary. Frequent hand washing should be encouraged. Eye irritation can also result from allergies or chemical exposures (e.g., air pollution, smoke, or swimming in chlorinated pool water).</i></p>
<p>Fever</p> 	<p>Definition: An oral (under the tongue), temporal (forehead), rectal, or axillary (underarm) temperature above 100.4°F (38°C). Axillary (underarm) measurements should be used only if other options are not available. Follow instructions for the specific thermometer, including directions for use, cleaning and covers (if applicable). If a temperature is close to 100.4°F, repeat to confirm the result.</p> <p>It is ONLY recommended to take a child's temperature if the child seems ill, feels hot, or has other symptoms or signs of illness. Checking the temperature of a child or group of children to allow entry (also known as screening) is NOT recommended in school or child care settings.</p> <p>Unless otherwise directed by a healthcare provider, a child with another symptom or sign of illness who also has a fever should NOT attend school or child care.</p> <p>Return when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever went away in the night – without using fever reducing medications, e.g., Tylenol®, Advil®, Motrin® (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) - and is still gone in the morning; AND • Other symptoms are improving and the child can participate comfortably in routine activities.
<p>Headache, stiff or painful neck</p> 	<p>Definition: Pain experienced in any part of the head ranging from sharp to dull; may occur along with other symptoms.</p> <p>May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concussion symptoms: Pain occurs after a fall or other injury to the head and is severe or associated with vomiting, vision changes, behavior change, or confusion. • Possible infection: Stiff neck, headache and fever can be symptoms of meningitis a potentially serious infection. Meningitis can also cause sensitivity to light, vomiting, and/or confusion. A stiff neck is most concerning if the child

	<p>can't look at their belly button (putting chin to chest) due to pain or the BACK of the neck is painful (not soreness in the sides) along with the other symptoms above.</p> <p>Get immediate medical attention for either of the above conditions. 🚑</p>
<p>Rash or itching</p> 	<p>Definition: An area of the skin that has changes in color or texture and may look inflamed or irritated. The skin may be darker than or lighter than normal or red or purple. It may be, warm, scaly, bumpy, dry, itchy, swollen, or painful. It may also crack or blister.</p> <p>May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oozing, open wound or infection that cannot be covered and is in an area that might come in contact with others. • Skin that looks bruised without a known injury or in an unusual location. • Rapidly spreading dark red or purple rash (may indicate a rare but severe bacterial infection; usually accompanied by fever). • Tender, red area of skin, rapidly increasing in size or tenderness. • Associated symptoms of a serious allergic reaction (rash with throat closing, abdominal pain, vomiting, or wheezing). 🚑 • Fever (see Fever for return guidance) • There is concern for a disease like chickenpox or measles. If this is the case, the child should see a healthcare provider and the local health department should be contacted. <p><i>Note: For diagnosed conditions, follow the advice of the healthcare provider. In general, for conditions such as lice, impetigo, ringworm, scabies, and pinworms, no waiting period is typically necessary after starting treatment and the child may return after the appropriate treatment is started.</i></p>
<p>Sore throat (pharyngitis) and/or mouth sores</p>	<p>Definition: Sore throat includes pain or irritation of the throat often resulting from a viral or bacterial infection (e.g., cold, flu, strep throat). May feel worse when swallowing.</p> <p>Mouth sores include white patches on the tongue, gums and/or</p>

 	<p>inner cheeks (oral thrush/yeast infection); white/red spots in the mouth, blisters on lips or inside mouth; or painful ulcers inside cheeks or on gums (canker sores).</p> <p>May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to swallow • Fever (see “Fever” for return guidance) • Breathing difficulties • Excessive drooling or muffled voice 🚑 <p>Note: Most children with sore throat have viral infections. Children younger than 3 years of age usually do not have strep throat. If a child is diagnosed with strep throat, they should receive antibiotics for at least 12 hours before returning.</p>
<p>Vomiting</p>  	<p>Definition: Forceful expelling of stomach contents out of the mouth 2 times or more in 24 hours.</p> <p>Note: Not all vomiting is due to an infection and other causes (e.g., spit-up in a healthy infant with reflux, motion sickness, overeating) should be considered.</p> <p>May attend school or child care unless the child has one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting has occurred 2 or more times in 24 hours. • Fever (see “Fever” for return guidance). • Concern for a serious allergic reaction, such as hives appearing with vomiting. 🚑 • Vomit appears green or bloody 🚑 • Child has not urinated in the past 8 hours (i.e., has dry diapers, or ask older children). • Recent head injury. • Looks or acts very ill. <p>Return when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting ended during the night and child is able to hold down food or liquids in the morning.

For more information, please visit the California Department of Health website

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Schools/SymptomGuidance.aspx>

The ECEC follows stricter protocols compared to CDPH recommendations for the following:

Fever: Children will be excluded from the program for a fever of 100.4°F or higher. They can return to the program when they remain fever free for 24 hours without a fever-reducing medication such as Tylenol or Motrin.

Vomiting: Children will be excluded from the program for vomiting until: 1) symptoms have subsided, 2) they can eat a full meal without any stomach issues, and 3) they have no other symptoms (such as fever).

Diarrhea: Children will be excluded from the program after 2 looser than normal or one severe diarrhea (liquid, where the child cannot make it to the restroom in time or has contents coming out of the diaper). Child can return when: 1) symptoms subside, 2) they can eat a full meal without stomach issues, and 3) they have no other symptoms.

Lice: Children will be excluded from the program and can return after: 1) being treated with medication, 2) thorough combing for nits (eggs), and 3) all live insects are removed. Children will be checked upon return for live lice and then again over the next few days. Should any live lice be found, they will be required to repeat the process of treatment and combing for nit and louse removal.

Pink Eye: Children will be excluded and require evaluation and diagnosis from medical professional. As both viral and bacterial conjunctivitis are contagious, symptoms must have subsided and treatment started prior to the child's return.

Rashes: A child who presents a new rash (even without fever) will be sent home for evaluation by a medical professional. Child can return when rash is healing and there are no new areas of skin effected. Blisters or wet lesions must be dry and scabbed. Diaper rashes, unless severe and painful where the child is uncomfortable, are not included.

Communicable Diseases:

1. **Notification:** Inform the ECEC immediately if your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease by an in-person physician. Please notify the ECEC of illness symptoms, even without a medical diagnosis, so we can inform other parents if multiple individuals are coming down with the same

symptoms (an outbreak is defined as similar symptoms in 3 children within 1 week in a classroom).

2. **Exclusion:** Children with diagnosed and undiagnosed illnesses should remain home until symptoms resolve and/or improve.

3. **Return to ECEC:** Children can return when they are no longer contagious, their symptoms are healing/resolving and can participate comfortably in routine activities.

Contagious conditions/communicable diseases such as, measles, RSV, pink eye, mononucleosis, staph, chicken pox, mumps, whooping cough, hand/foot and mouth, and streptococcal infections need a physician's diagnosis. Please inform the ECEC of the official diagnosis. Influenza does not need to be diagnosed by a physician, but we will treat it as we do for all other contagious conditions. We will notify other parents of the disease exposure and the symptoms, while keeping your child's name confidential. The child may return when he/she is no longer contagious. Please note that for some contagious conditions, a physician's clearance may be required, as well as implementation of best practices to ensure minimal exposure at the ECEC.

Special Considerations:

- **Face Masks:** Children 2 years and older with respiratory symptoms are encouraged to wear face masks while awake to reduce the spread of illness.
- **Hand Washing:** Emphasize hand washing, especially with symptoms like diarrhea and vomiting.

It is our goal to keep the children in our program as healthy as possible, but there are times when your child will have to stay at home when sick. Illnesses are very common when your child first enters a school setting, at the beginning of the year, and after holiday breaks. As your child's immunity increases, the amount of time being ill will decrease.

Medical Attention: Seek immediate medical attention for symptoms such as severe breathing difficulties, severe headache with stiff neck, or rapidly spreading rash.

Pick Up Due to Illness or Symptoms: Parents must make every effort to pick up their child when notified regarding illness. Please be timely in picking up your child to make him/her more comfortable and to lessen the exposure to the other children and adults in the classroom. We will isolate your child until you arrive. Children ages 2 and older may be asked to wear a mask, should their symptoms dictate the need for this additional precaution.

Medications and Incidental Medical Services Plans

Over the counter and prescription medications will be administered by staff **only with a doctor's written instruction or as prescribed on the label**. Your child's name must be on the original container, and we can only administer medication as directed on the label for your child's age/weight, unless a doctor provides other written directions. Parents must fill out a medication form and give the form and medication directly to the staff for proper storage. **Never have your child possess any medication**. If you can administer the medication yourself, we encourage you to do that. ECEC staff will not administer the first dose of a medication (except emergency medications - e.g. EpiPen Jr.).

Topical ointments, such as diaper rash cream or powders, will also need a medication form filled out and signed by the parent.

At this time, the ECEC staff will provide Incidental Medical Services (IMS) for the following with proper training from professionals and parents: administering inhaled medication, EpiPen Jr., and EpiPen. At this time, the following will not be administered: blood-glucose monitoring, glucagon administration, gastrostomy tube (G-Tube), emptying an ileostomy bag, insulin administration, or emergency anti-seizure measures. If there is need for any of these IMS services not currently provided, the ECEC is willing to further consider this as treatments and medical technology is constantly changing. For any IMS, there will be additional paperwork required and documentation needed for the ECEC staff to implement for your child.

Asthma and Nebulizers – For children with breathing difficulties that is documented on the physician's form, an inhaler/nebulizer must be kept at the ECEC in case of need. For the ECEC staff to administer any type of inhaled medication, the following must be present. The original packaging or the doctor's instructions must have the following information documented:

- Specific indications (such as symptoms) for administering the inhaled medication in accordance with the physician's prescription.
- Potential side effects and expected response.
- Dose form and amount to be administered in accordance with the physician's prescription.
- Actions to be taken in the event of side effects or incomplete treatment response in accordance with the physician's prescription. This includes actions to be taken in an emergency.
- Instructions for proper storage of the medication.
- The telephone number and address of the child's physician.

There is also an additional form that needs to be filled out at the ECEC, besides the medication form. This form is required by Community Care Licensing.

Sunscreen

The ECEC provides children's sunscreen for afternoon re-application. Please ensure that you put sunscreen on your child in the morning before arriving at the ECEC. If you need to bring personal sunscreen for your child, due to sensitivity or allergic reactions to certain brands, please make sure that the sunscreen is given to a teacher and a medication form has been filled out.

Food Allergies/Personal Preferences

If there are any serious food allergies in your child's classroom, those foods will not be allowed in your child's lunch either. The ECEC is a Peanut Free facility. Other nut butters are permitted. This is to keep all the children safe. You will be notified in writing if there are any additional allergy restrictions in your child's room.

The ECEC will purchase drink and food alternatives for snacks and milk lunch service for physician diagnosed allergies or medical conditions. *Personal preferences or parental choice alternatives must be supplied by the parent.* Some foods may be able to be stored at the ECEC, but other personal preferences may have to be supplied daily.

Snacks

For children eating table food, the food is prepared in the ECEC twice each day. Classrooms will offer a mid-morning snack and an afternoon snack. Each snack is designed within guidelines for a balance of foods and enough servings for each child. We encourage children to try all components of the snack, not to fill up on one item. Every child is encouraged to clean up after the meal. For your convenience, monthly menus will be posted in the ECEC and emailed monthly. Menu changes do happen on occasion, but they will be posted on the classroom parent board.

All children's allergy requirements are considered in snack preparation and service. Every effort is made to provide a diverse menu, allowing for the children to try a variety of foods.

All snacks must be eaten in their entirety or disposed of where they are served. No food or drinks are to be taken home.

Lunches

For Infants – Parents are responsible to bring all formulas and/or breast milk, cow's milk or alternative (older infants), bottles, and infant foods (cereals, jarred baby

food/home prepared baby food). There is limited storage for shelf stored foods and the refrigerator is only to be used for breast milk, cow's or alternative milk, and open infant food container storage. The ECEC will supply infant bowls, bibs, cups, and utensils. Teachers will meet with you regularly to update documentation regarding the new foods you are introducing to your infant.

All Table Food Eating Children (including Infants) – Parents are responsible to bring a nutritious lunch in a lunch box. The ECEC will supply milk (whole milk for infants and reduced fat for all others) for meals only. Milk for lunch is included in your child's tuition and will be served daily at lunch. Milk for infants drinking bottles *is not provided*. We ask that you do not pack additional juices or drinks in your child's lunch. We want to encourage all children to drink milk or water as an alternative.

Microwave services or other warming options are not available in any of the classrooms, except for infant bottles. There are no refrigerators available for lunch storage.

There may be times when certain foods may be disallowed from entering the ECEC, depending on food allergies of children enrolled. Please ensure that your child's lunches follow the restrictions when we have them.

The children will be given access to cups, plates, bowls, napkins and utensils to use during lunchtime. The children will eat together at tables. Trading foods will not be allowed. All uneaten food (except for single serve yogurt or fruit cup containers) will be returned to your child's lunchbox, so you can monitor how much your child has eaten that day. Buying Tupperware containers for items such as yogurt, cottage cheese, and applesauce will produce less waste than single servings and will also be cheaper for you. We ask families do not to pack cookies, puddings, or other treats in lunches. We encourage children to eat healthy foods and want to support a balanced meal.

We ask families to pack at least multiple components in their child's lunch as outlined through the USDA CACFP meal guidelines. The recommended components are milk, grains, meat/meat alternative, vegetables, and fruit. With our milk serving, your child will have a balanced meal.

Lunch suggestions:

- Dairy Products - Yogurt, string cheese, cottage cheese, cheese cut into new shapes (wedges, strips, etc.), cream cheese (On celery, bagels, or rice cakes.)

- Fruit- Grapes (cut lengthwise to prevent choking), melon chunks, apple chunks (with nut butter!), dried apricots or apples, fruit salad combo, applesauce (no sugar added), or trail mix with dried fruit.
- Meat or Alternative- Chicken or turkey dogs (cut lengthwise to prevent choking), shredded meat, beans and rice, tofu, nut butter, tuna, hard-boiled egg, chicken drumsticks. No peanuts.
- Vegetables- Steamed carrot, broccoli, or cauliflower, celery (remove thread fibers), cucumber, or zucchini sticks (cut lengthwise) with a small container of dip (cottage cheese with seasoning or salad dressing), snap peas, corn on the cob, stuffed celery, bean salad.
- Breads- Rice cakes or mini rice cakes, dry chow mein noodles, tortillas, mini bagels, mini muffins, pasta, pancakes, crackers (with cheese or nut butter), rice.
- Instead of Sandwiches- Quesadilla (tortilla with melted cheese), burritos, pasta salad, wrap-sandwiches, cold pizza, sandwiches cut into fun shapes.
- In the Thermos- Soup, pasta (bite sized- no long spaghetti), rice dishes, or other meals.

Section III

Clothing

Your child will play, climb, paint, glue, and get covered in both sand and water while in the program. We ask that you dress your child in outfits that will allow him/her to fully experience all the activities that we provide at our ECEC. Shoes should be sturdy and closed toed (sandals that provide foot and toe protection are allowed). Children also have occasion to fall while playing in the yard, long pants provide protection from scraped knees and comfort while sitting on the floor. If staff notices that your child is having a difficult time participating (because of style or size) in the daily activities due to clothing or shoes, they will bring it to your attention and ask for you to remember these guidelines.

Dress up clothes (princess dresses, tutus, capes, etc.) may be changed out of and stored in your child's cubby. Children play differently when dressed up and some clothing limits their play activities. We provide clothing and accessories for children in the dramatic play areas, if they feel the need to pretend to be someone different than themselves.

Each child must have at least two extra sets of clothing and underwear at the ECEC; this is to ensure your child can change after water play or a potty accident. Please mark all your child's clothing with permanent ink or name labels. This includes hats, gloves, coats, underwear, socks, pants, shirts and sweaters. **We encourage children to take care of their clothing, but we cannot take responsibility for clothing or other personal items that are lost or damaged at the ECEC.** We ask that you look at your child's extra clothing a few times a year. Often we find clothing that is not appropriate for the season and temperatures or that are a size or 2 too small.

Wet Bags are *required* for your child's wet clothing. Please ensure that there is a wet bag in your child's cubby basket with their extra clothing. We will send your child's wet/soiled clothing home in them. The ECEC does have some extra wet bags for loan for days your child has numerous outfit changes. For safety reasons - *No plastic bags can be stored in your child's cubby.*

The ECEC maintains extra "loaner" clothing. They are clearly marked with permanent ink. If your child is wearing "loaner" clothing at the end of the day, it means that there was a need to change your child and there were no extra clothes available. We ask that you wash and return these clothes, so we have them if the need arises again. If you have clothing to donate for extras, please inform the staff. Clothing items needed: shirts, shoes, pants (sweats), sweatshirts, and socks.

Jewelry

We do not encourage jewelry on children at school. These items can injure your child while they are playing, and all instances of injury are at your own risk. Children often lose jewelry or even give these items to other children; the ECEC does not take any responsibility for any damaged, lost, stolen or given-away jewelry.

Toys from Home

We do not allow items from home and will ask you to take them with you if they are noticed upon arrival. We will have any toys kept in cubbies or in the teacher's custody if your child brings them un-noticed by you. We are not responsible for any damaged, lost, or stolen items.

If your child needs a special "lovey" or "blanky" from home, we will attempt to have the child keep it in his/her cubby and use it primarily for nap times or when they just need it for comfort.

We do encourage children to bring books from home. These can be shared with the whole class during daily story time. If your child wants to bring something, have them bring a book to read or an interesting rock or other natural item that can be incorporated into the classroom.

Naptime Bedding

Children are given nap time daily, to either rest or nap after lunch. We ask that you bring a labeled blanket and sheet from home; many children like to sleep with bedding that is familiar to them. The blanket and sheet should be crib/infant size. These should be taken home on a weekly basis and washed over the weekend. Please bring it back for the next school day, so your child will have a restful nap time. The ECEC does maintain a number of extra cot sheets, crib sheets and blankets in case you forget one morning.

Infants, who are not fully mobile or cannot fully pull themselves into a standing position, nap in a crib. Once the infant is mobile, we move them onto mats, which we also use in the toddler and preschool rooms.

Diapers/Pull-Ups

Until your child is potty trained, you must make sure that there are enough diapers/pull-ups and wipes for your child at the ECEC. You are responsible to check daily to ensure that your child will not run out of diapers/pull-ups or wipes. Teachers will also leave you a note on your sign in/out sheet when you are running low on any of these items.

Water Bottles

We ask that all children bring a water bottle from home to use both in the classrooms and outdoors. Please make sure that your child's water bottle is clearly labeled with your child's name, or your teacher can label it for you. We will encourage your child to drink from their water bottle and refill it as needed. Infants, we will provide sippy cups, or you can bring in your child's sippy cup/water bottle. We will have extra loaner water bottles on site.

Children's Restrooms

Because of the ages of the children we serve at the ECEC, we do not provide separate **boys' restrooms** or **girls' restrooms**. Children are requested to use the restroom closest to the staff member on hand, to provide supervision and be available if the child needs assistance.

Birthdays

If you do not celebrate birthdays, we ask that you let us know. If you are interested in celebrating here at the ECEC, reach out to your classroom teachers to discuss timing. Your child's birthday treats will be served after a snack or lunchtime.

Healthy snacks are preferred such as: 100% juice fruit popsicles, whole fruit, fruit trays, or fruit kabobs, mini bagels or crackers with a hummus or flavored cream cheese, or fruit bars.

If your child insists on cupcakes/muffins, we ask for store bought, in the original packaging mini-cupcakes or mini-muffins.

There are alternatives to food, if you want to plan a birthday experience, such as: canvas painting or a dance party with bubbles. Parents would bring in a blank canvas and the class group would make a piece of art for your child to take home. For the bubble party, let us know your child's favorite tunes and supply some extra bubble solution and we will facilitate a bubble dance party.

We ask families to only bring in party favors if you want to. They will be placed on cubbies and sent home at the end of the day.

If you are interested in inviting your child's peers to a birthday party, we are happy to send out electronic invitations to individual families or the whole class. Please feel free to send your invitation to the ECEC and we will forward it to those you designate.

Holiday Celebrations

Through many cultures, holiday celebrations are a time to get together with family and share traditions. With the many cultures represented with the families at our ECEC, we have developed the following philosophy on holidays:

- Holiday are not the focus of our curriculum but will recognize them should a child talk about them, a student club do an activity, or family want to share their culture.
- We want the children in our program to be exposed to as many different cultures and their celebrations as possible. Without demeaning or trivializing them, we will recognize and honor different cultures and their traditions.
- We ask that all traditions shared be honored; however personal faiths and religions are to be shared in the home. There is no religious instruction or worship at the ECEC. It is our goal to recognize the diversity we have at the ECEC without offending anyone.

Celebrations with campus organizations and parents are encouraged when they have a focus on literacy and more age-appropriate events that all children can participate in.

Section IV

Fire Drills

The ECEC conducts fire drills every few months and evacuates to the playgrounds. This is to get the children used to the sound of the alarm, the flashing lights, and how to safely exit the building. ECEC takes care to try to conduct drills when parents are not dropping children off. Should you be subject to one of our drills, please join us for our evacuation, so the children learn that it is important to stay together in these instances.

Evacuation Procedures

Should there be a reason to evacuate the ECEC facility, we will relocate at the Yablokoff Wallace Dining Center, the Lantern (ground floor Kolligian Library) or to any other location UC Merced Safety Services directs us to go. Once the children are safely settled, we will reach out to you with any updates or directives.

Lock Down Protocol

In case of a “lock-down” anywhere on the main UC Merced campus, we here at the ECEC will automatically go on lock down. We will move into the classrooms and lock all of our doors. The front door CatCard reader will not activate for any individual except for UC Merced Police. We will not open the door for any individual. In case of lockdown, our priority is to keep the children without our facility safe and that means no admittance to any individual (student, staff, parent, grandparent, or other authorized individual). The lock down status will be maintained until we receive an “all-clear” from UC Merced Safety Services.

Section V

Classroom Observers/Graduate/Faculty Study Projects

The UC Merced ECEC allows observers in the classroom: students, professionals, and prospective parents. Observers are required to schedule their observation time and check in with the ECEC staff. These students will remain under a staff member's constant supervision and not be left alone with any child.

If a program from UC Merced requests to conduct a study that your child is a candidate for, you will be given detailed information regarding the study and a written permission slip for you to fill out from the persons completing the study. You are not required to give your child permission to participate, and you also have the right to withdraw your child during the study at any time. We will not allow your child to be left with a student or faculty member without supervision of an ECEC staff member.

Local colleges offer classes where students need to observe young children, and they often prefer to come to a campus affiliated center to do these observations. We expect to receive students from programs such as: CSU Stanislaus, Fresno State, Merced College, and Fresno Pacific University. Your child's identity will remain anonymous in any written observations made by the student.

UC Merced ECEC Complaint Process

If you, as a parent/guardian, have any complaints or concerns regarding the UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center, we require you to follow the center's process to address these issues.

These complaints or concerns can be regarding any of the following:

- Allegations of unlawful discrimination regarding actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, or age or based on a person's association with a person or group with one or more of these.
- The physical condition of the ECEC and the materials therein.
- Services that your child receives while attending the ECEC.
- Interactions that you have had with an ECEC Staff member.
- Interactions that you have had with other parents/guardians.
- Any other concerns as you deem fit.

All complaints are to be addressed to Danielle Waite, Early Childhood Education Center Director, who is responsible for receiving, investigating, and resolving the complaint. We ask that you follow our complaint process if you feel that the Director

did not satisfy you. If this complaint is regarding Danielle Waite, please address it to Debbie Henderson, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor Auxiliaries Enterprises and Fiscal Innovation.

Any complaint that you present to the Director in person or in writing will be investigated and the Director will be required to respond in writing. When under investigation, all documents and other evidence you feel deem necessary must be submitted to the Director if related to the allegations of the complaint. You may file an appeal in writing within 15 days upon receipt of the Director's written response to Debbie Henderson, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor Auxiliaries Enterprises and Fiscal Innovation for further resolution if you find the decision of UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center Director to be incorrect.

Contact information:

Debbie Henderson, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor Auxiliaries Enterprises and Fiscal Innovation dhenderson8@ucmerced.edu

Staff Rights

- To be appreciated for all the hard work of providing the best care for your child by being given a smile and a "thank you" on a regular basis.
- To be free to develop activities and experiences that are age appropriate based on UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center guidelines.
- To be listened to, talked to, treated and respected as a professional early childhood educator by other staff, parents and children.
- To work in a pleasant environment.

Licensing Office

Our Centers is licensed by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division. The Center is operating two licenses, one infant and one preschool aged. The local agency information is listed below:

Community Care Licensing—Fresno Office
1310 E. Shaw Avenue
Fresno, CA 93710
559-243-4588
www.ccld.ca.gov

UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center Licenses

Infant - # 243808513

Toddler Option and Preschool - # 243808514

State of California Licensing Agency

The State of California Licensing Agency monitors the UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center and has the following authority:

To interview children or staff and to inspect the child or facility records without prior consent.

To observe the physical condition of the child or children, including conditions which could indicate abuse, neglect, or inappropriate conditions or placement and to have a licensed medical professional physically examine the child(ren).

Child Protective Services has the same authority.

Child Abuse Policy

The California Penal Code states that all staff members in licensed childcare center are mandated reporters. If a staff “suspects” abuse or neglect, he/she is mandated to report to the police or Child Protective Services. Failure by our staff to report suspicious situations within 36 hours is a misdemeanor for the staff member, which is punishable by 6 months in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine. Parents whose children have birthmarks, or any other distinctive markings should communicate this to staff to avoid unnecessary reports.

Car Seat Law

California Law effective January 1, 2017: Children under two years of age shall ride rear facing. Exceptions: the child is over 40 pounds or over 40 inches in height. Young children will then transition to a forward-facing car seat with a harness until the age of eight (8) in the back seat of the vehicle. Children are required to be properly secured in an appropriate child passenger restraint (booster seat) until their eighth (8) birthday OR they reach 4’9” in height. <https://www.chp.ca.gov/programs-services/programs/child-safety-seats>

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Twenty to thirty percent of all shaken infants die and many more than that have some form of permanent damage caused by shaking. For more information and support for when you are frustrated with a crying infant <http://www.dontshake.org/index.php> or talk to the Director immediately.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)/ Crib Death

The UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center will only sleep infants on their backs due to SIDS. For more information regarding SIDS, please refer to the following website: www.sids.org .

Smoke Free Cars

There is a \$100 fine for smoking in a vehicle with a minor (under the age of 18) - H&S Code 118947 (2007). For more information visit the CA Department of Public Health website.

University of California Health Milk Bank

The Milk Bank is a resource for parents. The collect extra breastmilk to provide for parents who are in need of bridge milk and for NICU infants. To send in extra milk or to receive bridge milk is entirely free. For more information visit: <https://health.universityofcalifornia.edu/patient-care/milk-bank>

September 2025

UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center

This is to acknowledge the receipt of:

UC Merced Early Childhood Education Center
Family Handbook

September 2025

I understand that I am responsible for reviewing this document and adhering to all the policies and procedures outlined therein. _____(initial)

Name

Signature

Date

_____hard paper copy

_____via internet

www.ecec.ucmerced.edu