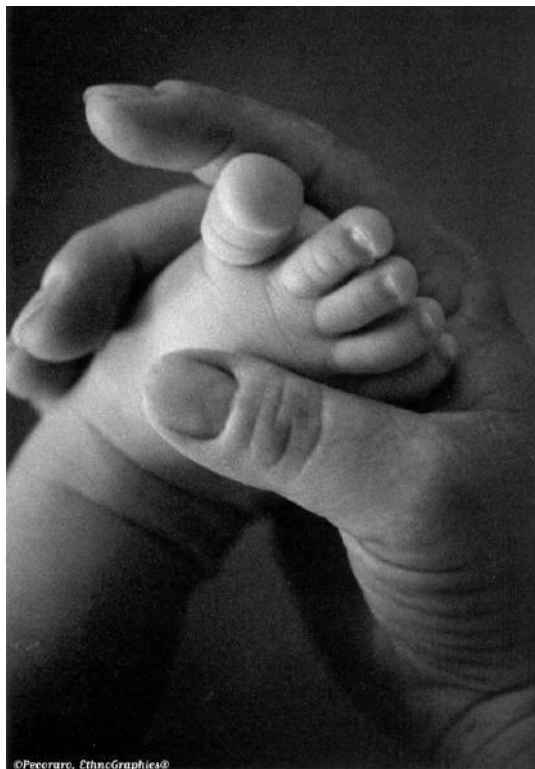




# Family Handbook



March 2011

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Proud member of

United Way  
of Greater St. Louis



## Dear UCCC Families:

Our everyday lives are consumed with rules and regulations. At University City Children's Center, our hope is that we become a place that is driven by values. Three major values are developmentally appropriate for children:

- Respect – Respect for self and others
- Responsibility – Responsibility for self, equipment and materials
- Compassion – Demonstrate compassion for others

We believe that if we live by these major values, then we are fostering citizenship and a healthy future for our children.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices, as described by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, provide a means for instilling these values. As parents and teachers, we need to enable children to embrace their confidence in their competencies – whether they can count to 10 or to 100 – we must celebrate their individual successes – **“Where every child is an individual.”**

The philosophy behind our curriculum is that children learn best by doing, because active thinking and experimenting are required to discover how things work. Children learn through trial and error, enabling them to develop a deep, long-lasting understanding of the relationships in their environment.

Providing quality care and education in a safe, trusting environment is essential at University City Children's Center. We provide a social atmosphere where all children feel accepted and respected, allowing them to accept and respect others. Children are encouraged to use their communication skills to express themselves. Communication skills are a key element for success in our world.

Developing a partnership between school and family is essential for a successful, holistic educational experience for children. Teachers and parents must make a conscious decision to become deeply involved in the educational and developmental process of their children. In the words of Bev Bos, an internationally renowned educator, “Together we're better.” I hope this Family Handbook will assist you in becoming involved at University City Children's Center with your child.

Stephen P. Zwolak, Executive Director

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## **Mission, Vision and Values**

### **MISSION**

University City Children’s Center is committed to providing innovative, quality care and education to a racially, culturally, developmentally, and socio-economically diverse population of children between the ages of six weeks and six years in a nurturing environment that provides supportive services to families.

### **VISION**

Our vision is to create a new paradigm in early childhood education that will serve as a model for creating systemic change for children and families.

### **VALUES**

University City Children’s Center is a diverse, intentional early childhood community that respects and nurtures children and adults in a trusting culture of love, empathy, compassion, and joy that is guided by visionary leadership. An integral part of our mission and practice is developing partnerships and educational outreach to the larger St. Louis community.

We believe that trust is the foundation of any value; that through trust, our school community, our partners, and our friends have the ability to carry the message of creating systemic change for children and families.

We believe that empathy and compassion are found naturally in children. In order to ensure these values are woven into the fabric of their personhood, children must experience an environment that is intentionally empathetic and compassionate. We believe that love needs to be among the primary examples we set for children, acting as a compass that directs all interactions as we grow a school community.

We believe that joy is an essential element to creating and maintaining an emotionally healthy life, is established through the alternating experiences of struggle and success, and begins at birth.

## **Philosophy, Goals and Objectives**

### **Philosophy**

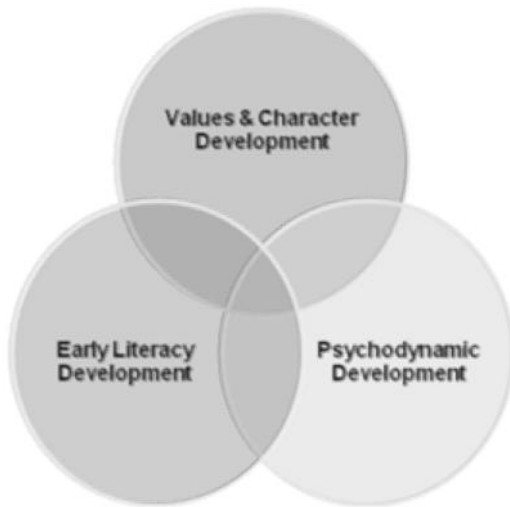
Our *inside-out approach* to caring for young children is part of what makes us unique – and one of the most critical ingredients missing in our early care and education system as it exists today. We have developed a model, The Spheres of Understanding that integrates three interdependent developmental lines, each of which is critical to developing the whole child:

The Spheres of Understanding support intentional teaching practices. We integrate each sphere into daily practice. Within each sphere, there are key elements of children's growth that are based on developmental theory, observational research, and current brain research. Our responsibility is to provide educational experiences that are driven by best practices.

We identify literacy as the linchpin to current and future academic success for all children. UCCC offers a literacy-based curriculum which supports the social, emotional, and intellectual health of children, and enables them to have the opportunity for that academic success. In addition to this innovative approach to literacy, the St. Louis Psychoanalytic Institute provides teachers with highly specialized training in the psychodynamic development of children, which, in turn, supports the social and emotional health of children. Thus literacy becomes the overlay for a deeper understanding of children.

Our approach is an ambitious conceptual understanding for teachers of early childhood, when the norm emphasizes product, not process or understanding the inner world of children. We must create a school that can heal and is emotionally responsive to the needs of children and families. Yet as ambitious as this may be, we believe it is the key to systemic family change. The integration of disciplines creates a model for early childhood education unmatched in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

***The Spheres of Understanding***



<b><i>Values &amp; Character Development</i></b>	<b><i>Psychodynamic Development</i></b>	<b><i>Early Literacy Development</i></b>
Trust	Temperament	Oral Language and Vocabulary
Empathy	Attachment	Listening Skills
Compassion	Self-Regulation	Emergent Writing
	Autonomy	Emergent Reading
	Identity	
	Resiliency	

## **Program Goals and Objectives**

- To provide innovative quality early care and education for an economically, racially, and culturally diverse population of children from 6 weeks to 6 years of age in a year-round program.
- To enhance early literacy development of children in an emotionally responsive environment that advances the intellectual, emotional, social and physical development of children.
- To provide an emotionally safe environment where children have the opportunity to develop their intellectual capacity while building the skills for academic success.
- To develop partnerships with families that increases their understanding of the importance of early care and education through comprehensive family services.
- To enhance character and value development of children, families, and UCCC's faculty and staff through building a caring community.

## **LICENSING**

The Center is licensed by the Missouri Division of Family Services Day Care Licensing to enroll 188 children. Our focus is on children ages 6 weeks through six years. Licensing regulations and reports are available for viewing upon request.

## **PERSONNEL**

Each teacher, staff member, or administrator of the Center has an important role and responsibility for each child's intellectual, social, emotional and physical well-being. We take a team approach to the development of children, knowing that each Center member has the capability to positively influence the life of each child. To comply with State of Missouri child care licensing regulations and other best practices, all employees of UCCC undergo all required screenings and tests.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

UCCC provides equal employment and opportunities to all individuals without regard to: race, color, religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, information derived from genetic tests, or any other protected characteristic. UCCC is committed to making reasonable job accommodations when possible. This policy governs all aspects of employment, including, but not limited to: selection, promotion, job assignment, compensation, discipline, termination, and access to benefits and training.

## **Professional Development**

UCCC is unique in its commitment to professional development. Depending on the position, all employees are expected to maintain a specified level of training each year. All staff must at least meet the minimum standard of education and experience required by Missouri Accreditation. However, UCCC faculty represents a wide range of personnel who hold a variety of degrees and have a diverse background and experience related to child and family services.

## **Program and Curriculum**

### **Curriculum**

The Center follows the Developmentally Appropriate Practices established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In addition, we believe that the curriculum has established standards that support the whole child. The UCCC program uses The Creative Curriculum that guides teachers in creating quality learning environments and facilitating learning experiences to support positive outcomes for children. Teachers guide the children through the learning process by intentionally exposing them to experiences, both indoors and outdoors, that support their development in the following areas: literacy, language, math, science, social studies and fine and large motor. Each day, children engage in learning experiences that are a balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities through interaction with their peers and adults in the classroom learning centers. Individualized learning experiences are implemented daily to assist children to develop and gain skills that focus on individual needs as well as to build on their learning interests. Diversity is cultivated throughout the learning experience so that children learn to appreciate the differences of others and includes children with extra support needs. Children may occasionally participate in field trips that enhance program themes for which your permission will be obtained.

### **Guiding Principles of Curriculum**

- Early learning and development is a totally integrated experience as one domain influences the development in others.
- The expectation of children must be to succeed, regardless of their background.
- Children are individuals who develop at different rates.
- Children learn through exploration of their environment in child-initiated and teacher-facilitated activities.
- Teachers, staff, and families must work collaboratively to ensure that children are provided optimal learning experiences.

### **Emotionally Responsive Programming**

- Children will show the capacity to think about important people when they are out of sight.
- Children will be able to identify and name emotions (positive and negative affects).
- Children will find pleasure in relating to other children.
- Children will anticipate and participate in routines, activities, and transitions most of the time.
- Children will use pretend play, symbolic play, storytelling, drawing, painting, and clay modeling to process experiences and to express thoughts and feelings.

*Adapted from Creating Schools That Heal by Lesley Koplow (2002).*

## **Lesson Plans**

The planning of the lesson is an opportunity for the teaching team to come together and brainstorm how they will intentionally incorporate the interests of their group into the UCCC Curriculum framework. The plan is then written into a creative format that provides a system to ensure that all domains of the curriculum are covered. An updated copy of the lesson plan is posted outside the classroom. Individual copies are available upon request.

### **Infant/Toddler Room Schedule**

- 7:00 - 7:30 Arrival, Selected Activities, Saying Goodbye to parent**
- 7:30 - 8:30 Breakfast**
- 8:30 - 9:00 Diaper Changes / Language**
- 9:00 - 10:00 Story books/ Music and Movement**
- 10:00 - 10:30 Outdoor / Gross motor**
- 10:30 - 11:00 Diaper changes/Language**
- 11:00 - 11:30 Art / Sensory**
- 11:30 - 12:00 Lunch**
- 12:00 - 12:30 Gross motor /outdoor**
- 12:30 - 2:30 Naptime for Toddlers, Diaper Changes,  
Individual Activities for Infants**
- 2:30 - 3:00 Diaper Changes / Snack Time**
- 3:00 - 3:30 Fine Motor Activities**
- 3:30 - 4:00 Language / story Time**
- 4:00 - 4:30 Dramatic Play**
- 4:30 - 5:00 Diaper Changes**
- 5:00 - 5:15 Music / books**
- 5:15 - 6:00 Departure, Selected Activities, saying Hello to Parents  
And goodbye to caregivers**

### **General Daily Timed Schedule Two- to Five-Year-Old Classrooms**

**7am-7:30 AM** -- Morning welcome in our playroom; greeting children & families.

**7:30am-8:00 AM** -- Two's go to their classroom @ 7:30, engage in open play. Other classrooms pick up children @ 8 AM, also open play as other friends arrive.

**8am-8:45 AM** -- Breakfast in classrooms- children that are present clean-up, wash hands and enjoy breakfast.

**8:45am-11:00 AM** -- Each age group will participate in any of the following: outdoor time, free choice time, small group, large group, morning meeting, center time, or journals.

**11:00 AM-1:30 PM** -- Classrooms are preparing for their lunch times which includes clean up time, setting up for lunch, putting down cots, hand washing, potty/diapering. Those classrooms that are not having their meal may be participating in the following; outdoor time, free choice time, small group, large group, morning meeting, center time, or journals.

**1:30-3:00 PM** -- Nap & quiet time. The following age groups have independent reading time, small group reading times, and/or soft music playing. For children who wake up or do not nap during this time, quiet activities are provided on their own cots or near a staff person; for example, writing in their journal or working on a puzzle.

**3:00-4:00 PM** -- Children are putting away cots, potty/diapering, hand washing, setting up snack, and eating snacks, some children may begin to leave for the day at this time.

**4:00-6:00 PM** -- These age groups may participate in the following activities; outdoor time, free choice time, small group, large group, center time, or journals. Children who stay after 5pm are served a snack.

\*\*\*The needs of each child are met on an individual basis; however, there are times when the group may be encouraged to potty, wash hands, or get a drink together.

### **Tracking Success**

UCCC ensures that your child will gain knowledge and life skills while in the classroom. We use ongoing observations, assessments, and individualized planning to track the progress your child makes while enrolled. Your consent is required prior to the administration of an assessment. This General Consent Form is valid throughout your child's enrollment and includes a list of assessments currently in use. Each child has a classroom portfolio that reflects his/her work and learning progression through the developmental milestones. This information about your child is available upon request.

### **Mental Health**

Our goal is to assist each child and family in finding effective ways to meet their physical, social and emotional needs. Throughout the year, information will be shared on positive parenting, emotional wellness, behavior management and developmental delays. (Community resources will be provided to assist in meeting the needs of children and families.) If you would like more information about these services, please contact the Center Director or Emotional Enrichment Counselor.

If your child has a diagnosed disability, or if you suspect that your child will have extra support needs, contact the Center Director or Emotional Enrichment Counselor. Many services for children with extra support needs can be provided in all classrooms. We will partner with you as we develop a plan for your child.

## **Family Support and Communication**

### **Website**

Parents are encouraged to visit the school website, [uccc.org](http://uccc.org), on a regular basis to see what's new.

### **Family Involvement**

Parents are always welcome at the Center! UCCC hosts a variety of family involvement activities to enable every family to have a relationship with the Center. Some of the events include a family potluck to celebrate our diversity, Curriculum Night, Literacy Night and family work days. Each family is expected to accrue a minimum of 24 involvement hours over a period of 12 months attendance at the Center.

Our teachers are very interested in your child. We encourage you to communicate openly and often with your child's teachers—come and visit the classroom. We are very interested in building trusting relationships between parents and staff. Such relationships will help make experiences at the Center positive for all invested.

### **UCCC Family Organization**

The UCCC Family Organization is similar to a school PTO. It strives to maximize positive family involvement in order to foster close relationships with their child's friends, teachers, school administrators and other families by actively participating in school activities. The families of UCCC students have entered into a formal partnership with the Center to support the growth and development of the families and the students. The Family Organization works together in an inclusive community to support the UCCC children in their respective efforts to think critically, act responsibly and live virtuously and compassionately.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences & Home Visits**

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled at least twice a year, every six months, or in spring and fall, depending upon the age of your child. A written report on your child's development will be given to you at the spring conference. Parents are always welcome to request a conference at other times with teachers and/or any member of the Administrative Team. Home visit conferences are also an available option for all families, but are required for families involved with Early Head Start and Head Start.

### **Parents as Teachers Program**

The Center participates in the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. PAT is a free, voluntary program that promotes parents as a child's first and most influential teachers. Contact Administration for more information or to enroll.

## **Family/Child Record Information**

Families have access to individual family records per request to the Center Support Manager. Also, if a family requests to have a child's record forwarded to another institution, they must do so in writing.

## **General Policies and Guidelines**

### **Admission Procedures**

We strive to mirror the diversity of our community within our center. Children are enrolled regardless of race, sex, religion, or national origin on a first-come, first-served basis.

### **UCCC Tuition Policy**

As a member of University City Children's Center, you agree to the following

- Tuition is to be prepaid no later than Monday of each scheduled week. If fees are not paid by 6:00 p.m. on Monday of scheduled week, your tuition fee will be considered late and your account may be assessed a late fee of \$5.00 per day until account is paid in full.
- Please call the Center Support Manager if you will be on vacation or if your child is ill on Monday and no late fee will be added to your account.
- Two weeks' notice is required before you leave the Center. If you leave prior to the two weeks, you are held financially responsible for two weeks following the date that written notice of withdrawal is received.
- Tuition is due regardless of whether your child is present at the Center. This includes illness, vacation, and holidays. Special consideration for children with long-term illness will be submitted to the Board of Directors. Your written request must be made to the Chief Financial Officer.
- Cash, money orders, credit cards, debit cards, and checks are all accepted forms of payment. At times, NSF checks (checks for insufficient funds) are received from the bank. If your check is returned, you will pay the amount on the check for the tuition, plus a \$25 administrative fee. If we receive your NSF check, you may no longer be able to pay with a check. We may require that future tuition fees be paid by cash or money order only.
- DSS and Head Start children are allowed five absences in a month, including holidays. We may charge a fee for absences over five in a month.
- Your past due tuition bill will be turned over for collection if your account continues to be delinquent. You will then also be responsible for court costs, attorney fees, and interest.

### **Hours of Operation**

The Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. School closings due to inclement weather will be posted on KTVI Channel 2, KSDK Channel 5 and KMOV Channel 4. You will also receive an automated telephone call. Please be sure we have an up-to-date contact number at all times. If your child will be absent due to illness, vacation, or any other reason, please inform the child's teachers ahead of time or call the Center before 9:00 a.m. @ 314/726-0148.

## **Breakfast, Lunch, and Snack**

The Center provides breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack for each child. These meals are nutritious and prepared on site. A vegetarian option is available and we are sensitive to medical dietary restrictions. We incorporate fresh produce from our garden as available.

- Breakfast is from 7:45 to 8:45. Parents of children who arrive at 8:45 and want their child to have breakfast must stay with their child in order for them to finish breakfast as the classroom is beginning their program day at 8:45.
- Lunch is from 10:30 to 12:30
- Snack is delivered to the classrooms beginning at 2:00 p.m. and served at the teachers' discretion
- Children who stay after 5:00 p.m. receive an additional snack

## **Celebrations and Holidays**

Our classrooms celebrate often—sometimes in response to traditional holidays, and sometimes spontaneously! We respect and acknowledge many traditions. Birthdays are celebrated in the child's classroom.

## **Child/Family Orientation**

After a family accepts a position at UCCC, a half-day visit for the child is orchestrated with the classroom teacher. At this time the child has the opportunity to become more familiar with the routines and schedules. In addition, the parent or family member has the opportunity to "get to know" the teachers. The purpose is for the family to gain a "sense of belonging" at UCCC. Home visits are arranged for all infants and toddlers. This gives teachers and parents an opportunity to get to know each other and the baby's specific routines.

## **Calendar**

The Center will be closed the following days. You will receive a school calendar each year and the calendar is always posted on our website. For your convenience, you will receive a SchoolReach reminder prior to any events or closings:

- New Year's Day (& Friday after if on Thursday)
- Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday (Observed)
- President's Day
- Professional Development Day (Friday before Memorial Day, Staff Only)
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Professional Development Day (Friday before Labor Day, Staff Only)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following
- Christmas Eve (Close at 3:00 p.m.)
- Christmas Day (& Friday after if on Thursday)
- New Year's Eve (Close at 3:00 p.m.)
- 4 Early Closing dates, one per quarter

## **Dismissal Information**

We know that all families understand the difficulties caused by not picking children up on time – 6:00 p.m. at the latest. However, we need to let you know the procedure in case of **unavoidable** delays or worse, the possibility of an occurrence which makes it not only impossible to come to the Center, but even to let anyone know.

The University City Children’s Center policy is as follows:

- We charge \$1.00 per minute after 6:00 p.m.
- In the event that no one can stay and/or the time is unreasonably late, and we cannot reach any of the people on your list, a member of Administration will contact the University City Police Department. As alarming as this sounds, it is standard procedure for day care programs. This allows you or family members to know exactly where your child would be in the event of a true emergency, and provides a consistent procedure always available to us.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtfulness and consideration of our teachers. The teachers know that you respect their family obligations and commitments. Knowing the emergency policy will help us all. Be sure you have provided a current list of phone numbers where someone can be reached that can pick up your child. The teachers will begin calling promptly at 6:00 p.m.

## **Child Abuse/Neglect Policies & Procedures**

All early childhood professionals are mandated reporters for abuse and neglect. In addition, we at University City Children’s Center understand that families can often become stressed or overwhelmed. We are adopting a proactive process to abuse and neglect situations by promoting program strategies that

- Facilitate friendships and mutual support;
- Strengthen parenting skills;
- Respond to family crises;
- Link family services and opportunities;
- Facilitate children’s social and emotional development;
- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse and neglect; and
- Value and support parents.

Suspected cases of CAN are reported to the Missouri State hotline. The toll free number is 1-800-392-3738.

## **GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE**

We help children learn to be self-assured, helpful, and cooperative. We believe discipline is an ongoing process through which young children can learn self-regulation. The emphasis

at the Center is placed on acquiring positive social skills, problem-solving strategies, and the ability to see things from other people's perspective. This process occurs at different times for different children, but from the earliest age, children are encouraged to express their feelings appropriately through facial expression, body movements, or language.

Teachers are encouraged

- To make expectations clear and age-appropriate.
- To model desirable behaviors.
- To anticipate potential conflicts.
- To use discussion and/or redirection as needed.

Teachers are prohibited from

- Using physical punishment, including but not limited to, spanking, slapping, shaking, biting or pulling hair.
- Using discipline techniques that are humiliating, threatening or frightening to children. Children shall not be shamed, ridiculed or spoken to harshly, abusively or with profanity.
- Using punishment or threat of punishment that is associated with food, rest or toilet training.
- Placing children in a closet, a locked or unlit room or any other place which is frightening.
- Permitting children to intimidate or harm others, harm themselves or destroy property.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Medical Admissions Requirement**

The Center must have up-to-date and accurate reports of your child's physical history and immunizations. State licensing requires this information be on file and current for your child to remain in attendance. All medical information must be submitted at the time of the orientation visit or, at the latest, on the first day of attendance. Early Head Start and Head Start families are required to provide additional health events annually. These must be maintained throughout the year.

### **Medication**

Prescription Medication must be prescribed by a physician and in its original container, labeled with instructions for staff and the physician's name. Non-prescription pediatric medication must be in its original container and labeled by the parent with the child's name and instructions for administration, including the times and amounts for dosages (medication must be pediatric). Non-prescription cold medication will not be given without a doctor's note. Medication Authorization Forms must be completed for all medications and must not deviate from the instructions. Families are asked to partner with teachers to ensure that all expired medications are promptly removed from the Center.

## Medical Action Plans

Children with specialized medical care needs may be required to provide a current emergency action plan from the licensed medical provider.

## Illness/Acute Infectious Disease

If a child becomes ill while at the Center, his or her parent will be contacted to come get him or her. For the comfort of your child and the protection of other children, we ask that you pick up your child as soon as possible, preferably within one hour of notification.

A child with a fever of 100, diarrhea, or vomiting **will not be admitted to the Center until the child has been symptom-free for 24 hours.** The following conditions and illnesses will require temporary exclusion from the Center:

- Rashes: A physician must investigate an undiagnosed rash or spots. Before returning, a physician's diagnosis must be presented to the Center.
- Pinkeye: Antibiotic treatment for 24 hours before returning to the Center.
- Chicken Pox: May return when all lesions have crusted, approximately 5–7 days.
- Strep Throat: May return after 48 hours of antibiotic treatment.
- Lice: May return after treatment with medicated shampoo when hair is nit-free.
- Ringworm: May return with a doctor's note after receiving treatment. Ringworm on the skin may be treated with a topical cream. Ringworm in the hair requires shampoo and medication before re-admittance to school.

## Injury/Accident Guidelines

An Accident/Injury Report will be filled out in order to document any accident, including major scrapes, bruises, bumps, or any other time that a child is injured. Parents will be notified in a timely fashion. Staff will note the time and date of the incident, the child involved, describe what happened (why it happened, where it happened, and what injury resulted), when a parent was notified, and what action was taken. Staff will call 911 before notifying a parent if the incident warrants such action. A parent will be asked to sign the Report and will receive a copy.

## Disaster and Emergency Plan

In the event of an emergency that would cause UCCC to evacuate the building (fire, gas leak, storm, etc.), parents would be notified as soon as possible of a location to pick up their child. We have three possible locations in the event of such an emergency and will inform you of the location of your child.

Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center  
737 Kingsland Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63130  
314-721-2965

Washington University – North Campus Building  
700 Rosedale  
St. Louis, MO 63112  
314-935-5727

Laciny Brothers Inc.  
6622 Vernon Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63130

## **Safety Drills**

The Center will perform monthly safety drills to ensure preparedness in the event of an emergency. Each month, two safety drills are held. A fire drill occurs monthly. In addition one of the following three safety drills occurs monthly on a rotating basis: tornado, earthquake, and intruder.

## **AFFILIATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS**

The Center maintains relationships with many organizations:

**The Belle Center:** *The Belle Center* offers a full inclusion preschool program which allows children with disabilities to learn and play with their typically developing peers.

**YWCA Head Start Partnership:** Effective January 2007, University City Children's Center became a partner in the *YWCA Head Start* Program. This enables us to serve several qualified families at a reduced rate of tuition.

**Youth In Need Early Head Start Partnership:** *Youth In Need* is dedicated to building positive futures for the community's most vulnerable children, teens and families.

In addition, UCCC is fortunate to have numerous volunteers, health consultants, educational institutions and other individuals and organizations who share their time and treasure with us on behalf of our children, families and staff.

## **Board of Directors**

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The Center's Board of Directors is composed of a maximum of 24 members who are community leaders, business people, professional volunteers, educators, parents of Center children, and one Center teacher.