



*Bright Beginning
Children's Learning Center*
Bright minds for bright futures™

Parent Handbook

BRIGHT BEGINNING CHILDREN'S LEARNING
CENTER

Parent Guide

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Creating meaningful child care.

We touch lives because we work with children.

Bright Beginning offers quality child care and educational enrichment programs for preschool children. We are committed to provide a positive and caring learning environment that enriches the mind and promotes personal and social growth.

Bright Beginnings meets the needs of families by providing meaningful all day enrichment programs. We offer a safe and secure setting that embodies a home away from home. Our certified and licensed staff works in teams on which emphasis is placed on every possible learning opportunity to meet the individual needs of our students.

The purpose of this guide is to provide information and ideas for parents to promote understanding of our program and foster a spirit of cooperation between parents and our staff. We feel that open communication is the key to developing a positive relationship. Our primary goal is to provide a safe, healthy, well-supervised, home-like environment for all children. Children will engage in activities that will benefit them emotionally, physically, socially and educationally.

We thoughtfully design and implement weekly lesson plans. Classrooms are arranged to influence what and how children learn and we offer a challenging instructional environment that will lead to higher expectations for the success of each child.

Our learning center allows for exploration in art, dramatic play, science, problem solving, language and literacy, plus outdoor play and snack time. We also provide valuable information on your child's progress through regular parent-teacher communication. We encourage parent conferences, and we have created an effective Developmental Growth Checklist to track each child's individual progress.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Bright Beginning Children's Learning Center is an equal opportunity provider. Applications for enrollment are considered without regards; to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, or any other basis prohibited by law. Lesson plans include and reflect children's interests and skills. We address the developmental needs of every child and through ongoing assessments, observations and information gained from support staff, including information from IFSP/IEP, as well as parents/families. The center only accepts well children. We request full cooperation of parents in order to protect the health and welfare of all our children and staff.

Mutual Respect Policy

Bright Beginning will do all we can to ensure the environment is one in which staff and children are made to feel safe and respected. Any child, staff, or parent who continuously shows a lack of respect for others through their words or actions, may be asked to leave the program. We ask parents to work with us in ensuring that each child understands the importance of mutual respect and that this policy is there for their benefit as well as others. You may request a copy of the Mutual Respect Policy at any time from the Director.

Basic Guidelines

(Note: these guidelines are not all inclusive but do represent some common concerns generally overlooked)

For the safety of all, when dropping off your child please park your car in a parking space, TURN OFF ENGINE and escort your child into the Center.

Lesson programs start promptly at 9:00 am. Please call if your child will be late or absent.

All children's personal items must fit within the Bright Beginning issued tote bag, including pillow and plush toys.

Vacation day forms must be turned in at least two week in advance to receive credit.

Tuition payment is due on the 1st of each month, paid in full. Payment must be placed in the drop box or mailed. If your child has been ill, they must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to the Center.

Dress your child appropriately for both indoor and outdoor activities, and please provide a spare change of clothes.

Children/parents should not remove any toys, books or equipment from the Center without prior authorization.

Communication

Communicating with Bright Beginning families is a critical component of this early learning program. Communication will occur in a number of ways; through notes home, newsletters, Facebook, emails, conferences, etc. Parents can help by checking their child's cubby after school each day. By taking time to talk about completed work and reviewing any notes or paper work sent home, parents can support their child's learning. If parents have questions or concerns about their child, they are encouraged to contact their child's classroom teacher.

Drop off and Pick Up

You are required to park your car in a parking space and escort your child into the Center. Please hold your child's hand from the car to the entrance. Sometimes our parking area is extremely busy. DO NOT leave your car running; it presents a safety hazard.

Sign In and Out Procedure

Parents are REQUIRED to bring your child into the Center and sign in/out on the daily list. The sign in/out sheet is located at front entry desk. It is imperative that all children are signed in and out. It is REQUIRED for the safety of the children that you sign your child out BEFORE taking your child out of class or off the playground, failure to do so may cause alarm and confusion. Access to the Center is only permitted through the front entry only.

We will only release children to their parents and those that are listed on the emergency form. Please remember to keep this list up to date. If you call in with a different person to pick up your child, please make sure they have proper identification so we can verify their identity. Staff members **WILL** check identification of any person not known to them.

If classes have already begun please escort your child to their classroom and make sure the staff knows they are there.

Illness Policy

If your child is ill, please **DO NOT** bring them to the Center. Should your child become ill while at the Center, you will be called and asked to make arrangements for the child to be picked up as soon as possible. Your child should be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to the Center. If your child is absent from the Center for more than 3 days, we must have a written notice from a physician saying that the child may return to a regular schedule.

Prevention of Communicable Diseases

It is very important that we attempt to control the spread of communicable disease. We would appreciate your consideration in following these guidelines:

1. Child should be fever free for 24 hours without the influence of fever reducing medication.
2. Child should be free of continuous coughing.
3. Child should remain at home for 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea.

4. Child should remain at home for 24 hours after taking the first dose of an antibiotic for an infection.

GUIDELINES

Contagious disease

Fever of over 100 degrees Fahrenheit

Vomiting and or diarrhea

Accident requiring medical attention

Unidentified skin rashes

Head lice

If a child has been exposed to a communicable disease at Bright Beginning, parents, guardian or co-parents of enrolled and incoming children will be notified.

Immediate first aid will be provided for a child who sustains a minor injury (scratch, scrape, insect bite, etc.). In addition, the child's parent, guardian or co-parent will be notified. In case of illness, head injury, or a more serious accident, parents, guardians or co-parent will be called. In serious cases, 911 will be called and the child will be taken to the hospital by an emergency vehicle for treatment. The parents, guardians or co-parents will be called immediately.

Medication

Child Care Licensing prohibits Bright Beginning from administering prescriptions or over the counter medicine without written permission from the parent or physician. Over the counter medication may only be administered ONCE without a physician's signature. Please make sure that the staff is aware that medicine needs to be administered and that the medicine form is filled out and signed.

Absences

If your child will not be attending Bright Beginning because of appointments, vacation or other absences, please notify the Director in advance.

Accidents

Our primary concern is the safety and welfare of your child. Children will always be supervised and every precaution will be taken to prevent accidents. In the case of an accident, an Accident Report will be placed in your child's cubby. This form needs to be read, signed and returned.

Child Disciplinary Policy

Children are entitled to a pleasant and harmonious environment here at Bright Beginning. Our philosophy of discipline is based on respect for the child's self esteem, setting reasonable limits and consequences, and encouraging increased self-discipline. Only constructive methods of discipline shall be used to promote appropriate behavior. We appreciate parental support when you are informed of a disciplinary situation. The staff shall work with any child and cooperate with parents or guardians to resolve any problems that may arise.

If any child's behavior is consistently disruptive, the child is physically or emotionally harms others, or otherwise conflicts with the program rules and guidelines, a conference with the parents or guardians will be scheduled. In the event that the problem persists, after all reasonable attempts have been made; the child may be suspended or dismissed from the program. Suspension or dismissal from the program is the decision of the Management and Director only.

Disciplinary Strategy

Develop a positive approach to discipline:

1. Discipline is teaching and guiding, not punishment.
2. We respect children as individuals, and their feelings.
3. We encourage reinforcement of positive behavior.
4. Our goal is the development of each child's internal controls, leading to socially acceptable behavior.

Strategies for children who misbehave:

1. Redirect children by offering alternatives.
2. Staff will lead by example, using polite language.
3. We allow children to express their feelings and ideas.
4. We set clear limits by establishing rules and being consistent.
5. We communicate with children in terms the child will understand.

"Time Out" or "Safe Spot"

1. It will not be the only strategy used.
2. When used, it has clear age restrictions. When used with older children it will be for short periods of time (2 to 3 minutes) and it must be clear that there is an adult close by.
3. The purpose of "time out" will be explained to the child in a positive way, with the child given an opportunity to discuss what happened.

Staff may NOT:

1. Use physical punishment, or threats of such punishment.
2. Use verbal abuse or demean children.
3. Use food as a reward or punishment.
4. Isolate children out of sight or hearing of the staff.

Basic Rules

(Note: these rules are not all inclusive, but most all expectations for appropriate behaviors can be placed in these general categories)

Respect Others

Excessive noise, shouting, swearing, talk about inappropriate subjects, hitting, kicking, shoving, etc., are unacceptable. Any child who physically or emotionally harms others will be reported to parents/guardians. Repeated incidents may result in suspension.

Follow Directions

Children will be expected to follow building and playground rules and listen to all staff members.

Practice Safety

Children will be expected to stay with the group in designated areas. Children will be escorted by a staff member from one activity to another.

Disciplinary Action

If any rules are not followed, or if disciplinary action is necessary, these steps will be used.

1. *Verbal warning and discussion or reminder of expected behavior. This may include redirection to another activity chosen by the staff or the child. The child may be asked to go to a “Safe Spot” / “Time Out”*
2. *Discuss reoccurring or serious behavior concerns with the child. A Behavior Notice or Disciplinary Notice may be required.*
3. *Contact parent, guardian or co-parent by phone for discussion of behavior. Recurring behavior problems will result in the Director requesting a conference with the parent to determine how the program can best work together with the parents to provide consistency in promoting positive behaviors.*
4. *In any situation or in the event that we cannot gain control of a child the parent will be contacted to immediately pick up the child.*

If a child leaves any designated boundaries (i.e. playground and field trip area) without permission, this may result in an automatic next day suspension or Disciplinary Notice. Bright Beginning strives for cooperation and communication between staff and parents. We will utilize strategies such as target behavior forms, monitoring of behavior, etc., to assist and work with a child exhibiting disciplinary problems.

Suspension

Immediate suspension will be necessary in the case of a child or parent becoming physically violent with another child or a staff member or for repeated incidents of a serious nature. The parents will be contacted and required to immediately pick up

the child for the day with no reimbursement of cost. Discussion with the Director will be necessary before the child can return.

Dismissal

If it is found by the staff that this Center is not the best possible environment for a particular child because of discipline problems or if his/her individual needs cannot be met to the fullest potential, a parent conference will be held. After which if it is determined the Center is not the appropriate environment for your child, the parents will be given notice of dismissal or we will suggest a more appropriate alternative for care.

Holidays

The center will be closed on the following days:

New Years Day
Memorial Day
4th of July
Labor Day
Thanksgiving and the Friday after Thanksgiving
Christmas

Also Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve will be half-day classes. The Center will close for (1) week the first week of September for in-service to prepare for the fall school year. These holidays and closings may be chance based on changing conditions. No refund, credit or any other allowance for holidays. The Center also reserves the right to modify and change these dates at the discretion of the management or the director.

Inclement Weather Closing Policy

Bright Beginning's intention to be open and provide child care service every weekday of the year, excluding holidays, but that inclement weather, natural/national disaster or major building issue may close due safety concerns. We do not expect employees or parents to jeopardize their safety. Our closing for inclement weather does not necessarily coincide with the cancellation of classes in the local schools. Please contact the school to ensure that it is open during inclement

weather/natural disaster. In the case of other area emergencies, Bright Beginning will follow the recommendations set forth by the county, state or federal government. If you have any questions, please contact the Center. Days lost due to inclement weather/natural disaster are not transferable or refundable.

Inclement Weather notices will be sent out through a texted service, REMIND and Facebook posts on the Center Facebook page. Please make sure you check these outlets.

Payment Policy

A non-refundable, non-transferable registration fee is due at the time of initial registration. Registration is valid for one program year. Parents must re-register for each program year; however, priority is given to families currently in the program. Registration times will be offered with a deadline to sign up.

Registration will be opened to the public after priority sign ups, and will be taken on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Tuition rates are based on weekly/daily enrollment, and paid monthly. Bright Beginning does not offer partial refunds for days missed. There is a no refund policy for days missed other than a one (1) week vacation credit. Vacation credits are based on your children's weekly participation in the program. It is the parent's responsibility to fill out a Vacation Form.

Tuition is paid monthly and is due in advance on the first day of each month. After the first of the month, tuition will be taken from your \$200 Security Deposit until payment is made. After tuition has exceeded the \$200 security deposit, your child will not be allowed to attend until account is current. Arrangements for Weekly/Bi-Weekly payment must be made in advance.

Payment MUST BE PAID BEFORE CARE IS PROVIDED. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Monthly tuition bills are calculated based on the number of Mondays in each month. Some billing cycles will contain 5 weeks and some will contain 4 weeks, based on the number of week in that month.

Note

Tuition payments can be made by mail:

Bright Beginning, Inc., 2136 Renard Court, Annapolis, MD
21401

Or dropped off at the Bright Beginning Children's Learning
Center during normal operating hours

Late Pick Up Fees

The program opens at 6:30 a.m. and closes at 6:30 p.m. daily. To ensure the safety of your child, Bright Beginning must enforce a strict late pick-up fee policy. The Center closes promptly at 6:30 p.m., and we must be sure every child is safely with their parents before staff can leave. Failure to pick up children by 6:30 p.m. will result in a charge of \$10 for a late pickup to up to 10 minutes late and \$1 per minute thereafter until the child is picked up. Late fees are assessed in **every** late pick up situation—no exceptions.

In the event that late pick up fees are not paid, services will be terminated. If your child is left at the Center past 6:30 p.m. on more than one occasion, the parent is issued a written and/or verbal warning. Three violations of the pickup policy may result in dismissal from the program. The Center's clock will be used for establishing the correct time.

If a child is still at the Center after 7:00 p.m., the staff will take the following steps:

1. Contact parent/guardian at phone numbers supplied.
2. Contact persons authorized on the child's registration form.
3. Late fees will be assessed.
4. At 7:30 p.m., the Police and/or the Department of Family Services may be contacted unless we have received word from an authorized pick-up person. If you find yourself caught in traffic or inclement weather, you must contact the Center immediately to communicate to them who will be picking up your child.

If a child is left past 7:30 p.m. (one hour past closing) without any contact from a parent and/or an emergency contact, the Department of Family Services and/or the Police will be contacted to pick up the child.

Delinquent Accounts

Your child's care will be terminated for no payment. Once a child has been terminated from the program due to non-payment of tuition, a letter will be sent to the parent responsible for the account and an opportunity will be given to pay the balance in full. If the balance remains unpaid, the account will then be referred to a Collection Agency.

Insufficient Funds

Insufficient funds checks must be rectified within five days of notification. Replacement funds must be in the form of cashier's check, cash, or money order. Failure to provide replacement funds within seven days will result in loss of childcare services on the eighth day. In the event that a second insufficient funds check is received, payments to Bright Beginning, Inc. will be accepted only in the form of money order until further notice from Bright Beginning, Inc. A \$35.00 service fee will be assessed in the event payment has been made with insufficient funds. In the event a parent's account becomes in arrears, the child will be dismissed from the program.

Absence and Vacation Policy

Bright Beginning allows for credit of **up to** 5 vacation days, per program year. Vacation day credits are based on your child's participation in the program. If your child attends Bright Beginning 5 days per week, a vacation credit of 5 days applies. If your child attends Bright Beginning 4 days per week, a vacation credit of 4 days applies, and so on.

To constitute a vacation day, the child must NOT be present at the Center and we must receive a minimum of 2 week prior notice to the date of nonattendance. Any days absent without 2 weeks' notice will be considered a non-refundable absence. If more than the allotted vacation days are taken during the course of a program year, then any days missed exceeding the

allotted vacation days will be considered as non-refundable absences.

Vacation day: Any days missed in which more than 2 weeks prior notice is given and not exceeding the allotted vacation days during a program year. You must turn in a Vacation Form.

Absence day: Any days missed in which less than 2 weeks prior notice is given or any days missed exceeding the allotted vacation days per school year.

Holiday: A recognized day in which the Center is closed.

Inclement Weather: Any day in which the Center is closed due adverse weather. We do not expect employees or parents to violate those rules. Our closing for inclement weather does not necessarily coincide with the cancellation of classes in the local schools. We may still open if safety permits.

Program Year: 2nd week of September to 1st week of June

Summer Term: 2nd week of June to 1st week of September

You must keep in mind; Bright Beginning has a limited number of spaces available for enrolling children. Your child's space is reserved for your child, for the entire program year. If your child is absent, that space can not be filled by another child.

Refunds

To insure a high quality and a properly staffed program for each child, we have a no refund policy for days missed unless they qualify under the vacation policy.

Tuition Costs

Registration Fee - one-time non-refundable for each child

Supplies Fee - per full-time child, per program year

Tuition and Supplies Fee includes:

Music Program

Art Program

Athletic Program

Breakfast

Lunch (Crownsville Center only)

Snacks

All Supplies needed for Arts and Crafts

Special Program Days (special rented equipment)

Computer Fees

Tuition Deposit

A tuition deposit is due at time of registration. When it is returned or applied to your account depends upon the enrollment agreement. Tuition deposit will not be refunded if: you have an outstanding balance, you fail to give 4 week notice of early termination, or dismissal due to non-payment or violation of the Disciplinary Policy.

Computer Access

In an effort to provide the best resources for your child Bright Beginning has developed a computer lab for your child to utilize if you so chose. Our goal is to provide age appropriate material for each child. Bright Beginning encourages the use of this media because it is a great resource for education and a valuable of source information. Your child is expected to use the media properly and any child, who abuses the privilege, will lose that privilege.

*Children under the age of 2 years do not have access to computer use.

Internet Access

To insure a safe experience for your child "parental controls" have been installed on any computer connected to the internet. Bright Beginning reserves the right, at its discretion, to limit or suspend access to the internet.

Transportation / Field Trip Policy

Bright Beginning will be going on occasional field trips. In addition to busing field trips, classes may take walking trips through the neighborhood. Families will receive notice prior to all trips. Please watch your newsletter.

Children's Personal Property

The Center has toys, games and materials for the children to play with. Please do not let your child bring toys from home. These toys often get lost or cause hard feelings and fights. Special nap items are ok, provided that they are stuffed and they are small. Occasionally, the Center may have a show n' tell day and you will be notified in advanced.

Parent Participation

Parents, guardians and co-parents are encouraged to participate in the program in many ways. If you have a particular talent or something of interest to share, please let our staff know. We enjoy having parents/guardians go on field trips, be a guest speaker, come for special events, or just spend time with your child. Look for notices of special activities and requests. We welcome donations of time, service and items such as toys, games, books, usable recyclables for crafts, paper, etc. We also ask for donations on our special days for parties, holiday gifts, beginning of school year, etc. We welcome your comments and suggestions. At times your child may be asked to supply a particular item for projects or activities and photos for the family board. The Director will communicate with you in regard to this.

Meetings and Conferences

Parents, guardians and co-parents are invited to attend our annual Fall Orientation event. At this event, we will highlight program policies and procedures, give families the opportunity to meet with caregivers and teachers and answer any questions for the upcoming program year. We also conduct 2 annual parent/teacher conferences, lasting 20-40 minutes (in the Winter and the Spring) to give opportunity for parent/teacher collaboration, communication and progress reports on individual child development. Conferences are scheduled with classroom teachers at an agreed upon time segment with the parents/families and may also be requested throughout the program year.

Fundraisers

Bright Beginning sponsors two fundraisers each year, one in the autumn and one in the spring. The reasons for this are to keep costs at a minimum for projects and special field trips or to raise money for community service projects, center activities, or family events. Watch the parent bulletin board for information. Please know the fundraisers or the special activities are optional, however, they allow your Center to participate in additional activities, provide supplies and benefit your family in many ways.

Nutrition Statement and Food Service

We provide well-balanced, nutritional snacks and meals. We provide whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables and we limit fat, sugars, and sodium. The program monitors meals sent from home (site specific) and will offer supplement meals if necessary to ensure that children are receiving the appropriate nutrients that meet a well-balanced diet as directed by the USDA.

Breakfast is offered between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. daily to all children present. A choice of cereals and fruits will be available.

(Crownsville Center only) Lunches will be prepared daily. A weekly meal menu will be available a week in advance and posted on the parent bulletin board. We encourage the children to eat their main dish first, their fruit/veggies next and then their dessert item.

Mandated by State of Maryland, Bright Beginning will keep a supply of nutritious food on hand in order to provide food to a child who needs sufficient food to meet the standards of the Child and Adult Care Food Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is also mandated that the children drink milk at all meals. If your child has an allergy to milk, you may bring in an UNOPENED carton/gallon of milk substitute and we can store it in the refrigerator. Your child may not have juice in their lunch.

Due to varying allergies Bright Beginning must monitor any food being brought into the Center. Please check before sending any food with your child, there may be children with allergies that could be triggered even if they do not come directly in contact with the food item.

Open Containers, Cups and/or Sippy Cups are prohibited from the center per MSDE Licensing Regulation

Developmental Screenings and Children with Special Needs

As mandated by MSDE, developmental screenings are conducted for all children (birth through age 5) within 90 days of enrollment as well as at regularly scheduled intervals. Results will be shared with families and referrals made if necessary.

If your child has special needs, please contact the Director to educate our staff about your child. We request that IEP's and IFEP's be provided so that communications surrounding those plans can occur and we are able to ensure appropriate planning that is based on the specific needs of each child. Additional assistance may be needed in order for your child to participate in off-site activities, special programs and/or events. Our goal is for every child to participate, we keep the safety and well-being of every child as our first priority.

Proper Clothing

Your child should arrive with proper attire for forecasted weather conditions, as well as safety and program activities. The Center is not responsible for keeping your child's best clothes clean while they are participating in the Center's activities. Flip Flops and sandals are not permitted on the playground equipment. Tennis shoes are the best. Please dress your child for the weather; we go outside to play everyday, weather permitting. Please keep your child's change of clothes updated and label all jackets, hats, clothes, gloves etc.

Weather Policy

Bright Beginning uses the following guidelines to set time for outside play.

Below 25 degrees ⇒ no outside play
25 to 32 degrees ⇒ 10 minutes of outside play
33 to 45 degrees ⇒ 15 to 20 minutes of outside play
46 to 60 degrees ⇒ 20 to 30 minutes of outside play

Above 60 degrees ⇒ minimum of 30 minutes outside play

Over 100 degrees ⇒ 20 to 30 minutes of outside play

Heat Warning ⇒ 15 to 30 minutes of outside play

☆ Degrees measured in Fahrenheit

Safety

Bright Beginning is required to report cases of suspected abuse or neglect. This includes reporting parents who appear to be impaired by drugs and/or alcohol. No child will be released to an impaired parent, guardian or co-parent. The Department of Family Services, Police and/or Other Emergency Services will be contacted to pick up a child in these situations.

Staff to Child Ratios: Bright Beginning strives to maintain a one to fifteen staff to child ratio for children 6 and older and a one to ten staff to child ratio for children ages 5 and younger, which meets the Department of Health Licensing Standards and the National School Age Care Alliance Standards. Children will not be left alone or unsupervised at any time.

Accidents: For minor accidents, staff will carry out immediate and necessary first aid and parents, guardians or co-parents will be notified. In case of illness, head injury, or more serious accident, parents, guardians or co-parents will be called.

Emergencies: Staff has immediate access to a working telephone, in case of an emergency. 911 will be utilized in case of an emergency. In the event that there is a serious emergency (i.e. life-threatening accident, allergy, head injury, etc.) 911 will be called and the child will be taken to the hospital by an emergency vehicle for treatment and parents, guardians or co-parents will be called immediately.

Drills: Fire drills are held monthly throughout the year. Emergency procedures are posted.

Assessments and Observations

Our assessment and observation processes are ongoing. These include, but are not limited to observation and anecdotal records; portfolios and work samplings; checklists (both specifically designed or aligned with the curriculum). Progress reports and information are shared with parents during regularly scheduled parent/teacher conferences, but also through ongoing open communication that occurs daily, weekly as well as on a “as-needed” basis.

Changes and Amendments

This booklet is a guide to providing your child with a safe and happy experience here at Bright Beginning. Bright Beginning reserves the right to change, alter or eliminate any policies contained within this booklet at its discretion. Bright Beginning also reserves the right to cancel, combine, change dates, times, fees, and staff or make any other revisions to the program which may become necessary.