Mother’s Morning Out Preschool Program



Parent Handbook

2023- 2024

Cashiers United Methodist Church

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**Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me,**

**and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of the**

**heaven belongs to such as these.”**

*Matthew 19:14*

**Mission Statement**

The mission of our Mother’s Morning Out program is to provide children with a warm and loving Christian environment that strives to promote growth in all areas including intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development.

**Philosophy and Goals**

CUMC seeks to provide a loving, safe and Christian environment where learning is fun and feelings of self-worth are fostered and strengthened. Children will learn how to share, play, and work with others. They will gain self-confidence through encouraged involvement in small and large group activities. Children will have opportunities to learn and practice good choices as they grow in their love of God. All this will work to prepare children to enter Kindergarten ready to learn.

The program does not discriminate either in enrollment of children or in the employment of staff on the basis of race, gender, color, national origin, age, handicap, or religious affiliation.

**Program Description**

The MMO program provides activities for preschool-aged children (ages 1- 5) that are age and developmentally appropriate. Activities are designed to stimulate each child’s social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. Activities will provide both cooperation and consideration of other children, as well as encouragement of the child to play alone.

**Days of Operation**

The program is offered Monday through Friday, from 9 AM to 1:00 PM. We observe the following holidays/breaks:

* + Presidents Day 2/19/2024
  + Spring Break 4/25-4/29/ 2024
  + Easter (Good Friday) Included in spring break
  + Memorial Day 5/27/24
  + Independence Day 7/4/2024
  + Labor Day 9/2/2024
  + Thanksgiving Thursday and Friday 11/23-11/24/ 2024
  + Christmas- New Year’s Day 12/25/2024-1/1/2025

**Daily Schedule- may vary**

9-9:15 Drop-off & Free Play Time

9:15-10 Structured learning

10:00-10:30 Snack Language and Literacy

10:30-11 sensory/science

11-11:30 music

11:00-11:30 free play/ centers/ outside play

11:30-12:00 Lunch

12:00-1:00 Outside play Unless there are active weather alerts or precipitation, children will go outside for at least 30 minutes per day.

**Inclement Weather Policy**

MMO follows the same weather closing schedule as Blue Ridge School. If MMO changes the opening/closing times due to weather, you will be notified by text message.

**Arrival and Departure**

Children should be present at MMO by 9:00 AM. Please notify MMO staff If your child is going to be more than 15 minutes late.

The MMO program ends promptly at 1 PM. Please have plans to pick your child up at this time. You will be charged $10 for every 15 minutes you are late picking up your child. Children will only be released into the care of someone listed on your enrollment application, and that person may be asked to provide identification before we will release the child. In the event, that your child is going home with someone other than a parent, a note should be sent the morning of with the child.

**Make-Up Days**

In the event of program closure due to inclement weather, MMO will provide a make-up day for any children affected by the closure. Make-up days will *not be provided* for days missed for any reason other than program closure or early dismissal. Children may not attend on any day other than those designated on their enrollment application.

**Application and Registration**

Prior to enrollment in the MMO program, the following policies and forms must be read, completed and signed:

* + Child’s Information Form
  + Child’s Medical History/ Special Considerations Form
  + Immunization History
  + Emergency Treatment Authorization
  + Parent Covenant
  + Copy of the Parent Handbook/ Signed Acknowledgement
  + Enrollment/Tuition Agreement
  + Permission to Have Pictures Taken
  + Permission for Sunscreen and Bug Spray

If your child will attend less than two consecutive weeks at a time, our drop-in rate is $40/day. Please notify MMO staff the day prior to your child’s attendance in order to ensure adequate staff/child ratios.

**2023-2024 Monthly Tuition Schedule**

One day/week - $100

Two days/week - $200

Three days/week - $300

Four days/week - $400

Five days/week - $500

Tuition is due on the 1st of the month, however, if tuition is not paid by the 10th of the month, a late fee of $10 will be added. Payments are calculated by the month. If you happen to travel on vacation or your child is sick and is unable to attend, you are still responsible for full monthly payment.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality of information about the child and family will be maintained. Enrollment forms and all other information concerning the child and family compiled by our program will be accessible only to the parent or legal guardians, the MMO Director, childcare provider, health/social service coordinator, health consultant, and person designated by the state licensing department to review records for licensing. Information concerning the child will not be made available to anyone without the expressed written consent of the parent or legal guardian.

**Food**

Parents are asked to pack a nutritious lunch for their child each day. Please note, we do not have the capability to warm food or keep food refrigerated. . Food sharing is not permitted between children or between staff and children. Food is not to be used as a reward or withheld as a form of discipline.

Please provide a spill proof cup so that we can ensure adequate hydration and label the cup and reusable food trays and lunch boxes with your child’s name.

**Snack** - MMO will provide snacks for the children. Special dietary considerations should be discussed in advance with the MMO Director. All efforts will be taken to respect parent preferences in regards to sugar, processed foods etc. Please let MMO staff know of any food allergies or other considerations you have for your child.

**Birthdays** - parents are welcome to provide commercially prepared cakes, cupcakes, cookies, etc. to celebrate their child’s birthday. Please discuss with the MMO Director prior to the actual birthday, so that adequate plans may be made.

**Clothing**

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes according to the weather. During the changing seasons, it may often be cool in the morning and warm in the afternoon. Bring extra clothes or dress your child in layers. Please label all clothing on the tag or collar. During the summer months, please apply sunscreen and bug spray prior to dropping your child off.

**Extra Clothing (for all ages)**

Parents should also bring a complete change of clothes for their child labeled with the child’s name. Remember, active children will get their clothes dirty. During our daily activities, children will have the opportunity to be involved in sand, water, painting or other art activities. These “messy” creative activities allow children to participate in many valuable learning experiences. Be sure that children are dressed for involvement in these fun learning opportunities.

Parents are also required to provide diapers for their child. Please label these with your child’s name. MMO will provide wipes.

**Toys**

Children are not allowed to bring personal toys into the MMO classrooms. Our rooms are equipped with plenty of age-appropriate toys and material for all children.

**Children’s Photographs**

We do take pictures of the children throughout the day for scrapbooks, posting pictures of the activities in the classroom for the church newsletter, and for social media and print media. We may also use pictures in our MMO brochures and CUMC website. If you do not wish for your child’s picture to be posted, please let us know.

**Discipline and Behavior Policy**

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods for the behavioral management of children. When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief of how children learn and develop values, this program will practice the following discipline and behavior management policy:

**WE DO:**

* + Praise, reward, and encourage children.
  + Reason with and set limits for the children.
  + Model appropriate behavior for the children.
  + Modify the environment to attempt to prevent problem before they arise.
  + Listen to the children.
  + Provide the children alternatives to inappropriate behavior.
  + Provide the children with natural and logical consequences for their behaviors.
  + Treat the children as people and respect their needs, desires, and feelings.
  + Ignore minor misbehaviors.
  + Explain things to children on their level.
  + Use short supervised periods of time out.
  + Stay consistent in our behavioral management program.

**WE DO NOT:**

* + Spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap, or otherwise physically punish the child.
  + Make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse the children.
  + Harm or punish the children when bathroom accidents occur.
  + Deny food or rest as punishments.
  + Relate discipline to eating, resting, or sleeping.
  + Leave the children alone, unattended, or without supervision.
  + Place the children in locked rooms, closets, or boxes as punishment.
  + Allow discipline of children by children.
  + Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children’s parents, families or ethnic group.

If needed, the following methods of discipline will be used:

1. Redirect children’s activity if it is unacceptable.
2. Remove children from the group if they become out of control, giving them time out to consider their behavior
3. If a child repeatedly, after multiple interventions, continues to bite, hit, throw objects, or engage in otherwise destructive behavior to either him/herself or others, a parent will be called to remove their child from the program for the remainder of the day.

**Biting**

One of the most stressful events parents may experience when their child is enrolled in a preschool program is to find their child has been bitten by another child or that their child has bitten someone else. There are several reasons why children bite. They use their mouths to explore, they do not have a well-developed sense of cause and effect, they do not have verbal skills to express feelings, and frustration. Children are often teething, and it may just feel good to bite! While stressful it is a common occurrence in young children.

**What do we do to prevent and treat biting incidents?**

1. Plan activities and supervise our program carefully so that biting is less likely to occur.
2. Provide activities to release frustration.
3. Maintain a good child to adult ratio so that we know all children are well supervised.
4. Respond firmly by telling children “no” and provide a simple explanation to help children understand why biting cannot be allowed.
5. May isolate a child for a few minutes to give them time to calm down. The child will never be totally isolated form the group, an adult will always be in the presence of the child, and isolation time is very short for young children.
6. Console the child who has been bitten and move quickly to clean the bite.
7. We put ice on the bite to minimize swelling and bruising. We do have first aid supplies on hand.
8. Contact both children’s parents as soon as possible about the incident.
9. “Shadow” the child who has done the biting so that we can decrease the likelihood of any follow up incidents.

**There are some things we do NOT permit, related to biting:**

1. We will NOT bite children back, nor will we encourage children to bite each other back. These practices only further the aggressive behavior.
2. Under normal circumstances, we will not expel a child with a biting problem. If a child reaches the age where biting is uncommon (past three) and the child is still biting persistently, a careful examination of the situation will be given.

**Medical Emergency Policy**

MMO Staff are certified in first aid and CPR. MMO has first aid kits readily available at all times.

Emergency care information must be on file for each child including the name, address, phone number of the parents or other emergency contact person, the child’s physician, the preferred hospital, any chronic illness the child has, and any other information that has a direct bearing on assuring safe medical treatment for a child.

Each child’s parent or legal guardian shall sign a statement authorizing the MMO program to obtain medical attention for the child in an emergency. That signed authorization will be kept on file from the first day a child attends so that it can be accessed easily and taken with the child in an emergency situation.

**Emergency Medications**

If your child has a severe allergy or other medical condition which could warrant use of emergency medication such as epinephrine (an EpiPen) or Buccal (for severe seizures), **it is the parent’s responsibility** to ensure MMO has any medications your child may need. If your child has an EpiPen, you must leave one with us to keep on site or send one with them each day they attend. Medications will be stored in a secured area and labeled with your child’s name, medication name, dosage information, and frequency given. NOTE: We **cannot** permit any child who requires these sorts of medications to participate in our program without having these medications.

**Accidental Injury or Emergency Health Problem**

1. In case of accidental injury or emergency health problems, the staff will call 911, then contact the parent. If the staff cannot reach the parent, staff will call emergency numbers listed on the child’s application. The MMO Director will make all decisions about care of the child. The MMO program will maintain a parent’s signed consent form agreeing to medical care.
2. A first aid kit is available in the MMO room at Cashiers United Methodist Church. Staff are trained in first aid and infant/child CPR.

**Health and Safety Procedures**

Symptoms of illness: If a child has any of the following symptoms, he/she will be isolated from the other children and a parent will be called to pick up the child.

1. Lice
2. Suspected signs of communicable disease
3. Nausea or diarrhea
4. Constant cough or difficulty breathing
5. Discharge from ears or eyes or inflamed tissues around eyes or ears
6. Visible Rash or Skin irritation
7. Severe headache
8. Fever- 100 or above

**Re-admission Following Illness**

A child will be permitted to return to the MMO program when all symptoms of the illness have not been present for 24 hours or he/she has been free of fever for 24 hours without use of fever reducing medication.

**Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

In NC, all childcare staff are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services in the appropriate county.

**Staff**

We employ qualified childcare workers who participate in an orientation program and on-going training related to child development, early childhood education, and other related fields.

All staff and volunteers will have a criminal background check prior to hiring and every three years thereafter. As with any function of The United Methodist Church, strict adherence to the church’s *Safe Sanctuary* policy will be upheld at all times.

Visitors who are not official staff, volunteers or authorized by parents or church staff will not be allowed to be in the MMO area. Doors to the MMO area will be locked between 9:15 and 12:45. If you need access at other times, please see a church staff person to gain access.

**Parent Participation**

All parents are expected to

1. Visit MMO to help the child become familiar with the program prior to the child’s first day.
2. Obtain a medical examination and immunization record for the child and have all completed medical information.
3. Complete the medical emergency forms.
4. Read, sign, and return the attached letter, stating that you understand all points in the handbook.
5. Check your child’s cubby daily for any new information.

MMO staff will meet with parents on a regular basis to discuss any special needs or situations with each child. Parents are given the opportunity to participate in MMO activities and to observe their child in MMO programs.

**No Smoking Policy**

A tobacco free environment is provided for our children. Including e-cigarettes and vaping. No MMO or CUMC staff will use tobacco products on church property, and we request that all parents and visitors refrain from using tobacco in our MMO area.

**Cleaning Duties**

A thorough cleaning of each MMO area is completed each day after the children leave. MMO staff will spot clean mouthed toys as soon as possible, ensure diaper changing tables are sanitized between children and both staff and children will wash hands after diapering, before snacks and meals and before difficult to clean sensory activities.