

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center Employee Manual

Approved and Promulgated
January 2026

The Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center Director and Pastor reserve the right to make changes in this manual at any time. The policies contained in this manual apply to all lay employees of the Early Childhood Center and supersede any other previous policies and will not be negated by any other Early Childhood Center policy issued before this date.

Lucinda O'Quinn, Director

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center Employee Manual 2025-2026

Each new and returning Early Childhood Center Employee (including substitutes) receives an Employee Manual. The manual is composed of multiple sections as noted below. Additional items received and/or distributed at in-service meetings, monthly staff meetings, or at any time during the year should be incorporated within this handbook and are hereby deemed effective immediately. Our Employee Manual was revised January 2026.

Section I	Welcome, Mission Statements, History, Philosophy & Goals, & Statement of Vision
Section II	Employee Handbook <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employment Requirements and Procedures• Status of Employment• Attendance and Work Rules• Disciplinary Procedures• Changes in Employment Status• Settling Disputes and Grievances
Section III	Benefits

SECTION I

Welcome to Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center

This manual, while not an implied or expressed contract, states in general terms the policies governing your actions as an employee of Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center and the benefits of employment with Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center. It is the policy of Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center that all employees are employed at the will of the center. We place special emphasis at Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center on our employees as individuals and recognize that no manual can cover all situations. It is our hope that everyone will be able to achieve the highest level of performance and job satisfaction possible. Neither this manual, nor any other communication, shall bind Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center to continued employment of any individual employee, or group of employees.

The purpose of this manual is to set forth the personnel and administrative policies relative to the employees of Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center. It also explains benefits that you may receive as an employee. You are encouraged to discuss any questions that you have with the Early Childhood Center Director or with the Diocese of St. Petersburg Human Resource Office, if applicable.

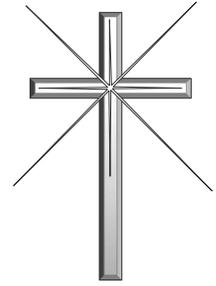
This manual will be amended from time to time, as policies change or require updating. It is your responsibility to keep updated with these changes. Revisions and changes will be supplied to you as soon as possible after adoption. New policies and amendments to existing policies will be effective immediately for all employees unless otherwise noted on the policy.

In addition to reading this Employee Manual, employees of Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center are also required to read the Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center Operational Procedures Handbook, Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center Parent Handbook and Pasco County Childcare Licensing Regulations (available in the Early Childhood Center Adm. Office & online). Employees will be required to comply with all licensing requirements and follow and enforce all policies and procedures as outlined in the Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center Parent Handbook. Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center may from time to time require employees to read additional documents/publications which have bearing on their job performance. Employees who fail to read and comply with any and all applicable documents/publications as assigned will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

As a business in the State of Florida, employer/employee relationship is established "At-will." The "At-will" relationship affords the employee the right to resign for any reason. Likewise, the employer may terminate the relationship at any time, with or without cause and with or without notice. It is further understood that the "At-will" employment relationship may not be altered by any written document or by verbal agreement, unless such alteration is specifically acknowledged in writing and signed by the authorized executive of Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center.

MISSION STATEMENT

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center, a Catholic community, provides a warm and accepting environment that fosters respect and dignity for all people by modeling Christian values of faithfulness, service and love while achieving academic excellence and as our children grow and learn.



Children are our Ministry

PHILOSOPHY

It is the philosophy of SHECC that a Catholic Christian based early childhood program should be a time of fun, warmth, security, exploring, and discovery through developmentally appropriate activities. Preschool children are creative and receptive. The staff strives to nurture Christian values of love, acceptance, community, and dignity in the children who attend. Academic excellence is achieved through hands-on experiences in literature, language, mathematics, science and social and civic concepts that can be related to the real world around them.

GOALS OF SACRED HEART EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

- To create an atmosphere where spiritual values are taught and developed;
- To cultivate in each child: compassion, tolerance, and acceptance of other people, in an effort to eliminate prejudice and discrimination of all kinds;
- To know and understand the families we serve;
- To invite and involve our families in the total school program;
- To support our families with regard to decisions affecting their children;
- To maintain a stimulating and positive learning environment which encourages successful academic accomplishments;
- To provide assistance to our families with children's transitions from year to year and from program to program;
- To provide an equal learning environment and leadership opportunities, regardless of gender;
- To cultivate in each child a healthy respect for self and others, including his/her own innate talents;
- To provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum that strives to meet the individual needs of children;
- To develop and refine communication skills through the understanding and use of written and spoken language;
- To broaden each child's knowledge of his/her community and the many diverse cultures and peoples within it;
- To develop physical coordination and skills;
- To assist each child in exploring, discovering, and respecting the environment around him/her and to encourage sensitivity toward all living creatures;
- To provide a multitude of hands-on activities designed to instruct, in a more tangible way, mathematical and scientific concepts;
- To support our teaching staff with resources and professional development opportunities that will encourage ongoing growth in the field of early childhood education.

HISTORY OF SACRED HEART EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

St. Joseph School started as a community school in 1988. The school was a public facility, but the Benedictine Sisters from Holy Name Priory in St. Leo held the positions as principal and teachers. The school was on private property, owned by Joe and Martha Nathe. In 1966, they deeded the property to the Board of Public Instruction of Pasco County. The Nuns were still the principal and teachers when the school closed in 1980.

San Antonio Elementary School opened in 1980. The school Board no longer needed the property, so it was deeded back to Martha Nathe, who in turn sold it to the Diocese of St. Petersburg. The frame structure that held children for so many years stood vacant for four (4) years. The parish had no immediate plans for the three-room school.

The hard freeze of 1983 brought many changes to St. Joe. The citrus that was the livelihood for many families was gone, as was the income. The stay at home mothers were going into the work force, many for the first time. Where were they going to take their children? Who was going to care for them? There were a few local women that cared for children in their homes, but childcare was a new concept for many.

During the summer of 1984, our parish priest, Father Paul Romfh, formed a committee to decide if our community would benefit from a childcare center. It was decided that Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center would open using the empty school building, providing they were able to be self-sufficient. We had lots of work ahead of us. We had no equipment, no toys, nothing. We had a baby shower, and the community gave us cribs, toys, books and a little cash. A parishioner made pillows and blankets for the children.

On October 14, 1984, we opened our doors to seven children. That didn't last long as word spread, and we grew quickly. Within a few years, we outgrew the old school building. Francis Peloquin offered to build a new building for our children. The building went up. The men from our parish came on weekends and evenings and were diligent in helping to complete this wonderful building for our children. Within two years we outgrew that building and Francis offered to build us an addition. Mr. Francis Peloquin blessed our center again with the addition of a building to house our VPK and Before and After School Program which opened in 2013.

Today, we provide care for children ranging in age from six weeks to 12 years of age. We believe having such a wide range allows us to meet the needs of the entire family. We are proud to be caring for a second generation of children attending our center.

We thank God for allowing us to care for and educate His children. We pray for God's continued blessings as we begin our journey into the next 41 years.

The Diocese of St. Petersburg (DOSP) Catholic Schools' vision is centered on "**Courageously Living the Gospel**," aiming to form joyful disciples through faith-filled education, academic excellence, and service, challenging students to encounter Jesus and live out Catholic values in a changing world, with strategic goals focusing on Catholic Identity, Academic Excellence, and Operational Vitality for growth and innovation.

Key Components of the Vision

- **Courageously Living the Gospel**: The overarching vision guiding all diocesan initiatives, including schools, encouraging a deep, active relationship with God.
- **Mission**: To be a joyful community proclaiming the Good News and inviting all to experience Christ's love, providing a faith-filled environment for spiritual, academic, and social growth.

Strategic Pillars (Office of Catholic Schools)

- **Catholic Identity**: Fostering belonging, rigorous faith formation, liturgical celebrations, and social justice projects.
- **Academic Excellence**: Emphasizing faith-filled instruction, innovative curriculum, critical thinking, and technology skills for 21st-century learning.
- **Operational Vitality**: Ensuring strong infrastructure, new facilities, and strategic growth to serve families effectively.

In essence, DOSP Catholic Schools strive to be vibrant, Christ-centered communities where students excel academically and develop strong moral character, inspired by the Gospel to serve their world.

Be it known
To all who enter here
That Christ is the reason
For this school,
The unseen but ever present
Teacher in its classes,
The model of its faculty,
The inspiration of
Its students.

SECTION II: EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

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1. EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

a. Overall Employment Relationship

The policies contained in this document, as well as other policies issued by the Early Childhood Center from time to time, form the basis of the employment relationship between the Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center (as employer) and staff.

As an integral part of these policies, the Early Childhood Center retains the right to exercise all administrative and managerial functions related to the operation of Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center and its various programs. No person, in any capacity, is authorized to alter this employment relationship, except in an individual case and with the written authorization of the Early Childhood Center Director in consultation with the Pastor.

In keeping with the laws of the State of Florida, Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center is an at-will employer. Therefore, just as an employee may resign at any time with or without reason, the employer retains the right to dismiss an employee at any time with or without reason, provided it is not a reason prohibited by law.

b. Applicability

The policies contained in this document apply to all lay employees of the Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center. Although it is desirable for these policies to apply to the relationship between clergy, men and women religious, certain lay positions and the employer, it is recognized that certain prior relationships exist under Canon Law that restrict full compliance. In those instances, appropriate policies and procedures will be included in documents that govern those relationships.

c. Equal Opportunity

The employer is fully committed to a policy of equal opportunity in all its employment practices. The employer endorses all efforts to eliminate and prevent discrimination on the basis of age, gender, familial status, race, national origin, color, marital status, or disability.

Since a person's faith and Church participation may be preferred in his/her role on behalf of the employer, religion will not be a protected category for purposes of non-discrimination.

d. Disabilities

The employer is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with disabilities. Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center employs; advances in employment; and otherwise, treats qualified individuals without discrimination with regard to disability in all employment practices including the following: employment upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or terminations, rates of pay or other forms of compensation and benefits, and selection for training.

The employer will attempt to reasonably accommodate employees and job applicants needing accommodation to permit them to perform the essential functions of their jobs in a safe and efficient manner. The employer will afford reasonable accommodation to qualified applicants and employees with known disabilities provided that the accommodation does not cause undue hardship to the employer or, irrespective of the accommodation, that such individuals do not pose a direct threat to the health and safety of themselves or others.

Applicants and employees with disabilities may inform their supervisor of the disability and may suggest, on a confidential basis, how the employer may reasonably accommodate them. The employer may require medical confirmation either from the employee's health care provider or one chosen by the employer to evaluate the employee's condition, applicable work limitations and potential accommodations as a part of this process. All information will be kept confidential.

Employees with life threatening illnesses, including cancer, heart disease and HIV-disease often wish to continue their pursuits – including work – to the extent allowed by their condition. The employer enthusiastically supports this so long as employees are able to meet performance standards. As with all disabilities, the employer will make reasonable accommodations and will keep medical information confidential and will treat employees with a disability compassionately and consistently with others. Employees are expected to cooperate with colleagues with disabilities and should be aware the employees with life threatening illnesses do not pose a threat to co-workers or those with whom they interact in an ordinary workplace contact. Employees with questions or concerns about life-threatening illnesses are encouraged to contact the Diocesan Human Resources Department for information.

e. Employment Eligibility Verification

After the hiring decision has been made, proof of U.S. citizenship or the right to remain in the country must be established. Therefore, an employee's eligibility for employment must be verified according to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. The appropriate forms must be completed prior to commencing employment and kept in a separate file with the personnel files.

f. Harassment in the Working Environment

The purpose of this policy is to promote and insure a Christian professional and supportive work environment for all employees and volunteers, which is free from physical, psychological, or verbal intimidation and harassment. The policy intends that each employee and volunteer maintain and further develop attitudes and behaviors which express respect for others and are reflective of each person's God-given dignity. It further intends to encourage a heightened sensitivity toward behaviors that others may find offensive and intimidating, whether these behaviors refer to race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, familial status, veteran status, disability. Lastly, this policy provides sanctions against behaviors which others may find offensive or intimidating.

The employer prohibits any form of harassment by employees, volunteers, supervisors or third parties. Harassment can result from a single incident or from a pattern of behavior involving verbal, written or physical conduct or written communication. Harassment encompasses a broad range of behaviors, which could include but are not limited to:

- Physical or mental abuse
- Insults or derogatory slurs based on one or more of the individual's protected statuses
- Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
- Sexual comments or sexual jokes
- Comments or jokes based on an individual's protected status
- Requests for sexual favors implicitly or explicitly used as a condition of employment or affecting any personnel decisions or actions.

The confidentiality of each party involved in a harassment investigation, complaint, or charge will be observed, provided it does not interfere with the ability to investigate the allegations or take corrective action.

When an employee believes that he/she is being harassed or feels uncomfortable with the actions or comments of another, the employee must report their concerns, in writing, to the employee's immediate supervisor or the Diocesan Executive Director for Human Resources. In the event the conduct involves or if the employee is uncomfortable discussing the situation with either one of these individuals, then the report should be made to the Vicar General or his designee. Any person who observes conduct by an employee, which he or she believes to be harassing, retaliatory or discriminatory should report such conduct as outlined above.

Once a report of offensive comments or actions is received, it will be promptly and carefully investigated.

People who engage in prohibited harassment are subject to disciplinary actions up to and including discharge.

Retaliation against people who report harassment is prohibited. Any person who feels that he/she has been subjected to retaliation for making a complaint under this policy is encouraged to report such conduct as outlined above.

Individuals should recognize that knowingly and willfully bringing false accusations of harassment or discrimination can have serious effects on innocent individuals and should not be done.

g. Offer of Employment

The selection of new employees will be accomplished by posting the job internally or externally, receiving and reviewing applications and/or resumes, and completing a formal selection process. The offer of employment will be made in writing by the employer after appropriate consultation, setting forth the job description, beginning date of employment, starting pay, and any special conditions relating to the position, including ending date of employment when necessary.

h. Background Screening

Once an offer of employment is made, employees will be required to submit to a background check (initially and periodically thereafter) and continued employment is contingent on the results. The background check will focus on criminal activity and will involve the submission of electronic fingerprints and a check through appropriate law enforcement agencies. This screening will be coordinated through the Background Screening Office of the Diocesan Department of Human Resources. Early Childhood Center employees are also required by the Department of Children and Families to successfully complete and maintain a current Level II Background Screening, which includes the following:

- A Current Affidavit of Good Moral Character
- 2-Year Employment History Check
- Current Local Criminal Records Check
- An FBI Background Clearance Letter

i. Relatives of Employees

The hiring of family members is discouraged.

j. Orientation

In addition to general information about Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center, the Early Childhood Center Director will provide new staff members with information about personnel policies, procedures, benefit programs, and other related matters. Enrollment forms will be made available to eligible employees at this time.

2. STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND EVALUATION

a. Employment Status

All employees will hold one of the following designations of employment status as determined by the Department of Human Resources in accordance with the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938:

- Exempt Employees – Supervisors and Directors are not covered by the FLSA and do not receive overtime pay or compensatory time. To be exempt, a person’s work must be executive, administrative, or professional in nature, requiring the regular exercise of discretion and independent judgment.
- Non-exempt Employees – Employees who perform work other than executive, administrative, or professional are defined by the FLSA as non-exempt employees. Such employees must be compensated at least the Government defined minimum wage and at a rate of one and one half times their respective hourly rate for overtime worked in excess of 40 hours per week. (Vacation, sick-time, holidays, and other time off are not considered as time worked). Non-Exempt employees must clock in and out regularly.

b. Types of Positions

Each employee’s position will be designated according to the following criteria:

- Full-time (Salary/Hourly) An employee who is scheduled to work 40 hours per week on a continuous basis during the calendar year will be compensated on a salaried or hourly basis and will receive full benefits as outlined in the employee benefit memorandum.
- Part-time with Limited Benefits (Salary/Hourly): An employee, who is scheduled for 29 hours or less per week, will be compensated on a salaried or hourly basis and will receive no benefits other than pension credit (if earned), and those that are required by State or Federal statute. Further, they may be eligible for holiday and sick time depending upon the length of their regularly scheduled workweek and total hours worked in a plan year.
- Temporary: An employee who is hired into one of the above categories but for a limited and specified period of time not to exceed six (6) months. During this time the employee is eligible only for Unemployment, Worker’s Compensation, and Social Security benefits. Beyond six months, they will be considered a regular employee and receive benefits as outlined in the employee benefit memorandum.

- **Contract:** An Employee who is hired for a specific position or role but for a limited and specifically period of time. During the period of the contract, the employee is eligible for Unemployment, Worker's Compensation, and Social Security benefits. Further, they may be eligible for other employee benefits depending upon the length of their regularly scheduled workweek and total hours worked in a plan year.

c. Probation Period

Each new employee or employee changing positions is subject to an initial provisional period of at least 90 calendar days. This permits the employer to evaluate the employee's performance, and it also provides an opportunity for the employee to assess whether the position is appropriate for his/her professional interests and skills.

Before the end of the provisional period, the Early Childhood Center Director should evaluate the employee and a formal notation placed in his/her personnel file ending the provisional period or, if the provisional period is to be extended, defining the length of an additional period. If an employee completes the provisional period satisfactorily, the cost of the fingerprints will be paid by the Early Childhood Center. If the provisional period is not satisfactory, the cost of the fingerprints will be the responsibility of the employee and deducted from the last check.

d. Performance Evaluations

Evaluations are done for the purpose of promoting the continual growth and development of the employee and may be used in determining promotions, raises, and training opportunities.

The staff evaluation program at Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center consists of:

1. Classroom visits throughout the school each year to assess teaching and classroom management skills. Both formal and informal observations may occur.
 2. Frequent walk-through observations.
 3. Report on professional activities.
 4. Annual reviews include a review of the teacher's personal professional development plan.
- **Provisional Employees:** Written evaluations by the employee's Early Childhood Center Director should be made prior to the completion of the 90-day period and prior to change of status to regular employee.
 - **Regular Employees:** All employees should receive periodic evaluations, at least annually, by their immediate supervisors.
 - **Unfavorable Evaluations:** In the event that an employee receives an unfavorable evaluation, the employee may respond to that evaluation in writing and that response will be kept as part of the employee's personnel file. Employees receiving an unfavorable evaluation should be re-evaluated in no more than 90 calendar days. A second unfavorable evaluation will be considered as a written disciplinary statement as described in Section 4 of this handbook.

e. Personnel Records

A cumulative personnel record is maintained for each employee in the Early Childhood Director's Office. All personnel records are confidential and available only to the employee and appropriate supervisory personnel. No information is released without authorization of the Early Childhood

Center Director. Employees may review their personnel file in the Early Childhood Center Director's office during regular business hours, provided they make a reasonable and timely request.

All employees are to promptly inform the Early Childhood Center Office Manager and Business Manager of any change in address and telephone numbers.

f. Outside Employment and Appointments

Although the employer does not discourage outside employment and does encourage civic involvement, such activities could occasionally create a conflict of interest. An employee considering such activities should consult with the employer and obtain written approval from the director prior to making any significant commitments. Sick time or vacation time may not be used for time spent at other employment or volunteer activities.

3. ATTENDANCE AND WORK RULES

a. Attendance and Absences

Employees are expected to maintain good attendance records, by clocking in and out regularly and on time. Full-time employees are to work a 40-hour week. Incidental time short of 40 hours, will be taken from accrued vacation and/or sick time. If a full-time employee continually is short hours, full-time benefits may be suspended.

1. Scheduled Time Off

When the need to be absent from work on a scheduled workday arises, an employee must notify his/her immediate supervisor of the reason for an absence by completing and submitting a "Time off Request" two weeks prior to the date.

In addition, it is the employee's responsibility to find an appropriate substitute for their absence. The absence must be approved prior to the day of the absence. If the absence is to continue beyond the first day, the employee must notify the supervisor on a daily basis with a satisfactory explanation unless otherwise arranged.

Absence for two consecutive workdays without notifying the supervisor is considered a voluntary resignation.

Unscheduled absences in excess of two days per month are considered excessive and are cause for disciplinary action.

2. Sick Leave

Short-term absences from the workplace occur, from time to time, for reasons related to the illness of an employee, a member of their immediate family. The intent of this policy is to allow time for these absences with no interruption to the employee's pay.

The employer reserves the right to require evidence of the illness.

Eligible employees who have successfully completed 30 days of continuous employment are eligible for paid sick days. Sick days are earned on a calendar year basis (January through December) and are accrued with each paycheck as outlined.

If the employee has available vacation or sick time to be used for absences, time will be automatically charged to the appropriate leave. After appropriate paid leave has been used, unpaid leave may be granted. Employees are asked not to take sick time or vacation time during the first week of school.

For additional details, refer to Section III: Benefits – Sick Leave Policy.

b. Overtime

All employees, except those exempted as executive, administrative, or professional employees, are covered by the overtime provisions of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

All non-exempt employees who work beyond 40 hours per week will be compensated at a rate of time and one-half their regular hourly rate for their overtime. Employees **may not** authorize their own overtime. All overtime work must receive **prior written** authorization from the employee's supervisor or disciplinary action will apply.

c. Time Records

All employees are required to report all time worked on the time clock. Working, without reporting the time, is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. A missing punch may result in delayed payment of hours worked.

d. Teacher Participation in the EC Community

As a Ministry and a School, Sacred Heart ECC operates a bit differently than some other employment venues. SHECC hosts fundraising and community outreach events that employees are expected to promote and encourage families to come and be part of the activities here at the center. It is expected that employees will lead by example and participate in the following school functions sponsored by Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center:

- Fundraising Events (Kumquat Festival, Fish Fry's, etc.)
- Special Events (Open House, Fall Festival, Catholic Schools' Week, Graduation, Picnics, Parish-sponsored events, etc.)

4. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The employer reserves the right to address unacceptable work behaviors. Generally, the employer believes in progressive discipline, meaning that, where possible, it is usually best to deal with problems with friendly reminders first, and then more formal discipline if the problem continues. However, immediate discharge from employment may become necessary, if the infraction warrants it. If any action is needed, the seriousness of the infraction, the past record of the employee and the circumstances surrounding the matter will always be taken into account.

Actions will also depend on a number of other factors such as the nature and responsibility of the employee's job, the nature of the conduct in question, job performance and, whether all the circumstances suggest that the employee is likely to make a meaningful contribution to the work of the employer in the future. The following is a non-exclusive list of the disciplinary measures used by the employer.

a. Verbal Counseling

The Early Childhood Center Director meets with the employee, identifies and discusses the concerns, and then involves the employee in identifying ways to correct these concerns. A time frame for improvement is usually established and agreed upon between the Director and the employee.

b. Written Warning

The Early Childhood Center Director meets with the employee and describes the significance of the issues and the consequences of insufficient improvement. Such consequences may include probation or termination.

The Director will then prepare a statement summarizing the discussion. Both the Director and employee will sign this as the “written disciplinary statement”. The employee signs it to signify that he/she has read and does understand the statement. If the employee declines to sign the statement, the Director will so indicate. The statement will include a place for employee response and will indicate that if the employee disagrees with the assessment, he/she has access to the disputes and grievance resolutions process.

c. Disciplinary Leave

The Director may place an employee on a “disciplinary leave”. The leave is implemented by the Director meeting with the employee on the morning of the leave day. During this meeting, the situation is reviewed, and the employee is instructed when to return with a decision either to correct the problem behavior and continue in the position or to resign his/her position. Upon returning, the employee informs the Director of his/her decision. Failure to return from the “disciplinary leave” shall be considered a voluntary resignation.

d. Probationary Status

In the formal probation process, the supervisor may set specific goals, develop an action plan, and set timelines to change the problem behaviors and improve performances. A probation meeting is initiated, and a detailed improvement strategy is outlined. At the end of the meeting, the Director may prepare a written statement, summarizing the employee’s performance improvement plan.

The employee and the Director will sign this statement. A copy of the signed statement will be placed in the employee’s personnel file. The probation period may be extended, if necessary. The employee may be dismissed, transferred or demoted during or at the end of this period if there is no satisfactory improvement.

e. Demotions and Termination of Employment

Depending on the conduct involved and the prior employment history of the employee, the Director may demote or terminate the employment of an employee with or without using any of the previously mentioned disciplinary actions. Demotions and terminations are described in more detail below.

5. CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS

a. Promotions and Transfers

All employees are eligible for promotions after satisfactorily completing their provisional period. Promotions will be based on meritorious work for the employer, as well as possession of the general qualifications and competence for the position under consideration. Promotions will only be effective when recommended in writing by the Director. (A copy of this recommendation will be placed in the employee's personnel file.)

As vacancies or new positions become available, announcements will usually be posted. Current employees interested in a vacant position are welcome to apply for consideration and should notify the Director of their interest. Prior service time and an excellent work record may be factors that would favor employees over external applicants who are similarly qualified.

Although employees are hired for a particular position, occasionally the overall staffing needs of the employer will require the transfer of an individual to another position. In such cases, and in consultation with the affected parties, transfers will be at the employer's discretion. An employee that works at two positions may be paid at different pay rates for those positions.

b. Demotions

Demotion shall be understood as removal from a particular position to a position of lesser responsibility and pay. A demotion may occur as a result of a decision by either the employer or the employee, or it may be a mutual decision. The employer reserves the right to demote an employee with or without cause and with or without notice. If an employee chooses to appeal a demotion decision made by the employer, the appeal must be through the internal dispute and grievance process prior to mediation.

c. Termination of Employment

When the employment relationship is terminated due to any of the following circumstances, the Early Childhood Center Director shall conduct an exit interview.

- **Resignations:** Resignations are those instances where an employee chooses to leave employment on his/her own accord. In such cases, the employee shall notify his/her supervisor of such intent. Exempt employees should provide a minimum of one-month notice and non-exempt employees a two-week notice.
- **Retirement:** In situations where an employee is qualified for and is considering retirement, he/she should follow the same notification schedule as noted above in the discussion of resignations. In addition, he/she should contact the Human Resources Office to secure the necessary paperwork to apply for pension benefits.
- **Layoff:** An employee may be removed from a position due to ministry or business considerations. This may be either a temporary or a permanent layoff. Among the factors that could be considered in determining the layoff process would be need for the position, job performance, qualifications and service time with the employer. An employee who has been laid off on a temporary basis may be re-hired when reorganization or expansion makes rehiring feasible.

- Dismissal: Dismissal refers to the termination of employment at the employer's discretion. The decision to dismiss an employee shall be made by the immediate supervisor in consultation with the Pastor.
- Termination Benefits: Upon termination, an employee is eligible for any salary earned but not yet received and may receive compensation for all vacation and ½ sick days earned but not yet taken. Health insurance coverage may be elected if fully paid for by the staff member for up to two months beyond their separation date (if applicable to 'Type of Position'). Long Term Disability, Workers Compensation and Group Life Insurance ends on the last day worked.

6. SETTLING DISPUTES AND GRIEVANCES

Employees must present any grievance (which is defined as a matter of personal concern, dissatisfaction regarding their employment, or the terms of these personnel policies) to the Early Childhood Center Director and have the matter considered on its merits. Presentation of a complaint or grievance will not result in any retaliatory action against the employee.

a. Internal Procedures

Any grievance will be discussed between the employee and the Early Childhood Center Director. Within ten (10) working days after the issue is brought to the Director, a disposition should be rendered. It is expected that most problems will be resolved within normal supervisory sessions.

Failing to attain resolution between the Director and the employee, the employee will submit his/her grievance to Pastor where it will be reviewed, and, as necessary, referred to the next appropriate level.

Due to illness, vacation, scheduling conflicts, and other similar circumstances, any concerned party may extend the time limits indicated in this procedure for good cause. Decisions as to the establishment of good cause shall be made by the Director and shall be final.

b. Mediation of Disputes

The employer requires a mandatory system of mediation for the resolution of employment disputes. If an employee has exhausted all internal procedures, the employee must request mediation before pursuing any other legal process. The Diocesan Department of Human Resources maintains a list of qualified mediators. Requests shall be made to that department in writing, which shall coordinate the mediation process.

SECTION III: BENEFITS

- Introduction
- Disability Insurance (Long Term & Short Term)
- Employee Assistance Program
- Expense Reimbursement
- Family & Medical Leave
- Parental Leave
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- Group Life and Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance
- Health Care Insurance
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- Tax Deferred Payroll Investment 401 (k)
- Holiday Leave
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- Social Security
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INTRODUCTION

The following is a description of the benefits that are provided for lay employees of Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center. Please note that eligibility for the various benefits is governed by an employee's status, as described in the Employee Handbook and by the specific language contained in each of the insurance policies and/or summary plan descriptions. Where differences in language might occur, the language of the individual policy or summary plan description will govern the benefit.

This replaces and supersedes all others dealing with benefits. Further the Diocese of St. Petersburg reserves the right to increase, decrease, modify, or delete benefits as may be necessary.

Disability Insurance (Long Term & Short Term)

All Full-time employees are provided both Short Term and Long-Term Disability insurance at the employer's expense.

The Short-Term disability insurance program is underwritten by Guardian and will provide totally disabled employees with 60% of their regular weekly income (maximum of \$1,250 per week) after the 15-day elimination period. The monthly benefit is based upon the salary as reported in the Payroll System. Premiums for this coverage are paid by the Employer.

The Long-Term disability insurance program is underwritten by Guardian and will provide totally disabled employees with 60% of their regular monthly income (maximum of \$5,000 per month) after the 90-day elimination period. The monthly benefit is based upon the salary as reported in the Payroll System. Premiums for this coverage are paid by the Employer.

Employees are advised to consult Guardian STD or LTD booklets found on the Diocesan website for additional details or contact the Diocesan Benefits Office. Coverage will become effective the first of the month following one month of continuous active employment.

Employee Assistance Program

All Full-time employees and eligible Part-time employees are eligible to participate in the Employee Assistance Program which is sponsored by Guardian. This benefit is provided to eligible employees at no cost. This program entitles participants to the following benefits:

- Six free visits for confidential counseling for personal issues
- Legal Information, Resources and Consultation
- Financial Information, Resources and Tools
- Family Resource Referrals for family life changing events
- Guidance Resource On-Line
- Estate Guidance for establishing an estate and will
- Wellness support

Consult the Diocesan website to view the informational flyer or call Guardian Toll Free at 855-239-0743.

Expense Reimbursement

Reasonable and approved out-of-pocket expenses, when incurred while performing work related duties, would be reimbursed when documentation is presented and approved **prior** to incurring the expense by the Early Childhood Center Director. All requests require receipts along with an explanation of the expense.

Family and Medical Leave

All employees, who have been continuously employed at least twelve months and who have accumulated at least 1,250 hours during the twelve months preceding the date that the leave is requested to begin, may request time off for the following reasons:

- because of the birth of a child to the employee
- because of adoption of a child by the employee
- because a child has been placed with the employee for foster care
- to care for the spouse, child, or parent of the employee, if the spouse, child, or parent has a serious health condition
- because of a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform his or her job duties

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider. Eligibility for leave for the birth, adoption or placement of a foster child expires 12 months from the birth, adoption or placement of the child.

A leave may be requested for up to twelve weeks and does not necessarily need to be taken as one continuous block. The leave must be completed within 12 months of the requested start date. Only one leave will be approved in any twelve-month period. Married couples who are both employed by the Diocese will be limited to 12 weeks total between them unless the leave is required for the personal illness of one or both of the employees or a child, in which case each would be eligible for a 12-week leave period. The request for leave must be in writing and should be presented to the Human Resources Department at least thirty days in advance of the requested departure date when practical. Employees who are requesting leave for health reasons must provide medical certification of the need for the leave and the probable duration of the leave; they must also provide medical documentation of their ability to return to work at the conclusion of the approved leave.

Family Medical Leave is "leave" without pay. Employees must use accumulated paid vacation and sick time prior to beginning a Medical Leave.

The Diocese of St. Petersburg will continue an employee's health benefits during the leave period at the same level and under the same conditions as if the employee was continuously at work. While on paid leave, the diocese will continue to make payroll deductions to collect the employee's share of insurance premiums. While on unpaid leave, the employee must either continue to make monthly payments by mail to their entity or arrange payment upon arrival. If the employee chooses not to return to work for reasons other than a continued serious health condition of the employee or the employee's family member or a circumstance beyond the employee's control, the diocese will require the employee to reimburse the diocese the amount it paid for the employee's health insurance premium during the leave period.

For additional details, refer to the Diocesan Family and Medical Leave Policy (October 1, 2022)

Parental Leave

Forming the Family in the Faith: Parental Leave effective January 22, 2024

The birth or adoption of a child is an exciting time for expecting parents and for their families whether they are giving birth to a child or receiving a child through adoption. The birth or adoption of a child is an opportunity for the family to form how they will grow in faith and nurture the domestic church. The Diocese of St. Petersburg supports its married employees to fully embrace their God-given role as husband and wife

to become parents. The Diocese provides eligible married employees up to eight (8) weeks paid parental leave (separate from paid vacation, sick or short-term disability leave). The purpose of the leave is to allow the mother to recover and for both parents to bond with their newborn or newly adopted child, to form or re-invigorate the spiritual foundation of the family, and to achieve a balance between their employment and their new family obligations.

Paid parental leave will allow for the family to have time to spiritually bond without financial hardship or the stress of pastoral ministry commitments.

For additional details, refer to the Diocesan Parental Leave Policy

Funeral Leave

In cases of a death in the immediate family, an employee will be granted a paid absence of up to three (3) days if necessary, for the purpose of attending the funeral and attending to local arrangements. If the funeral is out of state, five (5) days will be provided. The employee's immediate family is understood as being the employee's spouse, children, parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, and in-laws such as mother, father, brother, or sister. All employees are eligible for funeral leave at the time of their hire.

Group Life and Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance

Full-time and eligible part-time employees are provided with life insurance equal to the employee's base annual earnings up to \$100,000. Accidental death and dismemberment insurance is also provided, according to policy terms. Premiums for this coverage are paid by the Employer. Eligible employees may purchase additional life insurance for themselves or eligible dependents.

For additional details, refer to the Diocesan Benefits Guide.

Health Care Insurance

All Full-time employees are eligible to participate in health insurance coverage through the Diocese of St. Petersburg Self-Funded Health Plan. Coverage will become effective the first of the month following 30 days of continuous active employment.

There are 2 health plan options available; High-Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) and Point of Service (**POS**). Both plans are administered by Meritain Health, an Aetna company, and **Prescription coverage** is through Optum Rx. Premiums for these plans are shared with the employer.

- Employees and their eligible dependents may enroll in a health care plan with premiums *which can be paid as a pre-tax deduction*.
- We offer optional HSA and FSA allowing employees to set aside pre-tax income for eligible expenses
- The HDHP premiums are 100% paid by the employer for employee only coverage.
- To help offset the HDHP out of pocket costs, the Diocese of St. Petersburg will contribute towards your HSA.

Enrollments are processed through the online enrollment system thru Paylocity at:<https://access.paylocity.com/>

Dental & Vision Insurance

All Full-time employees are eligible to participate in dental and vision insurance coverage. Both plans are administered by Guardian. Coverage will become effective the first of the month following 30 days of continuous active employment

- Employees may enroll their eligible dependents in a dental and/or vision plan with premiums *which can be paid as a pre-tax deduction.*
- The Dental and Vision premiums are 100% paid by the employer for employee only coverage.

Tax Deferred Payroll Investment 401(K) and Roth 401(K)

All employees may participate in the Diocesan Tax Deferred Payroll Investment 401(K) Plan, who have completed 90 days of continuous employment. This plan allows full time and part time employees to participate in tax deferred investments or post tax investments under Internal Revenue Code Section 401(K). This section allows employees to invest a portion of their pre-tax pay in tax deferred investment programs or their post-tax pay in 401(K) Roth accounts that will be tax free when they are accessed in retirement. Within allowable limits, the employee may specify the amount or a percentage of his/her pay to be contributed to the program and authorize the Employer to withhold such amount from his/her paycheck and remit it to the program.

The Diocese 401(K) program is administered via the Paylocity system and managed by UBS with oversight by the Concord Advisory Group, LTD. We are using Empower (formerly Mass Mutual) to enroll and to make all changes to your 401K accounts.

Holiday Leave

There are eleven (11) days usually scheduled. These days may vary from year to year. Please refer to the Parent Handbook each year.

- New Year's Day
- Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday
- President's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day After Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

All employees are eligible for holiday pay with the following provisions:

- Employee has completed 90 days of employment.
- Employee is regularly scheduled to work on the day on which a holiday falls (or is being recognized).
- Employee has worked the first scheduled day before and after the holiday (or recognized day off).
Preapproved vacation days surrounding a holiday are not considered "scheduled days" for the purposes of holiday pay eligibility.
- If a holiday falls on a weekend, either the Friday before or the Monday after will *usually* be taken as the holiday.

Weather Days

If the center is closed due to inclement weather, staff may be paid for that day for their regularly scheduled hours only. It may be required to make that day up at a scheduled closed day or at another time.

Jury Duty

Employees are encouraged to cooperate in performing their civic responsibilities by serving in the jury system when requested. Recognizing that this service could result in being a financial burden, employees will be paid their regular salaries while serving on jury duty. Employees who are selected for jury duty should immediately notify the Early Childhood Center Director. Records of their service will be maintained in their personnel file.

Military Leave

Full-time employees will be granted a military leave of absence to engage in a temporary tour of duty with the National Guard or Reserve unit of any recognized branch of military service. Employees participating in such temporary leaves shall be paid the difference between their military pay and their salary, if the military pay is less, for up to ten working days per event.

FMLA may be taken by an employee in the event of Military Deployment by a spouse (see FMLA). Appropriate notice shall be given and rehire and reemployment will be according to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994.

A military leave of absence must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor and the Pastor. Records of military leaves of absence will be maintained in the employee's personnel file.

Pension Plan

All entities within the Diocese of St. Petersburg are required to participate in a pension plan entitled, "Diocese of St Petersburg Pension Plan". All lay employees are eligible to participate, and up until June 30, 2015, may earn on year of credited services by working 1,000 hours or more from July 1st to June 30th of each year. After June 30, 2015, employees will have to work 1500 hours to gain one year of credited service. Employees working between 1000 and 1499 hours will be awarded one half year of credited service.

Employees are 100% vested in the plan once they have completed five years of credited service.

The plan is a non-contributory, defined benefit plan in which pension benefits are determined based on a factor of salary and years of credited service at the time of retirement.

Normal retirement is age 65 or when age plus years of service equal 85 for employees employed by Jun 30, 2015. Employees who begin working for us after July 1, 2015, will not be eligible for the Rule of 85.

Early retirement with reduced benefits is allowed at age 55 for those with 10 years credited service. Certain disability benefits are also available under this plan for those with 10 years credited service.

The Plan Document governs all matters concerning the plan. The plan is currently administered by the firm of Gabriel, Roeder, Smith and Company of Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and is governed by the board of trustees.

Paid Time Off (PTO) – formerly Vacation Leave

This policy applies to all full-time, benefits-eligible employees of the Diocese of Saint Petersburg, including parishes, schools, and diocesan entities.

PTO may be used at the employee's discretion, provided it does not conflict with work schedules and has received prior approval from the employee's immediate supervisor. Employees are asked to schedule paid

time off as early as possible in the work year to allow for adequate planning, including arrangements for substitute personnel if needed.

Employees are expected to use all PTO they accrue within the year it is earned. The amount of PTO that may be carried over into the next calendar year is limited to the employee's annual maximum accrual for the new calendar year, unless otherwise required by applicable law. The maximum accrual limits are based on an employee's years of service and are listed in the PTO accrual schedule. Any accrued but unused PTO hours that remain in an employee's PTO bank at the end of a calendar year in excess of the employee's annual maximum accrual for the next year will be forfeited at year-end, will not carry over into the new calendar year, and will not be cashed or paid out at year-end for an employee who remains employed ("use it or lose it"). For example, an employee entering their 5th year has an annual maximum accrual of 96 hours for their 5th year; therefore, they cannot carry more than 96 hours over from their 4th year into their 5th year. To the extent the employee had more than 96 accrued but unused PTO hours at the end of their 4th year, those excess hours will "fall off" and be forfeited at year-end. No accrued but unused PTO will be paid out or cashed out to any employee who remains employed with the employing entity. PTO payout is only available to employees at separation of employment, subject to the terms of the policy below.

Full-time employees are to work a 40-hour week. Incidental time short of 40 hours, will be taken from accrued PTO and/or sick time. If a full-time employee continually is short hours, full-time benefits may be suspended.

Unused accrued PTO is compensable upon termination of employment, provided the employee meets the following eligibility criteria:

- Has completed at least one (1) year of continuous service, and
- Provides proper written notice:
 - At least four (4) weeks' notice for salaried employees
 - At least two (2) weeks' notice for hourly employees

PTO cannot be used during the notice period, as employees are expected to be present to support a smooth transition and fulfill final responsibilities. Upon termination, employees may receive payment for unused, accrued PTO-up to the maximum accrual amount based on years of service (see accrual chart below)-if they meet the above eligibility requirements.

If an employee changes from full-time to part-time status, they may request a payout of accrued PTO. Alternatively, for the remainder of the calendar year during which their status changed, the employee may continue to use their accrued PTO hours while in part-time status. However, all accrued PTO still unused at year-end will be forfeited, including any PTO the employee accrued while working in full-time status.

For the purposes of PTO calculation, years of service are based on the total number of years worked for any diocesan entity. Service with other dioceses will also count toward years of service, provided employment can be verified through official records. Verification of years of service is required before PTO accrual rates are adjusted.

PTO is credited to employees with each paycheck. Accruals are based on the employee's normally scheduled work hours and their payday frequency (weekly, biweekly, or semi-monthly), as outlined in the table.

Table 1: PTO Accrual Schedule

Full-time Employees Employment in Years	PTO Days Annually	40 Hr Work Week	
		Annual Hrs	Bi-weekly Hrs
0-3 years	10	80.00	3.08
4-6 years	12	96.00	3.69
7-9 years	15	120.00	4.62
10-12 years	18	144.00	5.54
13-15 years	21	168.00	6.46
16+	25	200.00	7.69

Sick Leave

Short-term absences from the workplace occur, from time to time, for reasons related to the illness of an employee, a member of their immediate family. The intent of this policy is to allow time for these absences with no interruption to the employee’s pay.

The employer reserves the right to require evidence of the illness.

Eligible employees who have successfully completed 30 days of continuous employment are eligible for paid sick days. Sick days are earned on a calendar year basis (January through December) and are accrued with each paycheck as outlined.

Full-time employees will accrue sick time of 10 days annually with a biweekly pro-rated distribution. Part-time employees, working an average of 20 hours per week or more, will accrue sick time annually as follows:

Part-time Employees Employment in Years	PTO Days Annually	
	Annual Hrs	Bi-weekly Hrs
0-5 years	12.00	.46
6-15 years	24.00	.92
16+	36.00	1.39

If an employee has at least one (1) year of service and terminates employment, he/she will be entitled to be paid half of his/her accumulated sick time to a maximum of fifteen (15) days. Employees may accumulate up to thirty (30) sick days.

Social Security

Social Security is required by Federal Law and provides retirement income, survivor benefits, disability, Medicare, hospital insurance and supplementary medical insurance. Participation is automatic upon employment. Contributions to the program (FICA) are based on gross wages and paid by the Employer and the employee. Benefits are administered by the Social Security Administration.

Reemployment Insurance

While not required by law, the Diocese participates in the State of Florida's Reemployment Assistance program, formerly Unemployment Insurance. Reemployment Assistance provides income to people who lose their jobs through no fault of their own. Eligibility and benefits is determined by the program.

To file a claim for Reemployment Assistance, contact the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

Wage and Salary Administration

For all lay employees, payday will be bi-weekly. Please refer to the Payroll Calendar or contact the Business Office for pay dates. If a payday falls on a holiday or weekend and the offices are closed, the date of check distribution will be at the discretion of the Business Manager. Non-exempt employees are required by the Fair Labor Standards Act to submit a time report for each pay period. The employer will retain these reports for three years from date of submittal.

Workers' Compensation Insurance

The Employer provides a comprehensive workers' compensation insurance program to our employees. This program does not cost you anything.

The workers' compensation program covers injuries or illnesses that require medical, surgical, or hospital treatment. Subject to legal requirements, workers' compensation insurance begins after a short waiting period, or if you are hospitalized, the benefits begin immediately.

It is very important that you tell your supervisor immediately about any work-related injury or illness, regardless of how minor it might seem at the time. Prompt reporting helps to make sure that you qualify for coverage as quickly as possible and allows us to investigate the matter promptly.

Workers' compensation covers only injuries and illnesses arising from or out of performance of your job duties. Neither the Church nor its insurance carrier will pay workers' compensation benefits for injuries occurring during voluntarily participation in an off-duty recreational, social, or athletic activity that we might sponsor.

If you have questions regarding your Workers' Compensation claim, please contact the Human Resources Department.

