

August 2024

Dear St. Thomas Aquinas E.C.C. Families,

Welcome to St. Thomas Aquinas ECC! Congratulations on choosing a faith-based center. We are very blessed to have you and your child in our early childhood program this year. We look forward to working closely with you, as we realize parents are the primary educators of their young children. It is our hope that through open communication and ongoing dialogue between our school, classroom teachers, and families, we can provide experiences that will nurture each child and foster his/her growth and love of learning.

St. Thomas Aquinas ECC is a Catholic Early Childhood Center and is part of the Diocese of St. Petersburg Schools and Centers. As a Catholic school, our purpose is to provide a faith-based, developmentally appropriate learning environment for children ages two to five. Sharing faith with our children and families is our reason for existence. It is our hope that you are encouraged and supported in your own ongoing faith journey, as you walk these steps with your young children.

Our Family Handbook, along with additional communications from our school, will give families an overview of our ECC program and the policies and procedures that are in place for the safety and well being of all. Families are asked to carefully read, review, and refer to the information enclosed during your time with us. We are here to support decisions related to your child and to assist families with transitions from home to school and from program to program.

Family involvement in our program is appreciated, encouraged, and welcomed. There are many ways families can be part of our ECC program throughout the year. Volunteer opportunities are outlined in this folder, as well as additional opportunities, which will be offered throughout the year. Family involvement is a vital part of St. Thomas Aquinas ECC and you are encouraged to be part of your child's journey, in a way that will best allow your child to find comfort and security in his/her new environment.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies and/or your child's transition into our ECC program, please feel free to meet with me.

We look forward to working with your family.

God Bless You,

Alicia Mumma, Director
St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center



License Number C06PA0101

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center
2024-2025

Mrs. Alicia Mumma
Mrs. Kari Glenny

Director
Administrative Assistant

TEACHERS AND STAFF

Mrs. Pam Stein
Mrs. Adrienne Wilson
Mrs. Allison Winebrenner
Mrs. Gina Vega

VPK Teacher
VPK Teacher
VPK Teacher
VPK Teacher Assistant

Mrs. Amanda Brandenburg
Mrs. Emily Moore
Mrs. Andrea Leto
Ms. Margarita Suhwiell
Mrs. Shauna Gaunt
Mrs. Ashley Lyman
Mrs. Janine Penland
Mrs. Deana Azzue
Mrs. Magda Grabowski
Mrs. Mallory Freeman
Ms. Isabella Mages

EC3 Teacher
EC3 Teacher Assistant
EC3 Teacher
EC3 Teacher Assistant
EC3 Teacher
EC3 Teacher Assistant
EC2 Teacher
EC2 Teacher
EC2 Teacher Assistant
Teacher
Lunch Bunch Teacher Assistant

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Lauren Alaimo
Ashley Bravo
Katie Dolatowski
Lindsey Medley
Eva Stahura

Rev. Krzysztof Gazdowicz, Pastor
Rev. George Varkey, Associate Pastor

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 8:30am-3:00pm

FAMILY HANDBOOK
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Policy No.
Mission Statement	1
Welcome/Philosophy	2
Diocesan Statement	3
Governmental Licensing Information	4
Enrollment	5
Orientation Plan for All Families	5.1
Tuition	6
Payment Schedule	6.1
Late Payments	6.2
Confidentiality	7
Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect	8
Parent Code of Conduct	9
Swearing/Cursing	9.1
Threatening of Staff, Parents or Children	9.2
Physical/Verbal Punishment of Your Children or Other Children	9.3
Smoking	9.4
Violations of the Safety Policy	9.5
Confrontational Interactions with Employees, Other Parents And Associates of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center	9.6
Violating the Confidentiality Policy	9.7
Parents Right to Immediate Access	10
Dismissal	11
Withdraw	12
Court Orders Affecting Enrolled Children	13
Arrival Procedures	14
Notification of Absence	14.1
School's Right to Refuse Admission	14.2
Pick Up Procedures	15
Late Pick Up	15.1
Persons Appearing to be Impaired by Drugs and/or Alcohol	15.2
Emergency/Alternate Pick-up Forms	15.3
School Calendar	16
Emergency and Inclement Weather Closing Information	17
Curriculum Information	18
Daily Schedule of Activities	18.1
Class Assignments	18.2
Staff to Child Ratios	18.3
Educational/Personal Care Supplies Needed	18.4
Birthday and Holiday Celebrations	18.5
Parent/Teacher Conferences/Communication	18.6
Farewell	18.7
Discipline	19
Toys from Home	20
Dress Code	21

Children	21.1
Parents	21.2
Parent Participation/Volunteering	22
Health and Safety	23
Pre-Enrollment Requirements	23.1
Children with Severe Allergies	23.2
Communicable Disease	23.3
Biting	23.4
Dispensing of Medication	23.5
Fire/Emergency Drills	23.6
Alternate Safe Location	23.7
Incident/Accident Reports	23.8
Snacks	23.9
Food Allergies	23.10
Firearms and Weapons Policy	23.11
Staff Employment by Client's	24
Agency Contact Information	25

Signature Page (One for each Custodial Parent and/or Legal Guardian)

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center

POLICY: MISSION STATEMENT

POLICY NO.: 1

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mumma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center Mission Statement

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is a Catholic school where two, three, four and five-year olds are given opportunities to develop spiritually, physically, emotionally, and intellectually. We are dedicated to the goal of providing developmentally appropriate programs aimed at the whole child.

POLICY: WELCOME/PHILOSOPHY

POLICY NO.: 2

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mumma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. We welcome you and your children to our center located in New Port Richey, Florida. We look forward to meeting with you. Call and arrange for an appointment to tour our school and allow us to put your mind at ease with your decision to choose St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center.

Our Philosophy

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is foremost a Catholic school where two, three, four, and five-year olds are given opportunities to develop spiritually, physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Each child is a special little human being with individual needs. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center provides the staff, programs, and environment to enhance the growth and development of young children. To accomplish our task, we work closely with parents in a complementary manner. We are dedicated to the goal of providing developmentally appropriate programs aimed at whole child development.

POLICY: DIOCESAN STATEMENT

POLICY NO.: 3

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Diocesan Statement

We, the administrators and teachers in Catholic Schools and Centers in the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida, are dedicated to the growth and development of the student through proclaiming the message, creating community, providing service, and celebrating worship.

POLICY: LICENSING INFORMATION

POLICY NO.: 4

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

4.1 Governmental Licensing Information

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is a fully licensed facility under the Department of Children and Families.

POLICY: ENROLLMENT

POLICY NO.: 5

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mumma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Enrollment at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is open to children from 2-5. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child’s race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, or disability, and without regard to a parent or guardian’s race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy, or disability.

Parents can apply for enrollment of their child at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center by completing the Registration Application and paying the \$225.00 Registration Fee. The Registration Fee is **NON-REFUNDABLE**.

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of the completed enrollment application, signed fee agreement, registration fee, deposit, signed Family Handbook receipt and Florida Department of Health Physical Exam Form and Immunization Certificate. Catholic schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg do not recognize religious objection to immunizations effective as of the 2011-2012 school year.

The Enrollment Application and Fee Agreements are not meant to serve as contracts guaranteeing service for any duration.

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center reserves the right to dismiss any parent or child at any time with or without cause.

Continued enrollment at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is contingent upon the parent’s, emergency contact persons’, and child’s adherence to the policies and procedures of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition.

Parents are required to notify St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center immediately, should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment or any time thereafter change. Failure to do so may result in the child(ren) being dis-enrolled from the program and forfeiture of any deposit.

Early Drop

STAECC offers morning care for all children from 8:30 am – 8:50 am, Monday - Friday for a nominal fee.

Lunch Bunch

STAECC offers a Lunch Bunch program for all children from 12pm to 1pm, 2pm or 3pm, Monday through Friday for a nominal fee. (See Food Policy # 23.9 for further information).

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

- Tour of our facility
- Introduction/visit to our teaching staff (stay a while to make sure you and your child are comfortable)
- Overview of our Family Handbook
- Program expectations: Students, Families and Staff
- Family Involvement and resources that are available
- Parent Orientation Meeting

By signing the ***Family Handbook*** acknowledgement form, you agree that you have been informed of all these portions of the St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center Program.

POLICY: TUITION

POLICY NO.: 6

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

6.1 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Cash, check, credit card or ACH Debit may pay tuition. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center accepts checks, cash, and credit cards. Receipts will be given for tuition payments made by cash. All cash payments must be handed directly to the Director or Administrative Assistant in an envelope labeled installment payment. Your canceled check will serve as your receipt for payments made by check. There will be a \$25.00 fee charged for tuition checks returned by the bank. Returned tuition checks will not be re-deposited. Parents will be responsible for a cash payment. If at any future time the bank returns a parent's check, all future tuition payments must be made by cash, certified check, or money order.

Tuition DOES NOT include fees for extracurricular activities. **Early Drop and Lunch Bunch payments are in advance of your child staying.** You may pay in advance for the month and we'll keep track of your credit.

6.2 LATE TUITION PAYMENTS

There is no credit given for vacations, scheduled school holidays, child illness, or for closings due to emergency situations, inclement weather or acts of God.

Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center; however, if you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with the Center Director immediately. If alternative arrangements for payment are approved, you will be notified by the Center Director. A late fee of \$10 will be added if tuition is not received by the 10th of the month.

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Within St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center who have a “need to know” in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child. Confidential and sensitive information about faculty, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center strives to protect everyone’s right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and HIV/AIDS status or other health related information of anyone associated with St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center.

Outside of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law. Parents will be provided with a document detailing the information that is to be shared outside of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center, persons with whom the information will be shared, and the reason(s) for sharing the information.

Any parent who violates the Confidentiality Policy will not be permitted on school property thereafter. Refer to the policy regarding Parents Right to Immediate Access for additional information regarding dis-enrollment of a child when a parent is prohibited from accessing school property.

You may observe children at our center who are disabled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e., biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child’s privacy. Employees of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

POLICY: MANDATED REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT **POLICY NO.: 8**

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any **suspicion** of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center are considered mandated reporters, under this law. The employees of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- ◆ Severe verbal reprimands
- ◆ Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- ◆ Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- ◆ Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- ◆ Not providing appropriate meals including a drink for your child
- ◆ Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- ◆ Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- ◆ Sending a sick child to school over medicated to hide symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- ◆ Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation.

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center always requires the parents of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center but, is the responsibility of each parent or adult who enters the center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. **Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on school property thereafter.** Please refer to the Policy on Parent's Right to Immediate Access for additional information regarding dis-enrollment of the child when a parent is prohibited from accessing school property.

9.1 SWEARING/CURSING

No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on school property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At NO time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff.

9.2 THREATENING OF EMPLOYEES, CHILDREN OTHER PARENTS OR ADULTS ASSOCIATED WITH ST. THOMAS AQUINAS EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In today's society, St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center cannot afford to sit by idly while threats are made. In addition, all threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, the school will not assume the risk of a second chance. **Parents must be responsible for, and in control of, their behavior at all times.**

9.3 PHYSICAL/VERBAL PUNISHMENT OF YOUR CHILD OR OTHER CHILDREN AT ST. THOMAS AQUINAS EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

While St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center does not necessarily support nor condone corporal punishment of children, such acts are not permitted in the childcare facility. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate, it is not appropriate for parents to verbally abuse their child. Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.

Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or other adult may physically punish another parent's child. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or Center Director.

Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or director's attention. At that point, the teacher and/or director will address the issue with the other parent. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or

the Center Director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our agency have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent or adult visiting the center.

9.4 SMOKING

For the health of all St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center employees, children and associates, smoking is prohibited anywhere on school property. Parents are prohibited from smoking in the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. Parents who are smoking in their cars must dispose of the cigarette prior to entering the parking lot.

9.5 VIOLATIONS OF THE SAFETY POLICY

Parents are required to follow all safety procedures at all times. These procedures are designed not as mere inconveniences, but to protect the welfare and best interest of the employees, children and associates of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. Please be particularly mindful of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center entrance procedures. We all like to be polite. However, we need to be careful to not allow unauthorized individuals into the center. Holding the door open for the person following you may, in fact, be polite; however, that person may not be authorized to enter the premises. Security procedures are only as strong as the weakest person in our organizational chain. Be alert and mindful. Immediately report any breaches to the Center Director.

9.6 CONFRONTATIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES, OTHER PARENTS OR ASSOCIATES OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center has an open-door policy. Anyone with concerns or complaints should immediately contact the early childhood office so that the issue can be resolved.

9.7 VIOLATIONS OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the school. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families and employees associated with St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. Any parent who shares any information considered to be confidential, pressures employees or other parents for information, which is not necessary for them to know, will be considered to be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy.

POLICY: PARENT'S RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS POLICY NO.: 10

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center, as provided by law.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center, **both** parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center staff will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

Visitors are asked to schedule appointments with the Center Director and are allowed in the childcare facility only at the discretion of the Center Director. An employee of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will always accompany visitors, throughout the center.

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will dismiss any child whose parent is prohibited from entering upon school property. Due to the parents' right to immediate access policy, as well as state and federal regulations, St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center cannot have a child at the school when the child's parent is prohibited access. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will not agree to any request to maintain a child's enrollment even if the parent agrees to stay out of the center. Such an agreement is a violation of the law and will not be entertained.

POLICY: DISMISSAL

POLICY NO.: 11

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time, with or without cause.

Parents will be refunded any unused tuition within two weeks of the dismissal. A school check will be mailed to the address indicated in the child's file. Any past due balances must be paid within 30 days of the dismissal. An invoice detailing the past due balance will be forwarded to the address indicated in the child's file within one week of the dismissal. Any balances remaining after the 30-day period will be referred to the school's legal counsel for collection.

The Center Director or designee will assist the parent in gathering their child's belongings at the time of dismissal and parents are required to leave school property in a calm and respectful manner, immediately. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will request assistance from local police should any parent become disruptive and/or uncooperative while gathering their child's belongings upon dismissal.

A dismissed child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with the Center Director if they wish to return to school property following a dismissal. Appointments are made at the discretion of the Center Director and are not a right of the dismissed child or parent.

Following a dismissal, any parent or child who harasses, threatens or in any manner causes harm to anyone affiliated with the school by calling, writing, or any other means, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, by St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center.

POLICY: WITHDRAW

POLICY NO.: 12

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Two weeks written notice is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. If the proper notice is given, any unused tuition will be refunded within thirty days of the withdrawal. If the required notice is not given, parents will be charged tuition for two additional weeks and will not have their tuition refunded.

The parents and child, following their last day of enrollment, are not permitted to re-enter school property without prior permission of the Center Director. A withdrawn child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with the Center Director if they wish to return to school property following the last day of enrollment at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. Appointments are made at the discretion of the Center Director and are not a right of the withdrawn child or parent.

Parents, who wish to change their child's days or times of enrollment at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center, must submit a request to do so two weeks in advance of the proposed change. Schedule changes are subject to availability.

The Center Director will notify the parents if the new schedule is available. A schedule change will not be final until a new fee agreement is signed. If the schedule change requires an additional deposit and/or registration fee, the change will also be contingent upon payment of these monies. If the requested schedule is not available parents may choose to continue with the current schedule until the requested schedule becomes available or may choose to withdraw their child from the program. The date the request for the Center Director receives the schedule change will be used to toll the two weeks notice required for withdraw.

**POLICY: COURT ORDERS AFFECTING
ENROLLED CHILDREN**

POLICY NO.: 13

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (ex. Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center administration, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center cannot, without a court order, limit the access of a one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself, where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

If conflicting court orders are presented, the most recently dated court order will be followed.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will report any violations of these orders to the court.

In cases of abuse where The Department of Children and Families are involved:
"The school will reasonably cooperate with regard to any investigation by The Department of Children and Families (DCF) pertaining to allegations of child abuse. Since the school is on private property, DCF will be precluded from reasonable access to students at school unless consent of a parent or guardian is obtained. Absent such consent, the school will cooperate in allowing DCF to have access to students if DCF obtains, according to law, an appropriate court order or other legal authority, such as the presence of a police officer or deputy sheriff."

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 06/15/2022

Arrival and Dismissal

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center drop-off and pick-up carline procedures:

We will continue morning drop-off procedures between 8:50am – 9:10am. It is important that your child arrive on time. Please walk your child to his/her classroom, give them a kiss/hug and sign them in. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center believes it is best for parents to tell the anxious child upon arrival goodbye. This will prepare your child for their departure. The staff will comfort and assist your child through the anxious time. The longer the parent of an anxious child drags out the departure, the more anxiety the child is likely to feel. The professional employees of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center are available to discuss other options if the child does not settle into the arrival routine after a reasonable period of time.

Carline Safety

Please stay in your cars. Children are dismissed on the passenger side only. All classes are dismissed at 12:00pm.

These procedures have been established for the safety of the children, parents, and staff. It is very important that St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center procedure be followed. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center staff will **not** buckle children into their car seat; **we ask that you pull forward to do so.**

Parents are required to notify the child's teacher or Center Director of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. The parent must present the special instructions in writing and verbally discuss them with either the classroom teacher or Center Director. These special instructions include but are not limited to: Early Pick Up, Alternative Pick Up Person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern which the staff should be aware to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

Please see carline insert in your Family Handbook folder.

14.1 NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Parents are required to inform the center by 9:30 am if a child will not be at the center on a scheduled day. This will enable the center to maintain appropriate ratios and help the classroom teacher effectively plan for the day more effectively. Parents who fail on 3 occasions in one school calendar year to give proper notice of an absence will result in the child being dismissed from the program.

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the center director not only of the absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses, which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the Center Director, so that the parents of the children in the school maybe notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality. Parents are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child's absence from school.

Parents who know in advance that a child will be late, are required to notify the center by 9:30am so as to maintain the appropriate number of employees to ensure ratios are met when the child arrives to school.

14.2 SCHOOL'S RIGHT TO REFUSE ADMISSION

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause.

Possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:

1. Lack of staff to maintain appropriate Staff to Child Ratios as determined by State Licensing Regulations.
2. The need to maintain compliance with Licensing Regulations.
3. Staff deems the child too ill to attend.
4. Domestic situations that present a safety risk to the child, staff or other children enrolled at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center if the child were to be present at the center.
5. Parents' failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
6. Parents' failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.

Parents WILL NOT be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.

POLICY: PICK UP PROCEDURES

POLICY NO.: 15

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/13/2020

Parents or other authorized adults are required to sign their child out of care on using the SmartCare Program. Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on school premises. The parent may not allow a child to wander through the hallways, bathrooms, other classrooms and/or playground. Parents are required to handle all business issues prior to signing out their child and are required to directly exit the building once they have signed their child out of care.

Parents or persons designated to act "in loco parentis" are required to sign any incident/accident reports from the day at pick-up. The classroom teacher may be able to briefly discuss the matter with you or another authorized adult at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day.

15.1 LATE PICK-UP

All measurements of time are to be according to the St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center clock located in front office. Children will be put in Lunch Bunch, if they are not picked up by 12:10pm, and a fee of \$5.00 will be charged. After the initial fee, \$5.00 per 15 minutes will be charged. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that someone (either a parent or Emergency/Alternate pick-up person) is available to pick up the child on time. Carline is not the time to have a discussion with a teacher. Please call St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center to schedule a meeting if necessary.

15.2 PERSONS APPEARING TO BE IMPAIRED BY DRUGS/ALCOHOL AT PICK-UP

The staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will contact local police and/or the other custodial parent should a parent appear to the staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent's right to immediate access does not permit the school from denying a custodial parent access to their child even if the parent is or appears to be impaired. However, St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center staff will delay the impaired parent as long as possible, while contacting the other parent, the local police and Child Protective Services.

Any other authorized person who attempts to pick-up a child and appears to the staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be denied access to the child. The staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will contact the child's parents, local police and Child Protective Services to notify them of the situation.

15.3 EMERGENCY/ALTERNATE PICK-UP FORMS

At enrollment, parents will be asked to provide an Emergency/Alternate Pick-up of two persons. Parents are encouraged to include on this form any, and all persons who, in the course of events, may at one time be asked to pick-up their child from St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. In an emergency situation the child's parents will be called first. If they can not be reached staff will call the persons listed on this form until someone can be reached.

Should the staff contact a parent, and the parent is unable to pick up the child, it is then the responsibility of the parent to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone on the emergency list. Failure of the parent to make such arrangements will result in dismissal from the program.

Parents do not need to be listed on the Emergency Contact Form. The nature of the parental relationship affords the parents (in the absence of a court order indicating otherwise) the right to pick-up their child.

Parents will be asked to determine which persons (if any) on the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form has the right to act "In Loco Parentis." "In Loco Parentis" status affords the pickup person the right to discuss confidential information about the child's day including, but not limited to, incident/accident reports, and behavior issues. In the absence of this designation the people on the Emergency/Alternate Pick Up Form are only afforded the right to pick up the child. Staff is not permitted to discuss the child's day with them.

The persons on the Emergency/Alternate pick-up form will be required to provide Government issued photo ID prior to the agency releasing the child. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

All changes and/or additions to the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form must be made in writing and be dated and signed. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes or additions to this form.

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center reserves the right to refuse/ban any person listed on the Emergency/Alternate Contact Form for any reason, including but not limited to violations of the policies/procedures contained herein. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent(s) to inform each person on the Emergency/Alternate Form of the policies/procedures contained herein.

POLICY: SCHOOL CALENDAR

POLICY NO.: 16

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

August 2024 – May 2025

(Calendar subject to change)

Please see School Calendar on our website, www.staecc.org

POLICY: EMERGENCY CLOSING AND INCLEMENT POLICY NO.: 17

WEATHER INFORMATION

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

In the event of an emergency closing and/or inclement weather, parents will be notified of the closing via email.

Should the school need to close in the middle of the morning, the school staff will attempt to reach the child’s parents first to arrange for pick up. Should the staff be unable to reach the parents, the persons listed on the emergency contact form will be called until pick up arrangements can be made. Staff will notify the parents or emergency contact person at the time of the call and of the pickup location should the children need to be evacuated from the center. Parents or emergency contact persons should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicted.

Should the center need to close for any reason, tuition will not be refunded or reduced for closures.

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 06/15/2022

18.1 DAILY SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Daily schedule of activities will be provided at our Meet and Greet days before school begins and posted in each of the classrooms.

18.2 CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments will be sent to parents in July or August.

18.3 STAFF TO CHILD RATIOS

2's Room 1/10
3's Room 1/15
4's Room 1/20

18.4 EDUCATIONAL/PERSONAL CARE SUPPLIES

Recommended supply list will be provided by teachers at beginning of year.

18.5 HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Parties will be held to celebrate the following:

Halloween
Christmas
Valentine's Day
St. Patrick's Day
Easter

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Simple birthday celebrations are encouraged. Please schedule the celebration ahead of time with your child's teacher. **We ask parents not to leave birthday invitations for private parties with the teacher to hand out unless all children in the class are invited.**

For class parties that are held in your child's classroom, parents who plan to attend must make other arrangements for younger children. For school events that are not held in the classroom, siblings are more than welcome to participate. Any food treats brought to the center for the purpose of sharing with the class must be store prepared and in the original packaging. We request that only donut holes, cookies/cookie cake, or mini cupcakes are provided. Please provide enough for the entire class.

18.6 PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES/COMMUNICATION

STAECC will conduct phone conferences in October. STAECC will have personal conferences with parents in February. **Three VPK assessments will be conducted (September, January and May).** A developmental screening of your child may be conducted during the school year. All communication must be approved by the office before being sent home.

18.7 FAREWELL

A Farewell Ceremony for the VPK children will be held **at the end of the school year.**

POLICY: DISCIPLINE

POLICY NO.: 19

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Every child and parent are expected to respect the other children in the classroom, all staff members and all school equipment here at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center uses a Positive Discipline approach: training the child to control his/her own behavior while teaching them to effectively solve problems and understand feelings, their own as well as others. We accomplish this task in the following manner:

1. Acknowledge the child's feelings, wishes, and wants.
2. Communicate the limits.
3. Target the acceptable alternatives.

In case of a serious misbehavior, a Behavior Notification Form will be completed. (A copy will be given to the parent) This form will be signed by the director and placed in the child's file. A conference will be requested after three behavior notifications to take control of the situation. Parent's cooperation is expected, and the parent must be available for said conference if requested. At no time will corporal punishment be used. When discipline problems cannot be resolved, termination from St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center's program may result.

POLICY: TOYS FROM HOME

POLICY NO.: 20

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring in toys from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child. Parents are encouraged to consult the classroom teacher should they find their child is having difficulty with this policy.

If the parents fail repeatedly to enforce this policy with their children, the staff will call the parents and require that they come to the school and remove the toy.

All toys brought in for use as part of the curriculum will be inspected by St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center staff for safety and appropriateness and may be prohibited at the sole discretion of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center Staff.

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

21.1 CHILDREN

Clothing

Children are engaged in various activities during the course of the day; some of these activities can be messy, and/or athletic in nature. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Due to these activities, children are required to be dressed in seasonably appropriate, comfortable clothing.

Parents are prohibited from dressing children in overalls, or clothing with difficult closures. These types of clothing present particular challenges for children in relation to toileting.

Coats must be provided in the winter months.

Children are not permitted to wear open toed, and/or open backed shoes. The most appropriate type of shoes for participation in school activities are rubber-soled, sneakers/tennis shoes.

Children ages 3 through 5 are always required to have one seasonably and size appropriate complete change of clothing at the center. Children under 3 years of age are required to have two seasonably and size appropriate, complete changes of clothing at the center always. A complete change of clothing includes shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. Teachers will post reminders for parents to update changes of clothing as the weather begins to change.

All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. This includes, coats, and hats. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

Jewelry/Accessories:

Children are not permitted to wear jewelry of any kind. It is a safety hazard for your child as well as the other children enrolled in the program. In addition, St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will not be responsible for lost or stolen valuables. It is the parents' responsibility to enforce this policy with their children. Should a child come to school wearing any jewelry, parents will be required to take it with them, or to return to the school to remove the jewelry if it is discovered after the parent leaves. Repeated (more than 3 violations per school year) violations of this policy are considered to be violation of SAFETY POLICIES (#23) and will result in dismissal from the program.

Hair beads are not to be worn by children. These accessories are considered to be safety hazards. When choosing accessories for your children, be mindful of the potential safety issues they present not only for your child, but also for the older and younger children attending St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center.

21.2 PARENTS

Clothing

Parents are required to be dressed in appropriate clothing while at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center or involved in any St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center sponsored events. Inappropriate clothing would include, revealing, extremely short, ripped/torn (in inappropriate places), and/or see through articles of clothing. Anything with suggestive or vulgar language is prohibited.

**POLICY: PARENT/ FAMILY PARTICIPATION AND
VOLUNTEERS**

POLICY NO.: 22

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

Parents are invited and encouraged to be involved in their child's school activities. There are many different ways in which parents can participate and volunteer at the center. Parents may volunteer to read in the classroom, assist teachers, and/or coordinate special events. Parents unable to volunteer directly in the classroom may donate items, do maintenance work, or assist teachers in preparing activities for the classroom.

Any parent who volunteers in the classroom **on a regular basis** will be required: to pay for and secure all criminal background checks as required by our licensing regulations, and complete Safe Environment training through the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Any person, including parents, with felony convictions, sex offender convictions and/or open investigations into any criminal activities will not be permitted to volunteer in the classroom or on school property.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to volunteer on days in which they are afforded custody (joint/shared custody arrangement) as per the court order. For example, if a parent is afforded custody on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, that parent will only be able to volunteer on those days. Parents with visitation only (sole/exclusive custody arrangements), will only be permitted to volunteer with the express written permission of the custodial parent.

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center reserves the right to make volunteer assignments. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center does not guarantee the volunteering parents will be assigned to locations where their child(ren) is present.

POLICY: HEALTH AND SAFETY

POLICY NO.: 23

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 06/15/2022

23.1 PRE-ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Each child is required to complete a pre-enrollment packet of information. This packet is to be returned to the center's office prior to the child's first day of attendance. All children are required to have a complete up to date immunization record on file at St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. This is per our licensing regulations. The Catholic schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg do not recognize a religious objection to immunization. Immunizations may be waived for certain reasons. Please discuss this with the Center Director to determine whether you have the right to be enrolled and not have your child immunized.

All children are required to have a physical examination form filled out by a licensed medical professional, to attend St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. The Physical Examination Form, indicating the child's fitness to attend St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center, must be completed by a licensed healthcare professional and returned to the Center Director upon enrollment.

23.2 CHILDREN WITH SEVERE ALLERGIES

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a signed copy of the "Authorization for Emergency Care for Children with Severe Allergies" form, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be filled out by the child's physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every year, or more frequently, as needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician's orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child's allergy. This form can be obtained by request from St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center office.

Parents must also execute a "Release and Waiver of Liability for Administering Emergency Treatment to Children with Severe Allergies" form. This form releases St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center from liability for administering treatment to children with severe allergies and taking other necessary actions set forth in the "Authorization for Emergency Care for Children with Severe Allergies" form, provided St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center exercises reasonable care in taking such actions.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein.

23.3 COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 45 minutes of notification by phone. If a parent is reached but cannot pick their child up within 45 minutes, it becomes the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact form. The staff will not continue to call those listed on the emergency contact list once a parent is reached. If a parent can not be reached, the staff will begin to call the people listed on the emergency contact form, until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up. The child will remain in the front office with the Director until the parent or designated pick up person arrives.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Guidelines for determining the contagious period for a specific illness are based on the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Children must present a doctor's note stating they are no longer contagious and can return to the program. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if the Center Director or designee believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program.

Children excluded from the program due to a fever may not return to the program until they are fever free, without fever reducing medication, for 24 hours. If your child is sent home due to a fever, he/she is not permitted to return to the program the following day at a minimum. A fever is defined as a temperature reading on a thermometer of at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more as taken in the ear.

Children are required to be excluded from the program for loose bowels or diarrhea which occur 3 or more times in a 24 hour period of time. Children may return to the program when normal bowel movements resume.

If your child will be absent due to illness, we request that you notify the center. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses, which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with faculty on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the center director, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality. You are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child's absence from school.

23.4 BITING

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center recognizes that biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior for children in the 2-year-old classrooms. Parents with children in these classrooms should expect that their children may be bitten or will bite another child. The staff understands that parents are concerned and can be upset when their child is involved in a biting incident. We ask that you remember this is a developmentally appropriate behavior, and that the staff is working to identify situations which provoke, or elicit, this behavior so it can be prevented in the future. The staff will not punish, or harshly discipline children in the younger classrooms for biting behavior; they will simply redirect the children to different activities in separate areas of the classroom. Parents are expected to work with staff to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior. Uncooperative parents will have their child's services terminated.

Children older than 3 years of age may occasionally be involved in a biting incident. For children in this age group who bite, the staff will use the discipline procedures outlined in the discipline section of this handbook, as well as observe the child to determine what provokes or elicits this inappropriate behavior. Parents are expected to cooperate with staff to help their child control this behavior. Uncooperative parents will have their child's service terminated. Furthermore, children, in the older age groups, who bite 3 times in a school year will have their services terminated since, the safety of all the children in the program is of the utmost concern of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center.

Parents will be notified by incident/accident report that a biting incident occurred during the course of the day. The staff may not discuss with either parent the identity of the other child involved in the incident. This information is considered to be confidential and can not be disclosed. The staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center cannot discuss the medical history of any child involved in a biting incident with the other party. It is recommended that any child involved in a biting incident be seen by their family physician if the parents are concerned about communicable diseases possibly resulting from the biting incident.

23.5 DISPENSING MEDICATION

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will not dispense any over the counter or prescription medication except for severe allergy epi-pens. The epi-pen must be left in the original box with the original prescription label clearly visible. We have an R.N. available to answer staff concerns regarding sick children.

23.6 FIRE/EMERGENCY DRILLS

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center conducts monthly fire and emergency/evacuation drills. Parents, staff, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans.

During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation, parents may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

In the event of a real fire/emergency situation, the Director or designee will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. At this time any parents waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. All other parents or emergency contact persons will be notified by telephone of the situation. As with the sick child pick up policy, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the telephone call.

Parents wishing to sign their child out of the program during a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation are expected to have patience with the staff as they are trying to maintain order during an often hectic and dangerous situation. If the center is in the midst of a fire/emergency drill, parents will be required to wait until the drill is completed and the staff and children are returned to the building to sign their child out of the program. If the center is having a real fire/emergency situation, parents will be asked to wait until the Director or designee has accounted for all staff and children and gives the staff permission to release children. Once again, it is important for parents and staff to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and Center Administration during these important and critical situations.

23.7 ALTERNATE SAFE LOCATION

Should the administration of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center or any emergency services personnel determine the building which houses the center to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to: STA Parish Hall or STA Church. Once the children are assembled here, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contacts for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the telephone call.

23.8 INCIDENT/ACCIDENT REPORTS

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident during the course of the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident/Accident Report. The Incident/Accident Report will be handed to the parent for a signature and the parent will receive a copy.

23.9 FOODS

All food items must be labeled with your child's first and last name. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center does not permit children to share or exchange food items.

For the safety of your child, parents **are required to provide notification, in the form of a doctor's note, of any allergies (food or otherwise), with instruction for treatment should a child have an allergic reaction.** Please refer to the Health and Safety Policies contained herein for further information.

Parents are required to provide written notification of any food/dietary restrictions. (i.e. lactose intolerance, vegetarian diets, wheat free/gluten free diets)

A mandatory Permission for Food-Related Activities & Special Occasion Food Consumption form can be found on our website. Please print and return this form to the ECC office.

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center never uses food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in lunch or snack time for behavior reasons.

All snacks are family style, with the children sitting at tables, to promote good manners, eating habits and socialization skills.

Lunch Bunch

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center curriculum focuses on developing healthy, well-balanced eating habits. Therefore, parents are required to provide a full, healthy lunch for their children each day they are in attendance. Lunches should include a sandwich (or main entrée item), snack(s) and a drink. Snack food items should be healthy, such as fruit, vegetables, and the like. Parents should limit junk foods to a minimum in their child's lunch. When preparing your child's lunch please refer to the Allergy Free Policy that follows. All uneaten food will be placed back in the child's lunch so parents can see what items and how much their child consumed during the day. Parents should limit the number of choices offered in their child's lunch, as children often become distracted by the choices. Parents should provide enough food so that their child is satisfied, but not so much that food is wasted.

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center does not allow candy bars, sodas, or candy treats such as Skittles, Starbursts or gum, in a child's lunch. If you wish for these foods to be a part of your child's diet, please give them to your child at home.

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center prohibits any food item in glass as well as aluminum cans. These can be safety hazards for the children and staff.

Lunches will not be heated for any child.

23.9 SNACKS

Parents will provide snack for their child's class. Each month a Snack Calendar will go home and be posted in your child's classroom. Check the calendar to see which day during the month is assigned to you. **Only individual pre-packaged snack items can be served.** Therefore, enough snacks for each child in the class must be brought in for the day you provide snack. Some suggestions are: boxed raisins, fruit, jello or pudding cups, individual bags of pretzels, animal crackers, gold fish and handi-snacks. If your child has food allergies, please notify the office.

23.10 FOOD ALLERGIES

Due to the extreme nature of allergic reactions to peanuts and products containing peanuts in some children, St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center reviews student records to determine any food allergies. Families will be notified if there is a child with severe peanut allergies in their child’s class. These peanut allergies can be so severe that exposure to peanuts can result in an anaphylactic reaction. An allergic child can have a reaction from simply smelling peanuts on someone’s breath, or touching peanut oil residue left on a countertop, not only from consuming peanuts or peanut products. All parents are required to sign the Peanut Allergy Notification form. In addition, parents are required to provide notification in the form of a doctor’s note of any allergies, food or otherwise, with instructions for treatment should a child have an allergic reaction. Refer to Health and Safety Policy 23.2.

23.11 FIREARMS AND WEAPONS

At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of Firearm, Ammunitions and/or Weapon on center property for any reason. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

**POLICY: STAFF EMPLOYMENT
BY CLIENT’S POLICY**

POLICY NO.: 24

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

The staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center is prohibited from being employed by any client (current or former). Parents are prohibited from soliciting any staff member for the purpose of employment. Parents who employ St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center staff will have their services terminated and any deposits will be forfeited. Staff members who become employed by current or former clients of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center will have their employment with St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center terminated.

Employment refers to any relationship outside of the school’s services which involves an employee of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center to interact with a current or former client of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center. Such relationships include but are not limited to, baby-sitting, house-sitting, mother’s helper, nanny services, and carpooling regardless of whether those services are voluntary or paid.

POLICY: AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

POLICY NO.: 25

APPROVED BY: *Alicia Mamma*

EFFECTIVE DATE: 05/13/2013

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center
License #C06PA0101

8320 County Road 54
New Port Richey, FL 34653
Phone: (727) 376-2330

www.staecc.org

Signature Page(s) One for each Custodial Parent and/or Legal Guardian:

St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center

I/We, _____, the parent(s)/legal

guardian(s) of _____, acknowledge that I/We have received a copy of St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center's Family Handbook and have been given the opportunity to read the manual and ask questions about and understand the policies contained therein. Furthermore, I/We agree to abide by the policies set forth in the manual.

I/We understand that the policies described in the Family Handbook are not conditions of enrollment, and the language does not create a contract between St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center and the parents. St. Thomas Aquinas Early Childhood Center reserves the right to alter, amend, or otherwise modify these guidelines, in its sole discretion, without prior notice.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____