



Parent Handbook

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Our Philosophy

Bright Start Learning Center was inspired by an ideal to create an extraordinary place for children to spend their days. At Bright Start, we believe that our open and inviting facility, our nurturing environment, and our devoted staff provide a positive setting that enables children to fully develop cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Bright Start serves children from 6 weeks old until they are ready to leave for kindergarten. We recognize that each child has individual needs and learning styles. We believe that it is our responsibility to identify those needs and styles and provide an environment that fosters growth and development in each child. While the curriculum is educationally based, children's natural inclination to learn through exploration and through play are central to the program at Bright Start. Children are encouraged to learn, play, and explore and will have the opportunity to participate in numerous group and individual activities and a variety of structured and unstructured activities.

As important, children need to feel loved, appreciated, and respected at school. We strive to achieve this by carefully selecting teachers who are dedicated to their profession. We appreciate that each child needs to feel that his or her ideas, feelings, and emotions are worthwhile, and we will encourage all children to openly express themselves. A supportive environment and a dedicated staff make this possible.

Teachers are expected to develop a comfortable relationship with all children in their classes. A relationship of trust and caring frees a child to focus on competencies and to move on to the next stage of development. We believe children have the right to experience trust, without which, learning is difficult. Children also have the right to experience being in control, to have friends, to feel safe and secure, to be able to change things, to feel welcomed and loved, and to have fun.

While working with children one-on-one or in small groups, teachers actively observe individual children and use the observations to enhance the learning activities planned for that child and the group. They have conversations with the children, encourage problem solving by the children, and guide children through interpersonal struggles. Teachers are expected to become familiar with the competence levels and learning styles of each child.

We have an awesome responsibility at Bright Start and we welcome parents' suggestions for continually improving the quality of our program. We encourage parents to be involved in our activities.

Mission Statement

At Bright Start, we SERVE with Positivity, Integrity and Intentionality!

We strive to be a role model of child-care excellence. Bright Start is a center where children are happy and well cared for, parents are confident in their child's care, and teachers are respected and supported. Bright Start's staff is innovative and solution-oriented and is fully committed to professionalism.

We have a responsibility to:

- **the children** – to provide a safe, nurturing, and positive environment that enables each of them to fully develop cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally in a manner appropriate to his or her age and stage of development;
- **the parents** – to establish a trusting and healthy relationship, where parents can depend on effective and timely communication and where parental involvement is encouraged; and

- **the teachers** – to establish a cooperative professional working environment where expectations are clearly communicated, where teamwork is valued, where support is unwavering, and where professional development opportunities are accessible and encouraged.

Objectives

It is our goal to help each child to:

- make a successful transition from home to school;
- feel secure and happy in a classroom setting;
- build positive relationships with other children and adults;
- build a strong and positive self-concept;
- develop large and small motor skills and coordination;
- express himself or herself freely and imaginatively; and
- become increasingly responsible and independent.

We also believe that we must provide the following for each child:

- experiences to develop pre-reading, language and communication skills;
- hands-on experiences that promote an understanding of spatial and numerical concepts;
- reasoning and problem-solving opportunities to explore, experiment and experience activities that provide them with an explanation and understanding of the natural world around them;
- development of critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills (including conflict resolution);
- mastery of recommended kindergarten skills (for those children at the preschool age); and
- sensory experiences that fulfill developmental needs and enhance a child's sensory integration process.

The Importance of Play

At Bright Start, children play a lot. During this time, children are:

- Developing friendships and having cooperative play experiences;
- Playing with materials which develop small motor skills;
- Investigating and exploring how things work;
- Developing critical thinking skills;
- Looking at books, listening to stories, finger plays and poems;
- Listening and moving to music;
- Having experiences in a mostly-child group situation versus a mostly-adult group situation
- Developing and expanding language abilities;
- Learning how to make decisions and cope with the consequences;

- Having creative art experiences;
- Following directions;
- Learning social skills;
- Building with materials which may not be available at home;
- Experimenting with “messy” sensory materials;
- Role-playing with dramatic play props;
- Developing independence;
- Comparing and contrasting different materials and experiences;
- Broadening their horizons by learning from others and from experiences;
- Having multi-cultural experiences;
- Developing hand-eye coordination for reading readiness;
- Matching, counting and serializing for math readiness; and
- Making observations about the surrounding environment.

Behavior Management and Discipline

Children need and appreciate structure and boundaries in their day. From time to time, they also need behavior guidance. At Bright Start, staff interacts with the children and one another to provide needed help, comfort, and support. We foster respect for personal privacy and respect for differences in cultural, ethnic, and family backgrounds. We encourage children to make decisions (within reason), promote ways of getting along, encourage independence and self-direction, and use consistency in applying expectations.

Teachers must lovingly, firmly and consistently guide and redirect and encourage children to help them learn to cooperate with peers and to have a positive learning experience. We plan to accomplish this goal by:

- Providing a variety of activities for the children;
- Planning activities and using group management techniques to minimize waiting time for children;
- Using an appropriate ratio of adults to children;
- Using positive language to reward and encourage appropriate behavior;
- Being aware of the group dynamics at all times;
- Being flexible and willing to change plans if our activities are not capturing the children’s attention;
- Teaching children the conflict resolution process and facilitating their participation in the process as much as possible;
- Following through on our promises; and
- Offering options.

Teachers point out the logical consequences of a child's actions and follow through with caring but firm limits. Teachers use positive reinforcement techniques to teach appropriate behavior and to encourage the healthy development of a child's self-esteem. Positive reinforcement techniques, such as recognizing a child's accomplishments and encouraging a child's efforts, reward a child for appropriate and positive behavior. When these measures are not enough, effective

age-appropriate discipline techniques are necessary to redirect children from inappropriate to appropriate behavior and help to resolve conflicts. At Bright Start, we will use a combination of the following techniques, as necessary:

- **Offering Choices:** Focusing on providing alternative age/developmentally appropriate choices as a method to encourage individualism and guide acceptable behaviors within the classroom.
- **Positive Reinforcement (all ages):** Focusing on good behavior instead of bad behavior. Giving a child attention is one of the most powerful forms of positive reinforcement.
- **Redirecting (all ages):** This technique literally involves the simple act of redirecting the child to appropriate behavior. It helps him or her focus on what *is* allowed rather than what isn't.
- **Verbal Instruction/Explanation (children over 18 months old):** Going over what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and the reasons.

Behavior that causes injury or is extremely intense is cause for concern and intervention. As soon as possible after such behavior, a teacher must describe the behavior to the Director and the parents. In addition, when a teacher observes ongoing behavior struggles, the Director will be notified in order to schedule an observation of a child or class and the parents will be notified. If necessary, Bright Start may recommend outside assistance or support. Certain discipline techniques are absolutely unacceptable at Bright Start and forbidden by law. Corporal punishment, for example, is strictly forbidden, and teachers shall never shame or ridicule a child. Intimidation, threats, and bribes are also unacceptable under any circumstances. The focus is on the positive rather than the negative to teach a child what safe, acceptable behavior is and how to practice self-control. In addition, teachers are never to strike, rough handle, or shake a child, withhold or force food or water from a child, make verbal remarks which are shameful to the child, or punish for toileting accidents as a method of guidance/discipline.

Our overall goal of discipline is to create a low-stress environment in which pro-social behavior is learned rather than forced. Teachers draw on their training and experience to identify behavior that indicates a child is unhappy, withdrawn, angry or feeling too much stress. These symptoms require patience, understanding and intervention, which is not punitive.

We will inform you promptly when persistent behavioral problems are identified, including the disciplinary steps that have been taken in response. It is imperative that you reinforce acceptable behaviors at home and provide consistent guidance. Please let us know if there is a particular behavior management plan or technique that you would like us to use with your child. We recognize the importance of maintaining consistency between home and school. Staff members will work with the parents to come up with ways to help the child regain control and/or modify behavior. However, in some instances, additional steps may need to be taken. Bright Start may require that the child's days be limited to half days for a certain period of time or Bright Start may make a determination that continuing care may not be in the best interest of the child or of other children in the program. In such a case, Bright Start may, in its sole discretion, decide to terminate services.

Separation

Separation may be painful for the children and their parents. Some children at certain ages have more difficulty than others. Be assured that we will help your child and acknowledge his/her feelings as he/she works through these normal developmental stages. Again, the parent's positive and understanding attitudes are most important. Simple daily routines make children comfortable.

- Establish a "goodbye ritual" so that your child knows what to expect each morning.
- Remind your child that each time you leave, you always return.
- Give your child lots of hugs and kisses and say "goodbye."

- Depart. It can be painful if parents stay too long. Don't turn around and return! Your child will be given love and attention until they are able to calm down and join the classroom.

If your child has or develops separation anxiety, the Director or teachers will be happy to discuss your child's situation with you in more detail and give you regular progress reports.

Communications

We understand that you are busy with work, school, and family obligations. Nevertheless, it is imperative that open lines of communication are maintained between us and you. In order to make sure that you are kept informed about Center events and your child's progress, we have several methods of communicating with you. Specifically, we rely on email and texting for most communications and on the Brightwheel platform for electronic daily reporting and classroom messaging.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are signed up for each communication platform and that you are checking them frequently. If we find that we are unable to communicate with you on a timely basis (e.g., you are not checking weekly emails or are not keeping apprised of important information from the Management team), we may request that you find alternative care. Please avoid this and just stay engaged with your child's school. ☺

The following are the principal electronic platforms that we use to communicate with you:

- **Email:** sent directly by the office. Bright Start will enter your email addresses into our system upon enrollment. If your email address changes, you must inform us as soon as possible so we can make necessary updates.
- **Brightwheel:** an electronic platform that we use for daily reporting, classroom messaging, checking child/staff ratios, and easing the administrative burden on teachers. Parents are invited to join Brightwheel upon enrollment. Each parent must have his or her own account so that we can accurately track who is dropping off and picking up a child. It is not necessary for every parent to have the app downloaded to their phones – checking in and out may be accomplished on the classroom tablets. Parents love seeing photos and receiving updates about their child throughout the day. We are very excited to be able to offer this service to our families.

Parent teacher conferences will be held in the fall and in the spring to discuss your child's developmental progress. If all is going well and you do not feel a conference is necessary, you are not required to schedule one. These are for your convenience and information only.

At least annually, we will require that you update the contact information that we have for you on file, including for emergency contacts. This is typically done in the summer each year.

We encourage you to meet with the Director or your child's teacher should you have any concerns. Please note, however, that teachers are not able to engage in lengthy conversations while supervising children. Should a conference be needed, please arrange a time with the teacher for an in-person meeting or telephone call and be sure to let the office know. This will allow us to provide additional staffing during this time.

Staffing

The success of our program is dependent on the quality of the teachers and administrative personnel that we employ and their dedication to the early childhood profession, the center, the children, and the families that we serve. Our team is made up of management staff, full time and part time teachers, volunteers, and custodial staff, all of whom have been carefully selected. We are proud of every member of our staff and encourage you to get to know them.

Bright Start highly values training for its staff members. All of our Lead Teachers are required to obtain and keep current their Child Development Associate Credential or equivalent. Bright Start also encourages and supports any teacher that is not currently a Lead that wants to obtain this credential. In addition, every teacher and administrator must have annually a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education related to early childhood development and education.

All employees and volunteers are required to undergo comprehensive background checks, including State and Federal criminal history checks based on name and fingerprints and child abuse and neglect central registry checks for each state in which the person has lived in the past five years. These checks are repeated periodically.

Supervision and Child to Teacher Ratios

Teachers are required to maintain an accurate class count at all times and maintain sound and sight supervision of each child in their care. To confirm the safe whereabouts of every child at all times, teachers are required to regularly count children every 15 minutes in the morning from 7:00 am to 9:00 am and in the afternoon from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm; and every 30 minutes at every other part of the day. They are also required to count the children at every transition and whenever leaving one area and arriving at another.

Adequate supervision can only occur when minimum ratios of children to teachers are observed.

Bright Start strives to provide as low a child to teacher ratio as much of the day as possible. At no time will the ratios fall below what is required by the Virginia Department of Social Services' Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers as follows:

- **Infants under 16 months old** – 1 staff member for every 4 children at all times;
- **Toddlers 16 months old to two years** - 1 staff member for every 5 children
 - During the designated rest period, the ratio of staff to children may double from 1:5 to 1:10 (1 staff member for every 10 children)
 - The designated rest period begins when the majority of the children are resting quietly or asleep.
- **Two years old children** –1 staff member for every 8 children
 - During the designated rest period, the ratio of staff to children may double from 1:8 to 1:16 (1 staff member for every 16 children)
 - The designated rest period begins when the majority of the children are resting quietly or asleep.
- **Children three years to the age of eligibility to attend public school (five years by September 30)** - 1 staff member for every 10 children
 - During the designated rest period, the ratio of staff to children may double from 1:10 to 1:20 (1 staff member for every 20 children)
 - The designated rest period begins when the majority of the children are resting quietly or asleep.

If a staff member is unable to report to work or remain at their duty station, we have extra staff that are able to substitute for the absent staff member. Substitute staff are selected by their knowledge of the classroom and children to provide coverage. All staff members have the appropriate training to keep the children safe, nurtured and developmentally engaged.

Parent Association

Bright Start is pleased to have a Parent Association in which all parents can participate. We meet once a month, usually on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, from 7:05 am to 8:00 am. Agendas will be sent in advance. The main purposes of the Parent Association include the following:

- To be a communication link between parents and the Center, ensuring that all parents have a comfortable place to express their views;
- To help plan and recruit volunteers to carry out special events throughout the school year in coordination with Bright Start's administrative team;
- To build links and encourage parents' participation in the activities of the Center, and
- To provide input into Bright Start's overall program planning.

While feedback is always appreciated, and we welcome all parents' input, the Parent Association is not intended to be a governing body of the Center and will have no authority as such. Council topics will be limited to those of general interest; we will not discuss specific children or specific family requests. Minutes will be sent out within one week following each meeting. We welcome you to be involved in this endeavor.

General Policies

Changes to Policies

Bright Start reserves the right to make changes to its policies without notice. Such changes will be communicated to parents as quickly as practicable and an effort will be made to give at least a one-week notice of changes. New or modified policies that go into effect immediately will be highlighted in an email to parents. The Parents Handbook will be reviewed annually and changes will be made as needed.

Staff Organization

The Management Team, consisting of the Owner and the two Directors works together to make decisions, solve problems, and set policies. Bright Start Learning Center and the Preschool buildings are licensed as separate facilities by the Virginia Department of Social Services. However, we operate all buildings as a single school or campus.

Contact Information

You can reach all of our buildings and classrooms by calling (703) 370-8414 and entering the 4 digit extension. The directory is below:

Bright Start Telephone Numbers			
Bldg	Name	Direct Dial	Extension
4901	Pandas	(571) 867-9422	3002
	Dolphins	(571) 867-9424	3003
4910	Penguins & Polar Bears	(571) 867-9432	1002
4915	Zebras	(571) 982-5362	1501
	Giraffes	(571) 982-5363	1502
4920	Main Office - Director	(571) 867-9414	2000
	Main Office - Ms. Cynthia	(571) 867-9409	2001
	Kitchen	(571) 867-9413	2002
	Teddy Bears - Upper Room	(571) 867-9408	2003
	Teddy Bears - Lower Room	(571) 867-9411	2004
	Bees	(571) 867-9416	2005
	Turtles	(571) 867-9415	2006
	Tigers	(571) 867-9410	2007
	Bugs	(571) 867-9417	2008

Staff Lines of Authority

Teachers' assistants are responsible for assisting the lead teachers in their daily activities and planning. Teachers' assistants report to their lead teachers, who report to the Center Director. The Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Center. Should you have a concern that is not adequately addressed by the Director, you may contact the Owner of the Center, Kerri Chase.

The Directors and the Back-Up Directors are responsible for the safety and smooth operation of each of the Facilities. Urgent situations should be brought to their attention immediately. Routine matters will continue to be discussed among and resolved by the entire Management Team.

Non-Discrimination

Bright Start welcomes families of any race, color, sex, religion, nationality, creed, sexual orientation, disabilities, marital status or age. We do not discriminate in any way within the administration or our educational policies, enrollment policies, financial policies or any other school-administered program.

Confidentiality Policy

It is our intention to respect the privacy of our students and their parents. We also expect that the privacy of our staff will be respected by parents. We want to ensure that parents can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children. Specifically, we respect confidentiality in the following ways:

- Parents have ready access to the files and records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child.
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child's needs. Staff orientation includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality.
- Personal information about children, families and staff as well as any concerns/evidence relating to a child's personal safety are kept in a secure, confidential file in the office.
- Issues to do with the employment of staff, whether paid or unpaid, remain confidential.
- Parents' permission to allow staff to take photos of their child will be given via a signed permission statement on the agreement/permission form. This form will be kept in the child's file in the preschool office.
- Parents are not permitted to discuss staff issues with other staff members, either on premises or off premises.

Hours of Operation

Bright Start's normal hours are Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 pm. Custodial parents or legal guardians have the right to be admitted to the Center during our normal business hours.

Late Pick-Ups

Bright Start closes at 6:00 pm. An on-time pick-up means that you have exited the building with your child by 6:00 not running in the door at 6:00 or lingering in the classrooms or Center beyond 6:00.

Late pick-ups cause hardships for the staff that are not able to leave on time, and for the children, who have had a long day at school. While many parents believe that an occasional late pick-up is acceptable, one must remember that we have over

100 families enrolled. Late pick-ups are not acceptable, and Bright Start must enforce a strict policy to discourage such behavior. Accordingly, in addition to a late fee, if you (i) pick your child up **more than 15 minutes late** or (ii) if you have picked your child up late more than **one time in a calendar year** (even if late by less than 15 minutes), you will lose care for the day immediately following the respective late pick-up. Continuing issues with on time pickups will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Solutions will include adjusting the family's required pickup time or disenrollment.

If your child is not picked up by 6:00, we will try to contact you or the emergency contacts provided by you. If we are unable to reach anyone by 6:30, we are required to call the Child Protective Services. Please notify the Center as soon as you know you are going to be late. It is imperative that you advise the Center immediately if you will need to pick your child up after closing.

Late Fees

Children who are picked up after closing time will be charged \$15.00 for any part of the first 15 minutes late and \$15.00 for each additional part or complete 15 minutes. This late fee is in addition to the loss of care described above.

Holidays and Closings

We will be closed for all Federal Holidays, the day after Thanksgiving, as well as the Friday before Labor Day for a Teacher Workday. During the week between Christmas and New Year's, we operate on a modified schedule with shorter hours. Other days are at the discretion of the Center and will be announced in advance.

Emergency/Weather Closings

During the year, an unscheduled closing due to inclement weather conditions may be necessary. We generally will follow the Federal Government on closings and delays. However, if the Federal Government is open, allowing for liberal leave or teleworking, and Alexandria schools are closed, Bright Start reserves the right to operate on a modified schedule from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm or to close. This will reduce the number of staff that we need to meet child/teacher ratios. Those teachers that cannot make it to the Center safely will be able to take personal leave.

The goal of our inclement weather policy is to remain open as often as it is safe to do so and minimize full day closings. At the same time, the safety of our families and staff is also important, and we do not want anyone to take unnecessary risk in order to get to the Center. Accordingly, Bright Start reserves the right to make an independent judgment about closings and delays that may not coincide with what the Federal Government decides. Such decisions will be made as early as possible and will be communicated through email and Brightwheel.

Sometimes, it is necessary to close the Center early due to inclement weather or other natural disaster. For weather related early closings, we will provide at least two hours' notice if we plan to close early. Early closings will be communicated through email and Brightwheel. In the case of a natural disaster, you are expected to pick your child up as quickly as possible. In either case, if a child is not picked up in an emergency situation or we have not heard from you about a pick up, the Center will attempt to contact the child's emergency contacts. In the event that we are unable to reach someone authorized by you to pick up your child, we are required to call Child Protective Services.

In the unlikely event of a prolonged utility loss or other situation that could jeopardize the health or safety of the children, Bright Start will close until the situation is corrected. Every reasonable effort will be made to expedite any repairs. A tuition credit will not be given for any closings of two weeks or less that result from events outside of the control of Bright Start. In the unlikely event that we are closed for more than two weeks, Bright Start will communicate a plan directly with the parents, including tuition credits and any additional steps or changes that we may need to incorporate.

Daily Routine

A typical day at Bright Start includes a variety of age-developmentally appropriate activities. These activities include a balance of large group and small group activities with opportunities for teacher-directed, self-directed, and self-chosen time. The children are provided with time for individual free play (sensory play and creative projects), group time (including movement and cognitive activities), cleanup, meals and snacks, quiet transition activities, and weather and air quality permitting, outdoor time.

Activities will include varied art projects, games for small and large motor skill development, simple cooking and food preparation, music and dance, nature and science observations/experiments, water and other sensory play, cooperative play, basic readiness activities recommended for a particular age group, and ongoing social interaction.

A copy of the general daily schedule for each classroom is posted on the classroom bulletin board. Please let the office know if you would like a copy of the schedule.

- **Music:** Bright Start has contracted with an outside vendor to provide an enrichment music and movement curriculum.

Pets

We recognize that having a classroom pet can be a rewarding learning experience for the children. However, because there may be children with allergies, asthma, or other sensitivities to animals and because caring for a pet is a great responsibility, Bright Start classroom pets are limited to fish that can live in a small closed container, such as a Beta fish.

Parent Participation

Custodial parents or legal guardians have the right to be admitted to the Center at any time during our normal business hours. We invite classroom visits and observations but require that parents refrain from cell phone use or other disruptive activities while in the classroom. If you intend to visit for more than 15 minutes, we request that you schedule this in advance with the lead teacher. This avoids awkward situations where the teachers are wondering why the parent is remaining in the classroom, which can be disruptive to the day. For such visits, we do not allow younger siblings to remain with the parent in the classroom. This is for the protection of the younger sibling and allows the parent a greater opportunity to observe and/or participate in classroom activities. Further, siblings are never to be left unattended by the parent at any time.

Bright Start encourages and looks forward to parent participation in all aspects of our program. On a semi-annual basis, Bright Start holds a town hall style meeting for all parents, the Director, the Master Teachers, and the Owner. At these meetings, parents are encouraged to provide feedback, ask questions, pose suggestions for program planning, and discuss other topics of interest. Further, we welcome any parent who would like to volunteer their time or talent to enrich our program. Teachers will be pleased to arrange a special classroom visit for you to share your hobby, culture, profession, or talent.

Donations

Recyclables are invaluable in planning science and art activities. We greatly appreciate parents' assistance in saving often used items and bringing them in when requested. The following items are good bets to save for Bright Start: toilet paper and paper towel tubes, foam and cardboard egg cartons, unusual paper, cardboard, large boxes, foam trays, buttons, calendars, strawberry baskets, plastic margarine tubs and lids.

We also accept gently used or new baby gear and developmental toys (swings, bouncers, etc.) in addition to no longer needed office supplies such as paper, pens, and index cards.

Application and Enrollment

Applications for Bright Start are accepted throughout the year. Priority is given to applicants that are siblings of current or former students. An active waitlist is maintained. Placement on the waiting list is determined by application date, the date of birth and development of the child, and other factors in Bright Start's sole discretion. The process for being placed on the waiting list is an online application on our website along with a \$100 non-refundable application fee, which may be paid in the form of cash or check. This fee is not applied to tuition once enrolled. However, it is a one-time fee. Siblings are not charged another fee for the waitlist. Once you are on the waiting list and you are offered a space in an appropriate classroom you can either accept or defer the space. However, the second time a space is offered you must take that space or move to the end of the waiting list.

To enroll your child, you must complete and sign the appropriate online registration forms which includes the following: Application for Enrollment including the applicant's supply of proof of the child's identity, Parent and Center Agreements (including Sunscreen Authorization, Diaper Cream Form (if applicable), Permission to Move Buildings, and the required Health Forms). Immunization records are required to be updated every 6 months for children two years of age and younger as required by our licensing regulations. A \$500.00 deposit is required at time of enrollment. All enrollment papers are required at least two weeks prior to the child's start date. The deposit is applied to the first month's tuition.

Tuition Payment

Since we are holding a space for your child throughout the year, tuition must be paid on a continuous basis and cannot be pro-rated or refunded if a child is absent due to illness, vacation, government imposed quarantines, or for other reasons.

Monthly tuition payments are due on the 1st of each month. Our tuition rates are listed on our website (<https://www.brightstartva.com/>) for all age groups. A late fee of \$25 per week will be applied to any payment received after the 5th of the month. Weekly tuition payments are due on the Monday of each week. A late fee of \$25 will be applied to any payments received after Friday of that week. Bright Start requires that all weekly tuition payments be made through Bright Wheel or by check. Please contact the Owner for further information.

A fee of \$35.00 will be charged for any returned checks.

Multiple Child Discount

When multiple children from the same family attend Bright Start, the younger child will be charged full tuition. The older child will receive a 10% discount in tuition and any additional children will receive a 20% discount. For more information, please speak with the Owner.

Transitioning to the Next Classroom

Transitions for children two and younger generally are done once a month and we try to transition children in small groups. Transition decisions are based on the chronological age of your child, his or her developmental readiness, and whether there is space available in the next classroom. Children spend one week transitioning from their old classroom to their new classroom. On occasion, a child may have a lot of difficulty transitioning to a new classroom and, after consultation with the parents, we may decide to return the child to his or her original classroom to transition at a later date.

Transitions for preschoolers are done over the summer, with the expectation that most or all children will be in their classes before the beginning of the school year by September 1st. Children are placed in the classroom based on their age at the end of the calendar year. Preschoolers that turn 3 years old before December 31st will be placed in the 3 year old classroom when they are developmentally ready and fully potty trained.

Tuition is adjusted for the new classroom, if applicable, during the first full month that your child is in that classroom.

Personal Belongings

Every child shall have a personal space (cubby) to keep his or her personal belongings. With the exception of a special toy that your child likes to sleep with, we ask that you not bring toys or other personal belongings to the Center except for designated show and share times. For show and share times, the following guidelines apply:

- Toys that shoot projectile objects should not be brought to school.
- Electrical toys that get hot or need to be plugged in should not be brought to school.
- Toys that can cause psychological harm to a child, such as war toys, mutilation toys, or grotesquely distorted representations of human beings should not be brought to school.
- Excessively noisy or dangerous toys should not be brought to school.

We cannot be responsible for personal items or toys that are brought to the Center and are lost or damaged.

Your child should have at least one full set of extra clothes, including underwear and socks, in his or her cubby at all times. Please check the cubby frequently to ensure that the extra clothes are appropriate for the weather. All personal items and clothing should be labeled with your child's name.

Children not yet on table food are required to have a 24-hour supply of formula in the cubby in case of regional emergency.

Birthday Celebrations

Bright Start hosts a monthly birthday celebration for all of the children in care. We provide cupcakes and celebrate those children who have a birthday during that month. We are happy to accommodate parents who wish to send a special activity to the Center to celebrate their child's birthday. Please coordinate with your child's teacher in advance. As we try to limit the amount of sweet treats that children are provided during the course of the month, we do not allow parents to bring food in for this day.

For home parties, birthday party invitations may be distributed in the Center only if every child in the class receives an invitation.

Withdrawal Procedures

Parents must give a minimum of 30 days' notice in writing to the Director or owner when withdrawing from the program. Tuition will be charged during these thirty days, even if your child does not attend.

In the event Bright Start needs to pursue collection of tuition, the family will be responsible for all court costs.

Dismissal Policies

Rarely, we may find it necessary to dismiss a child or family from the program. We will take every possible step to avoid such a situation, but in some cases, for the health and safety of the children and the staff, we are left with no other choice. Possible causes for dismissal include, but are not limited to the following:

- Unable to separate from the primary caregiver;
- Hostile attitude or mistreatment of other children;
- Disruptive behavior in the classroom that interferes with the normal functioning in the classroom for all the students. This includes but is not limited to biting (and attempted biting) behaviors that involve the safety of other children and/or staff;
- Consistent failure to pay tuition in a timely manner;
- Failure of parents to consistently follow Bright Start's guidelines as outlined in the Parent Handbook;
- Disruptiveness to the Bright Start program by a parent(s);
- Breach of confidentiality by a parent(s);
- Consistent late pick-ups of child/children from Bright Start; and
- Inability for Bright Start to communicate with parents on a timely basis because they are not signed up or are not reading important emails, texts, etc.

Should a problem arise, we will notify you immediately and advise you of the steps that we are taking to resolve the problem. We will work with you to help you and your child and will do whatever we can to facilitate a resolution. After a reasonable period of time, if the Center concludes that continued attendance is not in the best interest of the child or other children in the program, the Director will require that the child or family be dismissed. All dismissal decisions are made at the sole discretion of the Owner.

Bright Start will make every effort to give at least two weeks' notice prior to dismissing a child or family from the program, but in some situations, at Bright Start's sole discretion, immediate termination of services may be necessary. An example of such a situation includes, but is not limited to, hostile or aggressive behavior by a parent(s).

Conflict Resolution Procedures

Bright Start values your feedback regarding all aspects of our services including the manner in which policies and procedures are implemented and overall staff performance. Occasionally, despite our best efforts, situations occur which may give you cause for concern. We encourage you to share your questions or concerns with us so that we can work together to come to a resolution as we work to provide the best possible learning environment for your child.

Should a situation occur which gives you cause for concern, please first address it with your child's teacher. If your concern involves the teacher and you are not comfortable addressing it directly with him or her, please contact the Director immediately.

The Director is required to address your concerns within 48 hours of your notification. If you feel that your concerns have not been adequately addressed, please contact the Owner for further assistance. It is our goal to ensure that we work together to resolve issues, so your child can learn in the best environment possible.

Under no circumstances is it acceptable for one parent to approach another parent regarding their child's behavior. Any concern regarding a classmate's behavior should be shared with the Center Director. It is the Center Director's

responsibility to ensure the safety of all children enrolled and to ensure that established policies and procedures are being followed.

Smoking and Prohibited Substances

Smoking or the use of any tobacco or illegal substances is prohibited in the building and the areas immediately around all entrances. This policy is established to provide a safe and smoke-free environment for the employees, children, and visitors.

Babysitting by Staff

Bright Start teachers frequently babysit enrolled children in their off hours. While Bright Start is aware that this is happening, we do not take a position on whether this is advisable or not. Bright Start does not participate in any such arrangements and is not responsible for anything that may or may not occur during these private arrangements. Any such arrangement is made by the teacher as a private citizen and not as an employee of Bright Start. Accordingly, Bright Start assumes no responsibility for our employees away from the school outside of their working hours and will not be liable for their acts or omissions when not on our property. Bright Start will not provide lists of teachers or phone numbers to facilitate babysitting as these are strictly private contracts between the parents and the babysitter. Please be mindful that teachers continue to be bound by Bright Start's confidentiality requirements during their off hours.

If you enter into an independent child care arrangement with a Bright Start employee during your child's enrollment period at Bright Start or within 6 months thereafter, and this arrangement results in our employee leaving our company, you will be billed a \$2,500 procurement fee (finder's fee).

Safety

Keyless Entry

Each of our buildings is equipped with a keyless entry system. As a part of the enrollment process, you will be given a four-digit security code. Please do not share this code with anyone, including family members or friends that may need to pick up your child from time to time. These people can be admitted to the Center by the staff.

Items Not Allowed

We do not allow toy weapons, chewing gum, or any foods containing peanut products in our Center. Weapons are not allowed for philosophical and safety reasons. Gum is not allowed because the Heimlich maneuver cannot dislodge it if a child chokes on it. Peanut products are not allowed because of the potential risk to children with severe allergies. If a child brings any of the above, teachers must take the items from the child and return them to parents at pick up. In addition, firearms are prohibited in or near the Bright Start buildings regardless of any license or permit authorizing an individual to carry firearms. This policy is because of our commitment to maintain a safe and secure environment.

Arrival/Departure

If you are driving to the Center, please let your child in and out of the car on the curbside of the street. You must walk your child to his or her classroom. Parents or legal guardians are required to check their child in and out daily using Brightwheel, either on the parent or guardian's cell phone or on the classroom tablet. Classroom staff will engage in a

Name/Face Recognition Ratio form that accounts for every child recognized by face and name throughout the day. This is imperative that parents do their part, as we must have an accurate count at all times of which children are present in the classroom. In the event of an emergency, we rely on these counts to ensure the evacuation and safety of the children under our care.

We request that all children ages two and older be dropped off no later than 9:30 a.m. since the most important teaching is done during circle time and it can be difficult for a child to join the class in the middle of an activity.

Once a parent, guardian, or authorized pick up person enters the child's classroom for pick up, he or she assumes full responsibility for the child. At this point, the child will no longer be considered in care at the Center. Children are to remain with their parents or guardians until they are safely escorted from the Center.

Prior written authorization is required before we will allow anyone other than the parent or guardian to pick up a child (an email is sufficient). Before releasing your child, we will check the person's identification against the written authorization. The teacher will check the child out if the authorized person does not have his or her own Brightwheel account.

A court order must be part of the child's file if either parent is prohibited from picking up a child. We will abide by all legally served court orders, and we will inform the parent or guardian who enrolled the child of all court orders served to us.

Classroom Welfare

Bright Start teachers recognize that all children develop social skills and adjust to the school environment at an individual rate. If a child has difficulty assimilating into the group setting, then his or her teacher and the Director will work with the child and family to try to solve any problem that arises. Our goal is to serve each child's needs in our setting, with reasonable accommodation.

However, Bright Start reserves the right to require a more appropriate placement for a child if deemed necessary by the Director and the teachers, as outlined in the dismissal policy. Any child, who, after attempts have been made to meet the individual needs, demonstrates an inability to benefit from the type of care offered at Bright Start or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be dismissed. We take this position in the best interest of all children in the program.

Emergency Procedures/Communication

In coordination with local emergency personnel, we have developed an emergency evacuation and shelter in place plan designed to meet the needs of our location. The plan is available in the office for parents to review. For obvious reasons, we will not provide copies of the Emergency plan. Evacuation and shelter in place procedures are posted in every classroom and in the office.

The Director or Back-Up Director maintains an emergency binder, which includes emergency contact information for all children enrolled. Each classroom maintains an accurate daily attendance record on Brightwheel, which includes the time of arrival and departure for each child, which shall be used, for each child present, to contact custodial parents or legal guardians in case of emergency. To confirm the accuracy of the records in Brightwheel, teachers will also rely on the Name/Face recognition ration form reporting each child in the classroom (either In or Out). In the event of an emergency, all measures will be taken to communicate with parents in a timely manner. As early as possible in an emergency situation, a mass email will be sent out and a mass text will be sent through Brightwheel. If further communication is needed, once the children's safety is secured, teachers and management staff will begin calling parents and legal guardians, and if they cannot be reached, emergency contacts.

In the unlikely event of an emergency that requires extended absence from the school, all children will be evacuated to an emergency shelter where they will await your arrival. Should such an emergency occur, we will make every effort to contact you immediately and a notice will be posted at the Center with information about the shelter.

We routinely carry out emergency evacuation and shelter in place drills. Reports of these drills will be kept on file in the office and may be inspected by you at any time.

Accidents

If your child is injured while attending Bright Start, first aid will be administered and, in the case of a minor injury, you will be notified by Brightwheel. The office maintains physical records of the date, time, type, and circumstance of the injury, the staff present when the injury occurred, the type of first aid administered, and any future actions that we will take to prevent future occurrences. If treatment by a doctor or hospital is required, we will make every effort to contact you prior to seeking treatment. If we cannot reach you immediately, we will attempt to call the emergency contacts provided by you. If we are unable to reach any of these contacts, we will ensure that your child receives appropriate treatment and will continue to try to contact you. In an emergency situation, we will call 911 first and then make every effort to reach the parents or emergency contacts as outlined above.

Moving Between Buildings

Bright Start Learning Center and the three Preschool buildings are licensed as separate facilities by the Virginia Department of Social Services. Although owned and operated by one entity, this means that children cannot move freely between these buildings without express written permission of the parents. Parents are required to sign a permission slip acknowledging and agreeing that their child(ren) may be moved from one facility to another in the following situations:

- **In the event of an emergency at one facility, such as a disruption of utilities or HVAC systems, children may be moved to another of Bright Start's facilities. In such an event, an email or Brightwheel message will be sent to all parents/guardians of children affected by the move;**
- To attend classes or other enrichment or special activities being held in a building that is different from your child's regular building;
- To visit the office in the main building or in the Admin building;
- While transitioning from one classroom to another prior to being enrolled in the older classroom;
- To visit siblings; and
- In other situations, not specifically identified above. In such a case, an email will be sent to all parents/guardians of children affected by the move, indicating the reason for the move and the anticipated timeline.

Health

Bright Start is committed to maintaining a healthy environment for all of the children, and this requires that we continually assess the health of the children in our care. While we are not medical or behavioral professionals, we routinely consult with a trained practitioner when questions or concerns arise. In addition, Bright Start refers parents to trained professionals for age appropriate health related screenings relating to a child's vision, speech/language, hearing, and developmental milestones (including sensory, cognitive, gross motor, fine motor, and socio-emotional needs).

The Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia provides early intervention supports and services to infants and toddlers from birth through age two who are not developing as expected or who have a medical condition that can delay normal

development. Early intervention supports and services focus on increasing the child's participation in family and community activities that are important to the family. In addition, supports and services focus on helping parents and other caregivers know how to find ways to help the child learn during everyday activities. These supports and services are available for all eligible children and their families regardless of the family's ability to pay. A link to the local Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia (infantva.org) is provided on our family education page of our website.

Bright Start refers parents of children ages 2 to 5 years of age to Child Find, which is a resource available to parents in the City of Alexandria and Fairfax County for behavioral, physical, and/or mental challenges. The Child Find team provides free screenings and/or evaluations for children ages 2 to 5 years of age suspected of having a developmental delay or disability. Child Find brochures are available on Bright Start's website in several languages.

Child health services are the responsibility of the parents/guardians, however, we will assist by providing names of local health facilities and pediatricians. We recommend that children receive annual vision and hearing screenings by their pediatrician.

Please review Bright Start's COVID-19 Pandemic Policies and Procedures, which are applicable during the State of Emergency. This document can be found on our website and will be updated as needed.

Medical Requirements

All children attending Bright Start are required to have a physical examination and current immunizations, as required by the State Board of Health, prior to enrollment. Updated information on additional immunizations must be provided once every six months for children under the age of two years as required by our licensing regulations. We request that parents provide a copy of immunizations as they are administered, rather than waiting for the 6-month period. If updated immunizations are not received in a timely manner, your child will need to be excluded from school until the forms are submitted. All immunizations must be dated, signed or stamped by the pediatrician's office.

Any special medical requirements for a child must be documented before enrollment or immediately following the identification of such a need. Parents and the Director must ensure that staff are adequately trained to provide such care before the child may be present for care at Bright Start. While we do our best to accommodate any special needs, there are some situations for which we are not equipped. If we are unable to accommodate a continued enrollment or if either the Director or the Parents believe it is in the best interest of the child to leave Bright Start, the 30-day notice requirement for withdrawal will be waived. As each situation is unique, we welcome an open dialogue with the Director and the child's teachers.

Medication

Prescription & Over-the-Counter Medications

When administering medication, our primary concern is the health and safety of the child. Only staff who have been properly trained will administer prescription and over the counter (age appropriate) medications and only with written consent by the parent or legal guardian.

We will only administer non-prescription medication consistent with the manufacturer's instructions for age, duration, and dosage. Please note that some over the counter medications are labeled for infants or children, but the dosage chart may specify that the medication cannot be used for children under a certain age or may only be used under the direction of a physician. Bright Start will follow these instructions by the manufacturer and will not accept any over the counter medication that is not consistent with the particular child's age or weight.

All medications must be in the original container with the prescription and/or direction label attached. We will not administer expired medication.

We will provide written medication consent forms for your signature. On these forms, you will need to identify the name of the medication, the name of the health care provider who wrote the prescription, the dose and time(s) to be administered, the duration of the authorization for the medication (not to exceed 10 school days), and any special directions. These forms must be completed each time your child requires medication. Long-term prescription drug use will be allowed with written authorization from you and your child's physician.

We will keep a record of medication given to your child at the Center, which you may review at any time. These records shall include the following information: the name of the child to whom medication was administered; amount and type of medication administered to the child; the day and time the medication was administered to the child; the staff member administering the medication; any adverse reactions; and any medication error. You will be informed immediately of any adverse reactions to medication administered or any medication error.

Once consent has been secured on the appropriate form, unexpired medication will be labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage amount, and the time or times to be given. All medication will be maintained in a locked cabinet away from the reach of children. To prevent use of outdated medication, you will be notified in writing when the authorization for medication has expired. The expired or outdated medication will be maintained within a locked cabinet, away from unexpired medication, for 14 calendar days. Within that time, you must either renew the authorization for medication or pick up the medication, or the medication will be discarded.

Sunscreen

For all children in the Turtles class and older, parents are required to apply sunscreen prior to drop off. If a parent forgets, he or she may apply sunscreen at the center before leaving the child. Teachers will be required to reapply sunscreen after naptime in accordance with the procedures below.

Teachers will always apply sunscreen to children in the Teddy Bears class and Bees class prior to outside time in accordance with the procedures below.

With your written consent, children 6 months and older may have sunscreen applied to exposed skin, except eyelids, 30 minutes before exposure to the sun and every 2 hours while in the sun. Sunscreen preparations shall be applied according to the instructions provided by the manufacturer.

Bright Start provides sunscreen for all of the children, but parents have the option of using their own sunscreen instead. Sunscreen brought to the Center by the parents shall be in the original container, hypo-allergenic, have a minimum of SPF-15 and labeled with the child's name.

Diaper Cream

Diaper cream will be applied as directed by parents with a signed permission form. Diaper cream shall be maintained in the original container and labeled for the individual child and used only on that child. A record shall be maintained that includes the child's name, the date and frequency of use, and any adverse reactions. You will be notified immediately of any adverse reactions.

Prescription diaper cream must be administered in the same manner as other medications. A medicine authorization form, which is different from the standard diaper cream permission form, will need to be filled out and all procedures described above regarding prescription medications must be followed.

Illness

If your child arrives at Bright Start with any of the following symptoms, he or she shall not be allowed to attend for that day:

- Temperature over 100°F;
- Recurrent vomiting or diarrhea; or
- any symptoms that indicate signs of a possible infectious disease, as set forth in the Virginia Department of Health's current communicable disease chart, which can be found on the Virginia Department of Health's website.

If your child comes down with a fever of 100° or higher, you will be required to pick him or her up. He or she shall remain in the designated quiet area until leaving the Center.

If your child vomits or has diarrhea while at school, you will be notified and given the details about any accompanying symptoms. Your child must be picked up as soon as possible if he or she vomits or has diarrhea three (3) times during the day. He or she shall remain in the designated quiet area until leaving the Center.

If your child is sent home with a fever or recurrent vomiting or diarrhea, he or she must be fever free and/or symptom free without the use of any medication for at least 24 hours before returning to the Center. We reserve the right to request a physician's note when there is any doubt about contagious symptoms being transmittable to others.

If your child develops symptoms of a communicable disease during the course of the day while attending Bright Start, he or she shall be taken to the office and encouraged to rest on a cot. You or another person that you have authorized shall be notified immediately and arrangements shall be made for your child to leave the Center as soon as possible. He or she shall remain in the designated quiet area until leaving the Center.

If your child becomes ill as described above, all efforts must be made to pick him or her up as quickly as possible, but not later than one hour after being notified. If you are asked to pick your child up because of illness and you do not do so within one hour or if you cannot be reached to pick up your child, we will call the child's emergency contacts.

Virginia law requires that parents be notified if their child is exposed to a communicable disease. Whenever we are aware of any such possible exposure, we will post notices in the Center. If anyone in your home has a reportable communicable disease, if your child is exposed to a communicable disease, or he or she is infected with a communicable disease, please let us know as soon as possible, so we can advise families of other children that may have been in contact with your child. *Please note that exclusion from school for exposure to a communicable disease shall be determined on a case-by-case basis. Dismissal from our facility is also outlined on page 20 under Medical Requirements.*

Biting

Biting, unfortunately, is common with young children. Because they do not have adequate verbal skills to express themselves, children sometimes turn to biting when they are frustrated. Sometimes, a child will bite just to get a response from another child or a staff member. It is important to teach young children that biting, like other forms of aggressive behavior, is not acceptable. Attention will first be given to the child who has been bitten to make clear that biting is not a good way to get attention. The biter will be redirected and will be told firmly and matter-of-factly, "No biting", "We don't bite," or "Teeth are not for biting; teeth are for chewing food."

The teacher will comfort the child who was bitten, wash the area with soap and water, and apply a bandage if necessary. If your child is bitten, you will be notified in writing, as will the parents of the child who has bitten.

Teachers will keep a close eye on a child who has a tendency to bite to try to avoid any biting episodes. Most children stop biting after a short period of time as long as they are given positive redirection and repeatedly told that biting is not acceptable. It is important that parents send the same messages to the child at home and when dropping the child off at the Center.

Please remember that it can be a stressful time for parents when their child is the one biting as well as when their child is being bitten. We all must work together to try to curb biting. In some cases, biting behaviors continue despite the best efforts of the teachers and the parents. When a child has started biting, we will exhaust all developmentally appropriate strategies to curb the behavior. If, despite these strategies, the child continues to bite and he or she either bites or attempts to bite more than 5 times in a two week period, the child will need to be withdrawn from the program. In these situations, it can be beneficial for the child to be in a smaller group setting, such as in a home day care, or with a nanny until he or she has progressed beyond the biting stage. If the family would like to return after the biting behavior has stopped, we will welcome the child back, and the family will be given priority for an open space.

Diapering and Potty Training

Disposable diapers are required to be used unless your child's skin reacts adversely to disposable diapers, as determined by your child's physician. All children must be in a clean diaper when they are dropped off in the morning. Please check your child before you depart. Should a diaper change be necessary, please do so before you leave the Center.

Potty training generally is age appropriate after the child is at least two years old. For this reason, we do not begin the potty training process until your child is in the Tigers or Bugs classroom. If your child is over the age of two and you are in the process of potty training your child, we want to support you by continuing the potty training at the Center. We cannot potty train children without parental assistance. During this time, we ask you to provide an adequate supply of underwear and a couple of changes of clothing every day. Pull ups or diapers must be used until the child is able to remain dry for an entire

weekend at home. For sanitary purposes, the Center cannot allow children to go “commando”/without diapers, pull ups or underwear during the process of potty training.

Reason this policy is important: Learning to use the toilet is a big event in a young child’s life. Because toilet training is a complex process, there are many issues caregivers and families must consider before and during the process of toilet training for it to be a successful experience for everyone.

A child that is ready for potty training, exhibits many of the following signs:

- Follows simple directions;
- Remains dry for at least 2 hours at a time during the day;
- Dry after nap time;
- Regular and predictable bowel movements. (some may have bowel movements every day and some may have to go 2-3 times a day);
- Walks to and from the bathroom, pulls down own pants and pulls them up again;
- Seems uncomfortable with soiled or wet diapers;
- Seems interested in the toilet; and
- Has asked to wear grown-up underwear.

If your child has most of these skills, then he or she is probably ready to start toilet training. If they do not have most of these skills or have a negative reaction to toilet training, wait a few weeks or months until most of the skills are met. Starting too soon can actually delay the process and cause tears and frustration. Toilet training is much easier when the child is ready.

The Center uses children sized potty chairs for potty training. Staff will wear disposable gloves while changing each child. The toileting area will be cleaned and disinfected after toileting is completed or prior to completion if an accident occurs. Wet or soiled clothes will be bagged and sent home. Parents are required to supply a change of clothing for their child. In the event a child uses their change of clothing, the parents are expected to restock the child’s clothing.

Napping – Toddlers and Preschoolers

All children who spend a full day at Bright Start are required to rest in the afternoon. Soft music is played during naptime to help the children to relax. Every child must lie down for at least 30 minutes. Children must lie quietly and need to keep their arms and legs down, preferably on their cot. They do not have to lie perfectly still. Teachers will assist those who are having difficulty relaxing by patting or rubbing their backs. Should your child not nap any longer, quiet books and activities will be provided for them after 30 minutes of rest.

Napping – Infants’ Safe Sleep Practice

Infants follow individual schedules for napping. They will be placed on their backs in a crib to sleep unless a physician’s written statement authorizing another sleep position for that infant is provided. The written statement must include how the infant shall be placed to sleep and a time frame that the instructions are to be followed. We do not allow any objects to be placed in or on the crib with the infant. Only sleepers, sleep sacks and wearable blankets that will not slip up around the infant’s face may be worn for the comfort of the sleeping infant.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions, as defined by the Center for Disease Control, are a set of standards designed to prevent transmission of bloodborne pathogens when providing first aid or health care. Universal precaution training is provided to all staff every year. Bright Start practices universal precautions as a matter of routine; always gloving before touching blood, body fluids, body substances, urine, feces, vomit, soiled linen, or soiled clothing. Face shields are used when mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is required. Disposable vinyl gloves are provided in each classroom, diaper changing areas, classroom first aid supplies, and in the classroom backpacks for outdoors. Gloves are discarded after one use and hands are washed each time gloves are discarded. All surfaces or objects involved with a blood or body fluid exposure are immediately washed and disinfected with disinfecting solution. If the child's clothing or bedding is involved, those items are separately bagged, tied, and sent home. Waste, including but not limited to, diapers, discarded gloves, first aid dressings, and blood-soaked band aids are bagged in plastic, tied, and disposed of in a covered trash container that is inaccessible to children.

Child and Staff Hand Washing

Staff and children wash their hands at the following times and whenever hands are soiled or contaminated with body fluids: before and after food preparation, handling, or serving; after toileting or changing diapers or pull ups; after assisting a child with toilet use or toileting accidents; after removing disposable gloves; after coming into contact with blood; before any food service activity, including table setting; before and after eating meals or snacks; after blowing or wiping noses; upon arrival into the classroom; upon re-entering classroom from outdoor play; before and after delivering first aid; and after assisting children with hand washing. Steps followed for hand washing are: Turn on warm water, and moisten hands; apply liquid soap to hands; rub hands vigorously together until a soapy lather occurs, and continue for 20 seconds; rub areas between fingers, around nail beds, under jewelry, and back of hands; rinse hands under warm running water, until they are free of soap and dirt; leave water running while drying hands; dry hands with disposable paper towels; turn faucet taps off with paper towel to avoid recontamination; and dispose of paper towel in lined trash container.

Health Education

Early childhood years are an ideal time for teaching children about health and for establishing positive health beliefs and behaviors in the areas of physical, mental, developmental, dental, and nutritional health education. Bright Start teachers make a conscious effort to educate children regularly on healthy habits through role modeling, discussion, audiovisual aids, reading materials, and games. Parents in the medical and dental fields are also encouraged to participate.

Every year for dental health and poison control months, Bright Start focuses its attention on these areas. For dental health month, a local dentist is invited to visit the preschool classrooms to discuss proper oral hygiene and provides free toothbrushes and stickers to the children..

Sanitation And Hygiene

Bright Start uses a bleach solution to clean, disinfect, and sanitize. Each classroom has its own labeled spray bottle for sanitizing surfaces, furniture, and other equipment used by children. The spray bottle is always inaccessible to children. Any items mouthed or soiled in the classroom are put aside and sanitized before being placed out for use. Furniture is cleaned immediately if soiled. Surfaces used for eating are disinfected before and after use. This includes the sanitation of the kitchen area before and after food preparation and serving. Lidded trash cans are provided in all classrooms as well as common areas. Lidded foot pedal receptacles are located in diapering classrooms.

For sanitation and health purposes, each child is required to have their own sleeping blanket or nap mat. For parent convenience, nap mats can be purchased through the Center. These mats must be taken home every Friday for laundering.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

We are required by law to report any suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect. In some cases, we are directed not to notify the parents of such a report. Reports can be made to the Alexandria Department of Child Protective Services anonymously by calling 703-746-5800 or the State Hotline at 800-552-7096. If a child is in immediate danger, teachers are directed to call 911 for assistance. Please understand that we are legally obligated to comply with these requirements. First and foremost, we will always do what is in the best interest of your child.

Food Policies

Infant Feeding

We will feed your child on demand or according to the instructions that you provide each day. Please inform the office of the brand of formula that your child uses so that it may be documented in his or her file. Likewise, please advise if there has been a change to the brand of formula that you are using.

Please bring a full day's supply of prepared bottles for your child each day. When your child is ready to begin eating baby cereal, you may bring in a weekly supply of dry cereal. Jarred foods should be supplied on a daily basis. All bottles, jars, cereal, etc. should be labeled with your child's name and the date.

We will return all bottles and jarred food that your child has not consumed in a given day. We will not feed a child from an opened jar unless that jar was opened at the Center on the same day.

When your child moves into the upper area of the Teddy Bears classroom (typically when he or she is a good crawler), we will begin to introduce more of a structured feeding schedule. This will allow your child to make an easier transition to the Bees Classroom when it is time to do so. If your child is ready for table food, he or she may eat items from the school menu. The Lead Teachers will discuss this with you when she believes that your child may be ready, but you are welcome to raise it as well. We ask that your child be introduced to a food at home before he or she has it at school, so that any potential allergies can be noted by you.

Meals and Snacks

Bright Start serves breakfast until 9:00 am, lunch around 12:00 pm, and an afternoon snack around 3:00 pm each day. Children that are at the Center after 5:30 will be offered a light snack to hold them over until they are picked up. The meal and snack times are scheduled so that there is a period of at least 1 ½ hours but no more than three hours between each meal or snack, with the exception of afternoon snack, which will be served within 30 minutes of children waking from their nap, and no later than 3:30. Parents may provide a healthy alternative snack to replace any of Bright Start's snacks that are on the menu for the day. Please do not send your child with chips, cookies, candy or other sweets for his or her snack.

- If you would like for your child to eat lunch at the Center, then your child must be at school or have called us to let us know that he/she will be coming at school for lunch before 11:00 am
- We are not able to serve meals or snacks outside of our scheduled snack times. If your child misses the Center's feeding times, please make sure he or she is fed prior to drop off or if you would like, you are more than welcome to sit with your child while he or she eats food brought from home.

Monthly menus are available on our website and are posted in each classroom. All meals are catered and are served from our kitchens in each building. We do not cook or heat any meals for the children. All staff members preparing and serving food are required for sanitary precaution to wear disposable gloves. Parents will have the option of selecting vegetarian meals if they choose, but such decisions must be made for an entire month and at least 1 weeks' notice must be provided. If

you do not want your child to eat a particular meal on any given day, you may bring food from home for your child on that day. Food must be capable of being served directly from the container from which it is brought. Due to the risk of possible burns, we will not heat any food brought from home in the microwave for children.

Children under 4 years of age will not be given foods that are choking hazards (round, hard, small, thick and sticky, smooth, or slippery). Examples of these foods are hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), raw carrot rounds, whole grapes, hard candy, seeds, raw peas, hard pretzels, peanuts, marshmallows, and chunks of meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Please do not send your child to the Center with any of these foods.

Water Bottles and Sippy Cups

Each child that can drink from a cup must bring a reusable sippy cup or water bottle (as applicable) daily for his or her use. The cup or bottle must be labeled with your child's name and the date every day.

Food From Home Policy

To protect all of the children at the Center, we do not allow homemade food to be served to children other than your own. In addition, all food brought to the center must comply with our food allergy policy, even if it will only be eaten by your own child. In accordance with our policy, food must be labeled "school-safe" or it must be on our approved list of snacks and treats. Specifically,

- Food labels that say "**May contain peanuts or tree nuts**" are **NOT OK**.
- Food labels that say "**Made on equipment that also processes peanuts or tree nuts**" are **NOT OK**.
- Food labels that say "**Made in a facility that also processes peanuts or tree nuts**" are **NOT OK**.

Our safe snack list is available on our website. Please print it and have it as a ready resource. If you are sending food in of any kind, you **MUST** give it to the lead teacher and she will check it. **DO NOT** put food in your child's cubby or leave in his or her backpack. **DO NOT** allow your child to come into school with partially-eaten food in his or her hand. All food from home must be labeled with your child's name and the date.

Also, it is very important that your child wash his or her hands immediately upon arrival. Not only is this a good step to help prevent the spread of germs, it helps to minimize the risk of cross-contamination if your child has been in contact with foods that may be allergens for other children.

Food Allergies

Please let us know if your child has any food allergies, so we can work with you to develop a plan to avoid those foods. We will also need to develop a treatment plan that you have coordinated with your doctor should your child have an adverse reaction while at the Center. If your child requires an EPI-Pen or other medication for his or her allergies, we must have these on site at all times. Please see the medication policy above.

Parents of children with allergies must print the menu off from our website for each month (at least one week in advance) and highlight any foods that you do not want your child to have. At the top of the menu, please write your child's name and "**Do not serve the highlighted foods.**" The menus must be given to the office and the office staff will then coordinate with the classrooms directly. Parents must provide a substitute meal for any days that your child will not be eating the school food. Meals must be ready to serve; we cannot heat the children's food in the microwave.

We understand and appreciate that it is our responsibility to ensure that all persons caring for your child are aware of his or her allergies. We post a list of classroom food allergies for teachers in each classroom. Your written permission is required. If you wish for your child's allergy to not be posted, please let the Director know. We would be happy to discuss any concerns that you may have in this regard.

Field Trip Policy

Well-planned field trips can greatly enhance and provide a very positive learning experience for preschoolers. Prior to a field trip parents will receive information regarding the destination and purpose of the field trip. They will also receive a permission form, which must be signed and returned in order for their child to participate. The following guidelines will apply:

- Bus transportation is secured through Williams Bus Lines or another comparable school bus company.
- Parent volunteers will be asked to accompany classes on field trips. Parents will assist teachers as chaperones, but they will not be left alone with any child or children. All chaperones will be instructed to read and follow the Chaperone guidelines disseminated at least 1 week prior to each field trip.
- Cost of the field trip (entrance fee and transportation) is NOT included in the tuition. A charge will be made for each field trip. Parents can request scholarship assistance if it is needed. Parents will be charged the same amount for the field trip as the children.
- Teachers will take a class count before leaving Bright Start Center, once boarded the bus transportation, upon deboarding and reboarding the bus to return and finally upon returning to the Center. In addition, head counts should be taken intermittently throughout the field trip experience especially if the children are placed in smaller groups.