



# Parent Handbook 2026 - 2027

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## Welcome

### **Vital Connections of the Midlands, Inc.,**

The staff of Vital Connections of the Midlands (VCM) warmly welcomes you and your child to our program. This handbook has been developed to familiarize you with our philosophy and to provide a clear understanding of our policies and procedures. We encourage you to read this handbook thoroughly and carefully. Your cooperation and involvement are essential in helping us provide a positive and enriching experience for your child.

### **Mission Statement**

Vital Connections of the Midlands provides comprehensive, high quality, early care and education for children and families.

### **Vision Statement:**

All children and families in our community have a safe, nurturing environment for early growth and development and a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success.

### **Values:**

**Belonging** - we cultivate a strong foundation for lifelong success by providing a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment that supports the whole child and their families.

**Education** - we celebrate and promote learning and knowledge in all forms and for all people with a focus on early childhood growth and development.

**Excellence** - we provide high quality care and education in support of early learning through a culture rooted in honesty, integrity, and respect.

### **VCM Goals 2026-2027:**

- VCM will increase every child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development to ensure lifelong learning.
- VCM will implement a practice-based coaching initiative and increase professional development to improve changes in teaching practices.
- VCM will work to utilize community services, educational and economic, for children and families so all will be fully supported.
- VCM will facilitate outreach to community agencies, to increase referrals and strengthen follow up with parents to increase participation.

### **Philosophy**

At VCM, our primary goal is to help each child develop a positive self-image while building the skills necessary to successfully engage with the world around them. We believe that children learn best through discovery, exploration, and direct, hands-on experiences. Our curriculum is grounded in opportunities for children to make choices, solve problems, take responsibility, and collaborate with others as part of a group. We emphasize that the process of learning is more important than the final product. Self-initiated learning experiences are the most meaningful and lasting. We also recognize that each child is unique and thrives when learning in ways that reflect their individual temperament and style.

### **Parents Are Partners**

We appreciate you entrusting your child to us. It is our responsibility to make every effort to meet the needs of each child and family. We see parents as our partners. We require them to be responsible and to do the following:

- Support and follow the program's policies and procedures
- Support of the program's Parent Curriculum: Partners for a Healthy Baby
- Keep your child's immunization records and well visits current
- Follow security procedures
- Show respect for staff and children
- Notify center of your child's absences
- Work with program staff to resolve concerns
- Drop off and pick up your child on time

## **General Information**

Our centers are licensed by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) and enhanced through A Better Child Care (ABC) program. Each center is rated with the highest score of A+ with ABC Quality. Arthurtown, Children's Garden and Tender Years are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Vital Connections of the Midlands oversees Arthurtown, Tender Years, and Children's Garden. We have been awarded a federal Early Head Start grant. This grant provides funding to provide comprehensive center-based services to pregnant women, infants, toddlers to age 3 and their families enrolled at Arthurtown Child Development Early Head Start Center and Tender Years Child Development Early Head Start Center. Children's Garden houses two Early Head Start classrooms, a SC First Steps 4K classroom and South Carolina Childcare classroom via the strong start Childcare Scholarship program. SC First Steps 4K provides free pre-kindergarten for children who meet the income guidelines.

## **Eligibility**

Our program offers high quality early education to eligible children and families regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

### **Eligibility requirements for our Early Head Start Programs:**

- Pregnant women, infants starting at age 6 weeks, and toddlers to 3 years of age.
- Meet income eligibility guidelines.
- Live in our service area as defined by the following zip codes: 29201, 29203, 29205, 29208, 29209, 29044, 29052, and 29061 or
- Are experiencing homelessness and/or participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

### **Eligibility requirements for SC First Steps 4K program**

- SC First Steps 4K children can reside in any county. Children must meet income guidelines or be eligible for Medicaid.
- Children must be 4-year-olds on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> and meet specific income requirements.

## **Waiting List**

A waiting list is maintained when EHS enrollment meets capacity. A child will be placed on the waiting list according to a priority checklist developed by the Policy Council.

## **Withdrawal from Program**

Parents are asked to notify the Center Director and/or Family Advocate, in writing, **two weeks** prior to withdrawing a child from the program.

## **Program Information**

### **Enrollment Procedures**

Steps in the enrollment process include the following: completion of a Letter of Interest form, intake (with Family Advocate for EHS and Children's Center Director for SC First Steps 4K and/or SC Strong Start 4K scholarship program) to determine eligibility, and completion of an application. All children are enrolled on a full-time basis; no drop-ins are accepted. Parents on our waiting list will be notified of an opening as soon as a classroom slot becomes available. Parents must complete all enrollment forms including emergency contacts, developmental health history, health information, release forms, and authorization for pick-up. This information must be completed prior to the child's first day, along with the updated physical and S.C. Certificate of Immunization for Child Care Attendance from a doctor or health department and a copy of a recent well baby visit. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep such information current.

## Release of Children

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than yourself or your child's legal guardian, the center director and/or your child's teacher must receive written notification with your signature giving specific instructions as to who will pick up your child with the date and time. In case of an emergency, please contact the center director.

**Children will only be released to an authorized person aged 17 or older.** Please ask the authorized person to bring a picture ID to verify their identity. You will need to make arrangements for them to have a car seat for your child. A custodial parent or guardian who does not wish for the other parent to pick up their child is required by law to furnish a copy of the custody agreement or court order. Remember your child's welfare is our primary concern.

If a parent/guardian or other authorized pick-up person appears to be impaired because of the use of alcohol and/or drugs, your child will not be released to this person under any circumstances. The Director will (1) make the offer to call the other parent or another approved person to pick up the child; (2) offer to call a cab; (3) offer to call a friend to pick them both up; (4) call the Department of Social Services; or (5) call law enforcement. The above five (5) procedures may be used in the order written, or they may be used in any order necessary depending on the circumstances.

## Security

Each center is protected by a security system. Authorized people picking up your child must ring the buzzer beside the front door and wait for staff to verify their picture ID. All persons must enter and exit by the main entrance. Please do not open the door to unauthorized persons. Ask them to wait outside and see the Center Director for assistance.

All visitors must sign in at the director's office. Any person wishing to visit a child in his/her classroom must be on the Emergency Contacts list. If not, the parent will be contacted before allowing the visitor access to the child.

## Pick-up & Drop-Off of Children 8:00a.m.-3:00p.m.

VCM has an open-door policy and parents (designated caregivers) have access to the childcare facility at any time. VCM does not provide transportation. Families must bring children to and from the center. **Children can only be dropped off and/or picked up by an authorized person aged 17 or older.** Parents are responsible for their children's safety until the children are left with their teacher. (DSS Regulation No. 114-505.1) **No vehicle should be idle in the facility's designated parking area at any time. Air pollution from your cars can cause an asthma attack and make breathing hard for people whose respiratory systems are sensitive. Parents are to turn down their radio in their cars when they pull into the parking lot.** Parents/Caregivers are required to escort their child into the classroom, washing their hands upon entering and making certain he/she is with a teacher before leaving. Parents are responsible for filling out an **All About Me** form for each child at drop off. This form must be signed at the end of the day. A child starts the day in a better frame of mind when a parent spends a few minutes helping them get settled in an activity. Parents need to share any pertinent information, especially any medication which was given at home, with the teacher before leaving. **Children may not be left (i.e., placed in the care of the staff) before the center opens.**

Parents of SC First Steps 4K program and the SC Strong Start Scholarship program will need to initial the sign in/out sheet and check their child's cubby for possessions and communications daily.

Parents of two or more children are asked to respect the rules of each classroom. Younger siblings accompanying an older child need to be held or watched carefully. This is a safety issue as they may mouth toys that are not necessarily age appropriate for them. Older siblings accompanying a younger child need to stay with the parent or play under their supervision.

## Vital Connections Extended Care Program

Extended care services are offered to selected families from 3:00-5:30pm every program day at each center. Parents are expected to pick their child(ren) up by 5:30pm. If you are late in picking up your child(ren), you will

be charged \$1.00 per minute. Any late fee must be paid prior to the child attending the next day. Repeated late pickups will result in a case management meeting with program staff and may jeopardize your child's participation in the extended program.

**It is strictly against VCM policy for an employee to transport a child or children enrolled in the center in his/her own vehicle.**

### **Child Custody**

Vital Connections strives to maintain neutrality in all custody disputes. The center cannot deny a parent or guardian access to his or her child unless there is an active restraining order, court order, or court ordered visitation schedule on file at the center. Families are encouraged to resolve unsettled court orders and differences via legal channels. The center cannot be used as a place for scheduled visitations, nor can we be responsible for supervising parent or guardian visits.

### **Attendance**

It is the Program's policy and every staff member's responsibility to maintain the highest possible attendance, at least 85%, at all times. Children are expected and encouraged to attend the Program consistently to receive the greatest benefit from program services.

The VCM Early Head Start Program is from 8:00am to 3:00 pm. **Parents must contact the Center Director and/or Family Advocate at least 30 minutes ahead of time for known late arrival. If your child has an appointment (doctor, dentist, screening, WIC) they can arrive at school by 10:30 with a valid doctor's note and/or excuse. If a child will not be attending the program for any reason (i.e., illness or holiday), parents are asked to contact the Center Director by 9:00 a.m.** Please provide a doctor's excuse, appointment cards or written note when you come the next day. When vacations or extended days off are planned, please notify the teacher and/or Director. This policy helps to provide an accurate lunch count as well as coordinating classroom activities for the day. If your child is not in place by 9:00am without any contact, the Family Advocate will call the parent. **Children are to be at school by 9:00 a.m. when our educational program begins. They are considered tardy after 9:00 a.m. If your child is tardy 3 times, you will be required to meet with the director and/or the family advocate and 3 tardy days is equivalent to 1 unexcused absent day. Breakfast is over at 8:45am. If you bring your child in after 8:45am, you will be responsible for feeding your child breakfast outside of the classroom.**

### **Family Information Board**

On the wall at the entrance to the program is a family bulletin board with current information on meals and snacks, center events, parent meetings, Policy Council meetings, education/job placements and community activities. Please take the time to check the family bulletin board each day.

### **Confidentiality**

If a significant event occurs at home, parents are asked to consider informing the Director or appropriate teacher as soon as possible. All information will be regarded as confidential. Employees are expected to maintain confidentiality during employment and after hours. It is VCM Policy that any information regarding a child, the child's family, or other matters discussed with the Center Director or staff will be held in strictest confidence. All employees have signed a confidentiality form, as a stipulation of employment.

Child files are stored in a locked cabinet in the Center Director's office. Parents can review their own child's file at any time. Access is limited to staff on a need-to-know basis. Anyone reading the file is required to sign and date a Record of Access form.

Changes which may affect a child's behavior, security, and general well-being include: one or both parents being away from home for any reason for an extended time; new person living in the home; illness of a parent; illness of sibling; any hospitalization; accident or death in the family; new caregiver; moving; or death of a pet. Parents will also be informed of any significant changes in their child's classroom environment.

## **Classrooms and Staffing Ratios**

The program follows Early Head Start guidelines for staffing ratios and group size, from 8:00 am to 3:00pm. When teachers and children enter and exit their classroom and or the building, they follow policies and procedures for tracking children by taking their classroom rosters to ensure an accurate classroom count. Classroom count is periodically checked by face-to-name and recorded on a tracking form throughout the day to ensure supervision of children at all times. (DSS Regulation No. 114-505 C) All centers follow NAEYC guidelines for staffing, ratios, and group sizes.

VCM provides consistent caregivers for all children. By having consistent staff members primarily responsible for the care of the children, the bond between child and family is stronger. Creating small groups allows the teacher to develop stronger trust bonds with each child. We believe that children who have a secure relationship with their teacher have more positive relationships with other children.

## **Transitions**

When children enrolled in Early Head Start turn 2 ½ years of age your child's teacher, Center Director and Family Advocate will work with parents on finding an appropriate early education program for your child once they complete the program year. Children may transition into Head Start or another program in the community. The teacher and Center Director will work with the child and family for a smooth transition into kindergarten.

## **Grievance Procedures**

If you have any questions or concerns about your child or events in the classroom, the first person to contact is your child's teacher. The Center Director will be your next contact. If concerns are still unresolved, the VCM Executive Director can be reached at 803-394-5101.

**Complaint Resolution Procedure:** In most cases, the concerns of the parents should be resolved internally at the child's center.

The majority of conflictual situations can be resolved with a discussion with the child's teacher/Center Director.

- **Review Step One-** State your concern and your desire to unless the complaint is harassment.
- If the complaint is harassment from your child's teacher, then go directly to HR/VCM CEO or VCM Governing Board Chair.
- If the complaint is harassment from a member of Vital Connections Management (Behavioral Health/Quality Assurance Manager, Education Manager, Health Coordinator, Family Advocate or Center Director) the complaint should go directly to HR/VCM Executive Director or VCM Governing Board Chair.
- If the harassment complaint is from the Human Resource Manager, the complaint should go directly to the VCM Executive Director or VCM Governing Board Chair.
- If the harassment complaint is from the VCM Executive Director, the complaint should go directly to HR and VCM Governing Board Chair
- Present your request in writing, detailing the specific issues. This ensures that the issues of concern to the employee are clearly understood and allow others to respond more specifically. After the meeting, the supervisor will respond in writing as well.
- **Review Step Two-** If the parent is unsatisfied with the result of the meeting with his/her Center Director, the next step is to address the concern in writing to the VCM Executive Director. The Executive Director or Governing Board Chair, if applicable, will meet with you and any other individuals necessary to clearly understand the situation being reviewed. Following the meeting, the Executive Director or VCM Governing Board Chair, if applicable will discuss the situation with the individual involved and then communicate the decision in writing.

## **Health and Safety Policies**

Observing good health practices will protect children and staff. Program staff will promote a safe and healthy environment as they: wash hands and guide children to wash according to the Center for Disease Control and Caring for Our Children (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) guidelines. To continue the cooperation of parents in health there are two requirements that must be followed. All families must adhere to all **VCM Health Policies and Procedures** and

if your child has any health related concerns such as but are not limited to allergies, asthma, food or other allergies, food intolerances, respiratory disorders, skin conditions, reflux, or other chronic medical conditions, sickle cell disease, diabetes, cancer, seizures, heart conditions, etc. the parent/guardian must complete a VCM Child Health Plan Action Form for continued enrollment.

**All adults and children are required to wash their hands daily upon entering classrooms. Shoe covers are required for all individuals entering the infant classroom.**

Parents are required to assist their children with washing their hands at drop off. An infected child can spread germs to other children and caregivers and germs can be left on equipment. The risk of communicable diseases is higher for young children. If children are exposed to a communicable disease away from the program, we ask that parents notify us immediately. We can then determine the wisest course of action regarding exclusion from the program and notification of other parents. A **Health Alert** sign will automatically be posted whenever a child becomes ill with a communicable disease.

**There will be times when a child may not be extremely ill but may not feel well enough to interact with groups of children. When at the center, children are expected to participate in daily activities which include going outside.** Parents should use their judgment and consult with the child's teacher, Center Director and/or Health Services Manager in these cases. **The Center Director/Health Services Manager has the discretion to send a child home if the child is still displaying health concerns, even with a doctor's note.**

*Parents and teachers will conduct a daily health check together. Symptoms to be aware of are:*

- |                                           |                                    |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Activity level (sluggish, sleepy, etc.) | Discharge from nose, ears, or eyes |
| • Breathing difficulties                  | Severe coughing                    |
| • Skin color                              | Sores                              |
| • Rashes                                  | General Mood                       |
| • Swelling or bruises                     |                                    |

**Please note that it is the decision of the Center Director and Health Services Manager, in consultation with teachers, as to whether a child will stay or go home to rest.**

### **Exclusion Due to Illness**

There will be times that a child may be too ill to attend. Routine Exclusion Criteria is applicable to a child unable to participate; care would compromise the staff's ability to care for other children and meets the other criteria listed below. Children with any of the following symptoms will be excluded:

- Fever: 100.4F or more with behavioral change
- Eye pain with drainage and fever
- Rashes (with fever) that cannot be identified or that have not been treated by a physician
- Mouth Sores/Cold Sores
- Diarrhea (2 or more episodes and/or 1 or more episodes of stool with blood and mucus)
- Vomiting (2 or more times and/or with a fever)
- Cold with fever, coughing, sneezing and/or nose drainage that may cause difficult breathing or preventing to participate in daily classroom routine.

**Parents will be notified immediately to pick up their children if any of the above symptoms occur. A prompt response from parents is essential. A reasonable amount of time (approximately one hour) will be allowed for parents to pick up the child. If the sick child has a sibling enrolled in the program, the sibling must be picked up as well. Parents and child's Pediatrician/Medical Provider will be asked to sign a "Hope You Feel Better Soon" form documenting the child's symptom(s). This form and a doctor's note must accompany the child upon their return. This form will be placed in the children's file. If parents cannot be reached or do not respond to the pick-up call, the emergency contact on the child's enrollment form will be notified.**

If a child is kept home due to illness during the week, it is the responsibility of the parent to contact the program. **If any household member is sick with a contagious illness, the child enrolled in the program cannot attend until the sick person has been cleared by a medical professional.**

The requirements for the child's return to the program are listed below, to include returning with a doctor's note:

- *Fever-free for 24 hours without being given fever suppressants (i.e., Children's Motrin/Tylenol)*
- *Diarrhea has stopped for at least 24 hours*
- *Vomiting has stopped for at least 24 hours*
- *Strep Throat: No fever and at least 24 hours after documented treatment*
- *Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease: Medical note documenting evaluation/non- contagious*
- *Head lice/Ringworm: Documentation that treatment has started*
- *Contagious diseases (mumps, measles, chicken pox, novel coronavirus, etc.) Medical note*
- *Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye): Note from authorized Medical Professional*
- *Written statement from physician stating child is **"not contagious"** due to being sent home with unidentified marks/rashes.*

**A CHILD MAY/MAY NOT RETURN AFTER BEING ON ANTIBIOTICS FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS AND MUST BE SYMPTOM FREE BEFORE RETURNING.**

### **Well Child Checks**

All children enrolled in Early Head Start **are required** to have proof of well child visits in their files. Well visits are required at the following ages: **2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, 36 months.** Lead and hemoglobin are required when a child is 1 year of age. Parents must request it from the doctor and/or WIC. VCM has a form for the doctor to complete during well child visits.

All children will need sensory screening/exam for vision, dental, behavioral, and hearing. Parents will be notified of the date of the screening and the results. If concerns are identified, the Health Coordinator will work with the parents to make referrals as needed.

### **Administration of Medication**

Arrangements may be made with the Center Director to administer prescription medication. If medicine is required more than 2x a day, the Center Director will administer medication at midday with proper forms completed. **Parents must 1) provide a doctor's prescription with a current date, 2) medication in its original container labeled with child's name, 3) complete a "Permission to Administer Medication" form, including parent's signature or a note from the pediatrician stating medication can be given. A form with a doctor's prescription must accompany each individual medication.**

If it is necessary for a child to be given non-prescription medication, a parent/guardian may come to the program and administer those medicines. If over-the-counter medication has been prescribed for a child, a doctor's note, which states 1) the name of the medication, 2) the dosage and times to be given, as well as the allowed time frame for the administration (i.e., seven days, etc.), and 3) any possible side effects must accompany the medicine. A **"Permission to Administer Medication"** form will need to be completed, and a staff member will give medicine to a child. When the medication is completed, the container (empty or with any leftover medicine) will be returned to you.

Lotions, creams, diaper creams, sunscreens and insect repellent are considered a drug by the FDA and require written permission by your child's physician. As such, all-medication policies apply. All children regardless of race and ethnicity can get sun damage to their tender skin; therefore, we are asking parents to apply sun block before bringing their child to the center.

**Always inform your child's teacher of any prescription and/or over-the-counter medication your child has taken.** This is vital information and, in case of a medical emergency, will need to be given to emergency personnel.

## **Immunizations**

All children are required to have a current S.C. Certificate of Immunization for Child Care Attendance. Copies of the certificate are acceptable. **Children will not be allowed to attend when immunizations are not current. *The top of the certificate states the date of expiration, and that date must be present.* Parents are responsible for keeping immunization records current.**

If your child is under-immunized for health reasons or because of your family's religious beliefs, we must have documentation from a doctor stating why the child may not receive immunizations. We need a statement on your decision not to immunize your child because of your beliefs. Parents can obtain a waiver from their local health department. If a child in the program becomes ill with a vaccine-preventable disease, your child will need to be promptly excluded from the program and once the sick child becomes well, your child may return.

## **Commitment to Safety**

A top priority at VCM is to provide all our families, employees, and visitors with the safest possible environment within which to learn and work. This includes all aspects of the building's physical structure, outside play yards, as well as its equipment and supplies. To reach and maintain this goal, we need your help and support. If you see an unsafe condition, hazard or exposure, or a situation that might lead to an accident or injury, please bring it to the attention of one of our staff immediately.

## **Minor Injuries**

Any minor injury a child may sustain during the day will be treated by the appropriate staff member and/or documented with an **Incident, Accident or Observation Report**. A duplication of the report will be provided to the parent. The report will be completed and signed by the Center Director or appropriate supervisor before the parent arrives. The original report must then be signed by the parent and placed in the child's permanent file in the Center Director's office. If a child's injury requires medical attention at a later date, the parent must complete the box on the accident form and return it to the program with appropriate documentation from your Health Provider. *Any injuries that occur on site which require a doctor's attention must be reported to DSS.*

## **Emergency Medical and Dental Treatment**

If the staff determines whether a child is seriously injured and needs emergency medical or dental attention the following steps will be followed:

1. *First aid will be immediately administered.*
2. *911 will be called.*
3. *Parents or an emergency contact person listed on the enrollment form will be notified.*

**In the event of a medical emergency, VCM must have names of individuals who are authorized by you to have access to health information about your child. Be sure to include that information on the emergency medical cards completed upon enrollment of your child.**

**All teachers are certified in Pediatric First Aid.**

## **Infant Sleep Positions**

The American Public Health Association (APHA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) strongly recommend that infants be put to sleep on their backs to reduce the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). It is VCM policy that all children under one year of age will be put to sleep on their backs. SC DSS Child Care Licensing Regulations prohibit blankets/bumper pads/toys in cribs. Please dress your infant in layers so they will be warm and/or cool as the temperature in the room fluctuates. Infants will not be swaddled.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

As caregivers, **ALL** staff members are mandated reporters and will comply with state law to immediately report

any suspected child abuse or neglect (i.e., lack of appropriate medical/dental treatment, shelter, clothing, **suspicion** of substance use, etc.), to SCDSS.

## DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE

### Statement on Discipline

**DISCIPLINE** comes from the word disciple. A disciple is a person who learns from someone else. We believe that good discipline is a learning process that involves compassion, caring, sensitivity, and guidance. The goal of good discipline is to help a child develop self-control, responsibility, and problem-solving skills. It is important for children to learn that conflicts are a natural part of life. There are no “bad” children, only inappropriate behaviors. Our program is based on mutual respect of the child as an individual with changing needs and desires and of the child’s respect for the classroom environment, materials, teachers, and peers.

There are many ways that teachers will encourage good discipline practices. These include:

- *providing a well-planned physical environment and curriculum*
- *acting as role models for children*
- *setting reasonable and positive expectations*
- *respecting feelings*
- *trusting each child to succeed*
- *offering good, reasonable choices*
- *calmly talking about problems*
- *reinforcing that each child is loved*

Punishment or harsh treatment does not encourage the goals of good discipline. **Our program does not allow corporal punishment by staff or parents on VCM’s property.** Corporal punishment is defined as any treatment that humiliates or treats the child disrespectfully. This includes but is not limited to spanking; belittling; shaming; shaking; depriving food, water, naps, or bathroom facilities; unsupervised isolation; or improperly restricting the movement of a child. It is our strong belief that these methods work against the healthy growth and development of a child. Parents and VCM staff are required to sign a copy of the **Discipline Code** on an **annual basis**.

With groups of children interacting, there will be conflicts. Teachers will implement proven healthy strategies that are appropriate to the situation. At different ages, different types of conflicts are expected to occur. For example, during the toddler years, it is not unusual for biting to become an issue. Teachers understand these developmental events and are prepared to respond in a manner that will help guide the children in a firm, respectful way.

VCM embraces the **Conscious Discipline** curriculum for children, staff, leadership and parents. Some guidance techniques staff may use include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Conflict Resolution** - Teachers help children learn skills and language to work out disagreements with their peers.
- **Redirecting the Child** - Quite often, children need to be given concrete alternative suggestions for behavior to focus their energy in a positive way.
- **Positive Encouragement** - Teachers praise the appropriate behavior, being careful not to give much attention to the negative behavior.
- **Consequences** - By helping a child realize that when he/she throws sand you have to get out of the sand box and play on another section of the play yard.

Each child has different needs and requirements to develop self-control, judgment, and problem-solving skills. We will, therefore, work individually with each child and his/her parents to establish a positive program of discipline. Inappropriate behavior from a child can be caused by many outside influences such as death in the family, a new sibling, moving, etc. Your child’s teacher should be informed of any major life changes a parent or family may be going through which may influence a child’s behavior. **VCM provides a Mental Health consultant and family services for both children and their family.**

## Curriculum

Our program's curriculum is based on the following philosophy:

***Each child is a unique person, with their own interests, learning styles, growth timetable, and culture. When given the time, space and opportunity to interact in a meaningful environment, a child can construct new ideas and link them to existing knowledge.***

VCM has adopted the foundation for our philosophy from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC is the nation's largest organization of early childhood professionals, and its mission is to promote high-quality *developmentally appropriate* programs. This means that teachers will think first about what the children in her/his classroom are like and then create experiences that are in tune with those characteristics. We strive to gear our curriculum to be responsive to the community and families.

Our teachers are trained using the *Creative Curriculum* as a basic guide. This comprehensive curriculum guides teachers in creating a developmentally appropriate environment for young children. The *Creative Curriculum* encourages children to be resourceful by developing their confidence, their curiosity, their independence, and their ability to get along with others. Weekly lesson plans are posted in classrooms. Parents are asked to read and sign.

It is important to have goals for our children, to know what we want for them, both in their childhood, and as they develop into adults. Teachers will involve family members in setting individualized goals for their children.

### Approaches to Learning

How a child interacts with others and approaches tasks and learning leads to the development of critical executive skills for both school and life.

- Demonstrate a positive approach to learning by showing curiosity and motivation.
- Use creativity and imagination during play and routines.

### Social and Emotional Development

How your child forms relationships, regulates and expresses emotions, and develops his or her personal identity. These are core components to kindergarten readiness.

- Develop an attachment with a caregiver who consistently meets the child's needs. This attachment has developmental relevance to a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development.

A child **recognizes, expresses, and manages emotions** in a positive manner.

- Recognize and express their own feelings, engage with others, and become aware of their relationships to others in a group through social interactions.

### Cognition & General Knowledge

These skills help young children develop both logical and abstract thinking attributes as well as nurture analytical thought.

- Develop strategies to solve problems and understanding concepts such as cause and effect, grouping based upon attributes.
- Attend to and remain focused on a task and will return to task after interruptions (such as diapering/toileting).
- A child demonstrates early mathematical skills in the areas of counting, comparing, matching, sorting, measuring, and basic shape and pattern recognition.
- Develop numeracy concepts when they identify and match shapes, identify what will happen next in the daily routine, or learn to connect quantities with their written number symbols.
- A child observes, describes, and discusses **living things and the natural environment**; a child understands people share the environment with other people, animals, and plants.
- Develop an understanding of his or her world through exploration and discovery.
- Pursue their own goals when exploring the environment (make choices, develop decision making skills).

## Language & Literacy

Early literacy and language development serve as the foundation for school success; they are the key to communication and interactions which assist learning across all child development domains.

- Show interest in storytelling, book reading, and singing.
- Respond appropriately to the speech of others (for example, will turn to sound of mother's voice, will engage in back and forth babbling with adults, will point to objects when teacher asks).
- Vocalize to communicate starting by babbling and as development progresses will name one word and then combine words to create phrases and sentences.
- Engage in two-way conversation with others that follows social rules of language specific to each child's family and community.
- Demonstrate an interest in writing by making marks on surfaces and will ultimately use drawing to represent objects and ideas.
- Eventually understand the meaning of basic symbols (environmental print, familiar icons such as McDonald's golden arches).

## Physical Development & Health

Physical well-being and motor development impacts a child's readiness to learn.

- Gain strength in the head, arms, and legs to coordinate movements of their bodies.
- Develop large muscle control and small muscle control to explore and manipulate objects within the environment.
- Develop self-help skills when feeding (begins to hold bottle, learns to manipulate spoon).
- Learn proper procedures to brush teeth and wash hands
- Develop bowel and bladder control and will learn to use the toilet when developmentally ready.

## Toilet Learning

**Toilet learning is developmental and for each child it begins when they are developmentally ready for it to start. Following are some "ready" signs your child will demonstrate:**

- stays dry one and a half to two hours during the day
- wants to be changed quickly when wet or soiled
- talks, using short phrases. (2 words)
- manages their own clothes – pulling pants/short up and down
- follows simple directions

Toilet learning takes time and is not completed in a day. Prepare for accidents with extra clothes, extra shoes, and bags to put used clothes in. All family members and caregivers in your child's life need to work together and be on the same page for toilet learning to happen successfully.

For us to assist your child in toilet training, we need some help from parents. During toilet learning, we discourage onesies, suspenders, overalls, and tights. Suggested clothing items are knit pants and shorts with elastic waists or dresses. Our program uses diapers for this learning process. We do not use pull-ups or encourage the use of pull-ups because they do not give children the same sensation of being wet. However, if you are using pull-ups, we are asking that you provide a minimum of 15 pull-ups per week. Please remember that children must be encouraged in toilet learning. This is never a time to scold or punish a child.

## Nap/Quiet Time Routine

A daily rest time is provided for all children. Nap time should be a calm relaxing experience for children. Our program will provide each child with a blanket and a cot/mat labeled with his/her name. At times, children will go through a stage when he/she may resist the routine of napping. This is sometimes a way of being independent and is very normal.

## **Health/Nutrition Activities**

VCM recognizes the importance of physical activity for children in their early years. Appropriate physical activity supports the health and development of children and ensures the establishment and maintenance of healthy lifestyle habits. For the promotion of physical activity, all children will participate in a variety of physical activities both indoors and outdoors that are age appropriate and fun throughout the day. Children will be outside for 30 to 45-minute intervals. Play yards have some shaded areas. Children are offered water so that they remain hydrated. Parents are encouraged to provide hats.

Outdoor play occurs daily unless a weather advisory is issued by the National Weather Service. If the heat index is at or above 90 degrees or the weather is below 32 degrees, children will remain inside.

VCM strives to provide the best possible nutritional environment in our programs. Weekly nutrition educational activities such as tasting opportunities for the younger children and cooking activities for the older children are included in the classroom lesson plan.

## **Family Conferences & Assessments**

Conferences between parents and staff will be held four times a year at all centers, two will be home visits and two will be held at the program. Both parents are encouraged to attend due to the unique relationship each parent has with his/her child. Parents are encouraged to observe their child in the classroom at any time and are particularly encouraged to do so before conferences.

These conferences will focus on discussion of any questions regarding your child's developmental progress and methods of teaching. Children's progress is assessed using the *Teaching Strategies Gold: Objectives for Development & Learning*.

## **Developmental Screenings**

VCM uses ASQ-3 Ages & Stages and ASQ SE-2: Social Emotional Parent Questionnaires as our screening tools. During their first home visit (**for children enrolled in EHS**), parent(s), with the guidance of their child's classroom teacher, will complete the initial parent questionnaire. Questions are linked to developmental milestones in the areas of communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social skills. The results will be part of the process to create individual goals for each child and family. Teachers will ask parent(s) to complete questionnaires at least 2x times per year (more if needed) as their child grows and learns.

## **Assessments**

VCM uses the Teaching Strategies Smart Teach assessment instrument to map the developmental progress of infants, toddlers, two's, 3K and 4K; teachers will share this information with families during parent conferences.

## **Holiday & Center Closing**

### **Holidays**

We wish to be respectful of all families' culture, recognizing that not everyone celebrates holidays the same way. Please share with teachers your family traditions and ideas on how they could be added to the classroom activities. We ask everyone in our program to support our philosophy of being respectful to all families. Please see your child's enrollment package, monthly/yearly calendar, VCM's Facebook Page and Website for our holiday closing schedule.

### **Weather Closings**

VCM serves working parents; therefore, we will make every effort to be open during inclement weather. When appropriate, VCM will follow Richland School District One regarding their closing or late opening or early dismissal. If there is a delayed opening it is delayed from our opening time (2-hour delay, we would start at 10:00) each of the Center Directors will put up a sign on the door the evening before to provide information to watch WIS-TV for closing. Center directors will inform staff as soon as possible after the decision is made. If it is an early dismissal, parents will be notified to pick up their children within an hour of being notified. They will be notified by phone, text, or email. Necessary

information will be posted on our Facebook page and website.

## **Emergency Closings**

VCM serves working parents; therefore, we will make every effort to be open per our published schedule. However, events may arise and will result in a center(s) being closed. Any decision to temporarily close a center(s) due to an emergency will be at the discretion of the CEO and the Vital Connections Board of Governors. Center Directors will inform staff as soon as possible after the decision is made. If it is an early dismissal, parents will be notified to pick up their children within an hour of being notified. They will be notified by phone, text or email. Necessary information will be posted on our Facebook page and website.

## **Parent/Family Engagement**

Parents are recognized and valued as active members of the program's team. We welcome and encourage parental involvement. Many opportunities exist for volunteering in our program. These opportunities may help in passing out meals, gardening and reading to the children. Please ask your child's teacher or the Director for specific opportunities. The staff appreciates and encourages parental involvement at all levels.

## **Family Plans & Needs Assessments**

All families will be empowered with the ability to identify their needs and build upon their strengths to achieve their goals as they participate in the program's family engagement activities and partnerships. Parents can observe their child's classroom at any time (free and full access) unless a court order stipulates otherwise. Parents are encouraged to visit and participate in daily classroom activities. The visit should not disrupt instructional activities or classroom routines. Regular volunteers (defined as an individual who volunteers in the center 40 hours a month) will be required to have a TB tine test to ensure the health and safety of all people in the center.

## **Father/Male Involvement**

Fathers/father figures are invited and encouraged to play an active role in their child's development. The intent is to strengthen the role of fathers in their families. Strong families are essential to the future of the nation; both mothers and fathers figures play an important role in ensuring the well-being of their children. All fathers/father figures are invited and encouraged to participate in our fatherhood program. Activities generally occur once a month – watch for flyers (passed out during arrival/departure) and announcements in the newsletter, on our website and Facebook Page.

## **Parent Meetings**

There are four quarterly parent meetings that are mandatory (**September, December, February, May**). Parent committee meetings are held at each center monthly. The purpose of the meeting is for parents to discuss concerns, learn what is happening at their child (ren)'s center and plan family events. Every month a second meeting maybe held on an educational topic based on interest surveys or a concern that has arisen within the program. **Early Head Start Parents are required to attend no less than 15 parenting workshops/activities/meetings/PACT activities that are held each year at your child(ren)'s center and to be engaged in the education of their child. Parenting workshops/meetings/activities/PACT activities are held twice a month all year long. Your signature will validate your attendance.**

## **PACT (*Parent and Child Time Together*) and Partners for a Healthy Baby.**

PACT is a time for parents and their children to learn an educational activity as well as have fun interacting with each other outside of the classroom. Partners for a Healthy Baby is a research-based parenting curriculum that features materials for home visitors and families that promote child development and family well-being. The curriculum is organized around children's ages and topics home visitors can use to support both age-appropriate learning and family development.

## **Policy Council**

Policy Council is a team of parents, staff, and community leaders who provide oversight and guidance of the EHS program. Membership is composed of 51% current parents and 49% community. Meetings are held nine times per

program year:

- discuss overall program issues
- share information
- provide new ideas
- approve and/or disapprove specific program actions
- share in program decisions
- approves the budget and all financial expenditures

Each Early Head Start center holds Policy Council elections for parent representatives and an alternate in September of each program year.

### **Health/Mental Services Advisory Committee**

The Health/Mental Health Services Advisory Committee is a group of current parents, staff, and community volunteers who provide guidance and oversight into the medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health components of our program. This group formulates health, mental health, behavioral health and nutrition policies, participates in program evaluation, and sponsors health related events. Meetings are held quarterly at the VCM Central Office/via virtual.

### **Family Socializations**

VCM EHS and Children's Garden (3K, 4K) sponsor monthly social activities for family members each year. Activities may include the following center: Open House, Health & Community Resource Fair, Winter Wonderland, Fall Festival, Celebrations of Learning; Step into Spring; etc.

## **Program Services**

### **Nutrition Education**

Our Health Services Manager for EHS is available to meet with parents in groups or individually to educate families about proper nutrition. The Health Services Manager will review your child's file for any growth or nutrition issue. She will work with parents whose children need special diets or who have health conditions which affect their nutrition.

### **Mental Health**

VCM believes strongly in social-emotional health for children, staff, and parents. VCM has Mental Health Consultants available to address the emotional well-being needs of your family. The Health Services Manager is on site at each center to support our children and families.

### **Health Services**

Our EHS Health Services Manager (HSM) can offer information/resources on a health issue important to you. Also, HC will work closely with you to make sure your child is up to date on all immunizations, well baby/child check-ups, vision, hearing, and oral health concerns and needs. Twice each year the HSM will measure your child's head, weight, and height to make sure he or she is growing and thriving.

### **EHS Services for Pregnant Moms**

Our EHS Family Advocate, Health Services Manager and Mental Health Staff provide education resources and information to our EHS pregnant moms during enrollment. If a pregnant mom needs a medical home, our staff can assist her in finding a care provider. Once the baby is born, our staff will make a two- week follow-up visit to make sure that mom and baby are healthy. Information about pre-natal and post-partum education resources will be provided.

### **EHS Services for Children with Disabilities**

Children with Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP), Individual Education Plan (IEP) and/or Family Service Plan (FSP) are involved in all phases of the daily classroom curriculum. We use the ASQ – 3 and ASQ:SE - 2 to determine each child's current developmental levels in partnership with parents. After completing screening, the staff and family will determine whether the child will benefit from further evaluation. Our Health Services

Manager will complete additional screenings and hold a conference with parents to review the results. If additional testing and/or referrals are needed, the HSM. will help families connect to/with Baby Net, our state's provider of services for children with not typically developing. At all times, the staff and parents work together to provide a learning environment that meets the individual needs of children. Please feel free to talk to your teacher about any concerns you have about your child's development.

## **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

### **USDA Nondiscrimination Statement**

#### **SNAP and FDPIR State or local agencies, and their subrecipients, must post the following Nondiscrimination Statement:**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: How to File a Complaint, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410.

### **Menus**

Our program provides scheduled breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack each day. The current menu is posted on the parent bulletin board at the front entrance. Meals are developed to provide a wide variety of foods that are nutritious, culturally diverse, seasonally appropriate, and different in color, shape, size and texture. All children participate in the CACFP program.

If you arrive after the meal has been cleared, teachers will ask if your child has eaten. Teachers can ask that another serving be brought to the classroom. Breakfast is served until 8:45. If you arrive later than 8:45, you will have to feed your child. You will need to sit with your child outside the classroom until the child finishes eating since the teacher will already be involved in teaching activities.

**No food from home may be brought into the center.**

### **USDA Guidelines - Infant Formula and Food**

Our EHS program is required to follow the Infant Meal Pattern for infants ages birth through 11 months. Solid foods are introduced to infants when developmentally ready, a decision made by you **and** your infant's doctor. The program will provide iron-fortified infant formula, iron-fortified infant cereal, commercial baby food and/or table food at the appropriate consistency for the development of the infant.

### **Family Style Dining**

Meals are served family style. Children are seated at small tables with a teacher. Young toddlers are served on partition plates with seconds available on request. Older toddlers have their food in small bowls/pitchers and

teachers assist children to serve themselves. Teachers model social graces and manners as well as encourage children to taste each food. Children are offered all food components but will not be forced to eat.

### **Specialized Diets/Food Allergies or Intolerances**

If a child has any food allergies or needs a specialized diet, we must have notification in writing from a physician. The physician *must state in writing an appropriate food substitution*.

Teachers and/or the nutritionist will discuss with the family appropriate food substitutions which the center will provide. The Health Services Coordinator will ask parents to complete a child health plan on food allergies and intolerances.

For the safety of all infants in our care, cereal **will not** be added to a bottle under any circumstances. Adding cereal or any solid food to a bottle can increase the risk of choking and is not considered a safe feeding practice.

### **Special Occasions**

VCM policy advocates healthy foods that are low in sugar; therefore, special occasion foods provided by the parent **MUST** be pre-approved by the Center Director. Preparation of birthday foods shall be linked to an educational activity such as cake, muffin or cookie mix which children, teacher and parent can bake together; fruit salad or trail mix where children add ingredients to create their own; frozen yogurt or popsicles mixed up in the classroom and frozen to eat later. Food brought into the center must be commercially made and packaged. Remember no candy, chewing gum, sodas, sweets, nut products or chocolate are allowed in the centers. Birthdays are celebrated during lunch or afternoon snack. Family members are welcome to join the celebration.

## **What Each Child will Need to Bring...**

### **Three Sets of Clothes**

It is our philosophy to encourage children to learn through play and “hands on” exploration of materials and equipment. For young children, “hands on” typically means that all senses will be involved. Children should wear washable play clothes for comfort and convenience. Teachers will make sure that children cover their clothing before painting, or playing in water, but accidents can and will happen. Please assure your child that he/she will not be punished for getting involved in messy activities. All children should have extra clothing at the center. All personal items should be labeled with your child’s name. Please make sure to change clothes as your child grows and the seasons change. In the event a child soils his/her extra set of clothes, we have a limited number of clothing items for emergencies. Please launder and return the clothes.

Children should be dressed according to the weather. Pediatricians feel that if a child is free of fever and otherwise well enough to attend, he/she is well enough to go outside dressed in proper attire. (Except in the case of an emergency, we cannot honor requests to keep children inside.) Please make sure that your child has adequate clothing for the weather since they will be going outdoors for 60-90 minutes each day. **All children will go outside.**

### **Shoes**

Shoes are **required** for children 1 year old/older. We recommend that children wear rubber-soled/hard bottomed shoes. If wearing sandals, they must be closed toes. This is for the child’s safety while running and playing outside on grass and wood chips. Please NO cowboy boots, flip flops, slip on sandals or party shoes.

### **Infant Rooms**

Each baby must have the following: unbreakable bottles **(3)** with tops labeled with child’s name and date, hat, and three **(3)** sets of clothing. VCM provides diapers and wipes for infants during program hours. Children will be served cereal from a spoon; cereal will not be served in a bottle. Diapers provided by VCM are disposable; we do not use cloth diapers. However, if your child requires the use of cloth diapers, please notify your Center Director in writing.

### **Toddler Rooms**

Each toddler must have the following: a hat, and three **(3)** sets of clothing. VCM provides diapers and wipes for toddlers during program hours. Diapers provided by VCM are disposable; we do not use cloth diapers.

## Preschool Rooms

Each preschool child must have the following: an extra set of clothing (3) pertaining to the season, including socks and under garments.

### What Parents/Guardians Need to Know...

The following policies have been adopted to create a safe learning environment for our children:

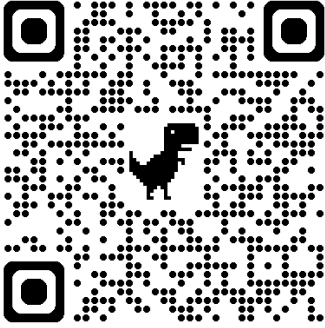
- **Pajamas, bonnets, head scarves, slippers, and hair rollers are strictly always prohibited within our centers. All individuals are expected to wear clothing that is appropriate, modest in length, and provides proper coverage.**
- No Cellphone use in building during drop-off or pick-up time.
- No small barrettes or beads can be in your child's hair.
- No jewelry on your child. This includes hoop earrings, necklaces, anklets, etc. Vital Connections is not responsible for lost or misplaced jewelry.
- No open-toed shoes are to be worn.
- Any individual dropping off and/or picking up a child/children **MUST BE** 17 years of age and older.
- No pacifier clips.
- Our program is a Smoke Free Environment - No smoking is allowed in the centers or on the property.
- No drugs or alcohol are allowed in the center or on the property.
- Our program does not allow firearms, knives, mace, or pepper spray on the premises.
- No outside food from any source (home, restaurant, etc.) may be brought into the center.
- No balloons.
- Our program is a Peanut Free Zone - No products that have nuts are allowed.
- No candy, cookies and/or chocolate of any kind.
- No grapes, hot dogs, popcorn, or corn chips.
- No guns or toys that promote violent play.
- Our program does not allow children to watch TV, videos, DVDs or computers for children 2 years AND younger.
- Teachers may refuse to accept things that they feel are unsafe for children to use in our program.
- Parents must bring their child into the classroom each morning with a completed **All About Me** form, wash their hands and make sure a teacher is aware that the child has arrived.

Our programs are based on developing partnerships and supporting families; however, despite our best efforts, on rare occasions a parent's/guardian's actions or request may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for themselves and their child. Examples of such instances include (but are not limited to):

- The parent/guardian fails to abide by all center policies, or those requirements imposed by the appropriate licensing agency.
- A parent/guardian demands special services that are not provided to other children's families and that cannot reasonably be delivered by the program (including requests that are outside of the philosophy of the program).
- A parent/guardian is physically, verbally abusive or threatening to agency staff, children or anyone at the center.

**For Weather Alerts and School Delayed Start or Early Dismissal or Closings,  
Please visit our website: [www.vitalconnectionsmidlands.org](http://www.vitalconnectionsmidlands.org) and Facebook page**

**If Richland County School District One is on a 2-hour delay, we will also be  
on a 2-hour delay. Our program day begins at 8:00 am. If school is delayed  
for 2 hours, our doors will open at 10:00 am.**



## Parent Resource Directory

### Housing

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Family Shelter<br/>2411 Two Notch Road<br/>Columbia, SC 29204<br/>803-602-6379<br/><a href="mailto:info@homelessnomore.org">info@homelessnomore.org</a><br/><a href="http://www.homelessnomore.org">www.homelessnomore.org</a></p> | <p>Women's Shelter<br/>3425 North Main Street<br/>Columbia, SC 29203<br/>803-779-4706<br/><a href="mailto:angie@womenshelter.org">angie@womenshelter.org</a><br/><a href="http://www.womenshelter.org">www.womenshelter.org</a></p>   |
| <p>SisterCare Crisis Line<br/>803-765-9428<br/>P.O. Box 1029<br/>Columbia, SC 29202<br/><a href="http://www.sistercare.com">www.sistercare.com</a></p>                                                                                | <p>St Lawrence Place<br/>2400 Waites Road<br/>Columbia, SC 29204<br/>803-256-3999<br/><a href="mailto:info@homelessnomore.org">info@homelessnomore.org</a><br/><a href="http://www.homelessnomore.org">www.homelessnomore.org</a></p> |

### Food

|                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Harvest Hope Food Bank<br/>2220 Shop Road<br/>Columbia, SC 29201<br/>803-254-4432<br/><a href="http://www.harvesthope.org/">www.harvesthope.org/</a></p> | <p>Columbia Metro Baptist Association<br/>806 Universal Drive<br/>Columbia, SC 29209<br/>803-619-7110<br/><a href="http://columbiametro.org/">columbiametro.org/</a></p> |
| <p>There is Hope<br/>905 South Bound Road<br/>Gaston, SC 29053<br/>803-794-0237</p>                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                          |

### Employment

|                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Work Support/FI Support Services<br/>803-714-7387</p>                                                                                                                             | <p>Community Relations Council<br/>930 Richland Street,<br/>Columbia, SC 29202<br/>803-733-1134</p>                                                                                                      |
| <p>Wateree Community Action<br/>201 Columbia Mall Blvd<br/>Suite 91<br/>Columbia, SC 29223<br/>803-786-4250/803-592-7000/803-807-9811</p>                                            | <p>Midlands Workforce Center<br/>700 Taylor Street<br/>Columbia, SC 29201<br/>803-737-5627</p>                                                                                                           |
| <p>SC Department of Employment and Workforce<br/>1550 Gadsden Street<br/>Columbia, SC 29201<br/>803-737-2400<br/><a href="https://jobs.scworks.org">https://jobs.scworks.org</a></p> | <p>Job Corps<br/>Free Residential Program for young men and women, (ages 16-24) that empowers you to take responsibility for employment through vocational and academic achievement<br/>803-256-9675</p> |
| <p>Columbia City Employment<br/>1225 Lady Street # 101<br/>Columbia, SC 29201 803-545-3010</p>                                                                                       | <p>Goodwill<br/>6642 Garner Ferry Road,<br/>Columbia, SC 29209<br/>803-783-2696</p>                                                                                                                      |

### Counseling Services

|                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Everyday Wellness<br>801 Gervais Street<br>Unit 2B<br>Columbia, SC 29201<br>803-888-6714                                      | Three Rivers Behavioral Health System<br>2900 Sunset Blvd.<br>West Columbia, SC 29169<br>803-796-9911                                                                                             |
| The Givens Collective<br>839-329-7971<br><a href="mailto:info.givenscollective@gmail.com">info.givenscollective@gmail.com</a> | Lutheran Services Carolina<br>1118 Union Street<br>Columbia, SC 29201<br>803-750-9917                                                                                                             |
| Columbia Area Mental Health<br>2715 Colonial Drive<br>Suite 100<br>Columbia, SC 29203<br>803-898-4800                         | Psychology Services Center<br>1331 Elmwood Ave<br>Suite 140<br>Columbia, SC 29201<br>803-777-7302                                                                                                 |
| Post Trauma Resources<br>1709 Laurel Street<br>Columbia, SC 29201<br>803-765-0700                                             | Counseling Behaviors<br>140 Stoneridge Dr, Ste 430<br>Columbia, SC 29210-8276<br><a href="mailto:cory.russell@counselingbehaviors.com">cory.russell@counselingbehaviors.com</a><br>(803) 216-1996 |
| Expungement<br>SC Fifth Circuit Court Solicitors' Office<br>1701 Main Street<br>803-803-576-1800                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

### Emergency/Financial

|                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cooperative Ministries<br>3821 West Beltline<br>Columbia, SC<br>803-799-3853                                                                                            | Salvation Army<br>3024 Farrow Road<br>Columbia, SC 29203<br>803-765-0260 |
| Poison Control Center<br>1-800-222-1222                                                                                                                                 | United Way Help Line 211<br>803-790-4357<br>803-737-7312                 |
| Family Promises of the Midlands<br>1333 Omarest Drive<br>Columbia, SC 29210<br>803-832-4765<br><a href="http://Familypromisemidlands.org">Familypromisemidlands.org</a> |                                                                          |
| Domestic Abuse Center<br>803-256-0468                                                                                                                                   | Prevent Child Abuse SC<br>803-733-5430                                   |
| Wateree Community Action Council<br>803-786-4250                                                                                                                        | Columbia Police Department<br>803-545-3500                               |
| Richland County Sheriff's Department<br>803-576-3000                                                                                                                    | Eastover Police Department<br>803-353-2291                               |

### Medical/Dental

|                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Palmetto Health Richland Hospital<br>5 Richland Medical Court<br>Columbia, SC 29203<br>803-434-7000 | Department of Public & Environmental Services<br>2000 Hampton Street<br>Columbia, SC 29204<br>803-579-2900 or 803-576-2980 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                     |                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Richland Primary Care<br>1520 Laurel Street<br>Columbia, SC 29201<br>803-799-8407                   | Richland Care (free/low cost)<br>803-296-2220                                                  |
| Creston Dental & Braces<br>5422 Forest Dr.<br>Columbia, SC 29206<br>803-973-0738                    | Free Medical Clinic<br>1875 Harden Street<br>Columbia, SC 29204<br>803-765-1503                |
| Eau Claire<br>4801 Monticello Road<br>Columbia, SC 29203<br>803-754-0151                            | Hopkins Pediatrics<br>9019 Garners Ferry<br>803-978-1848                                       |
| Eastover Family Practice<br>3041 Old Eastover Road<br>Eastover, SC 29044<br>803-353-8741            | Midlands Healthy Start<br>1333 Taylor Street<br>Columbia, SC 29201<br>803-296-3780             |
| Carolina Children's Dentistry<br>Trenholm Road<br>803-736-6000                                      | Well Partners<br>2000 Hampton Street<br>Columbia, SC 29204<br>803-888-1690<br>Wellpartners.org |
| Absolute Total Care<br>100 Center Point Circle<br>Suite 100<br>Columbia, SC 29210<br>1-866-433-6041 |                                                                                                |

#### Health Department/DSS

|                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Richland County WIC<br>2000 Hampton Street<br>Columbia, SC 29204<br>803-576-2900<br>Appointment Line: 1-855-472-3432                                                  | Eastover WIC<br>120 Clarkson Street<br>Eastover, SC 29044<br>803-353-3295                                                                                 |
| DSS Food Stamps<br>Phone Number: 1-800-616-1309<br>Apply Online:<br><a href="https://benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov/#/login">https://benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov/#/login</a> | ABC Voucher Program<br>Apply Online:<br><a href="https://benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov/#/login">https://benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov/#/login</a>                 |
| DSS Protective Services<br>Phone Number: 803-714-7300<br>Emergency Report Line: 1-888-227-3487                                                                        | SC Strong Start Scholarship Program<br>Apply Online:<br><a href="https://benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov/#/login">https://benefitsportal.dss.sc.gov/#/login</a> |

#### Transportation

|                                                                                                             |                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Dial A Ride Transit (DART) (for disabled riders)<br>3613 Lucious Road<br>Columbia, SC 29201<br>803-255-7123 | Medicaid Transportation<br>LogistiCare<br>1-866-445-6860 |
| Checker Yellow Cab<br>1715 12 <sup>th</sup> St.<br>Cayce, SC 29033<br>803-799-3311                          |                                                          |

***Revised June 2017, July 2018, July 2019, July 2020, June 2021, July 2022, July 2023, June 2024, June 2025 & June 2026***

**Excused Absences**

|                                      | <u>#of Days</u>           |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Illness (measles, chicken pox, etc.) | 10                        |
| Documented Excused absence           | 5                         |
| Transportation                       | 5                         |
| Weather Conditions                   | (Administrative decision) |

**Unexcused Absences**

No more than 10 business days will lapse for unexcused absences.

A child may not miss three (3) consecutive days without a written excuse from parent or doctor for reasons of illness, family death, or emergency.

When a child is absent, teachers and Family Advocates will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to inquire about the child's whereabouts, well-being, and expected date of return.

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# 2026- 2027 Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Center/Classroom

I have received, read, and understand the policies and procedures described in the Vital Connections of the Midlands, Inc. Parent Handbook.

I agree to follow all rules and regulations as stated and failure to comply could result in immediate dismissal from the program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

