



Fresh Start Early Learning Center

Parent Handbook

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Our Philosophy

It is the philosophy of Fresh Start Early Learning Center Inc. that early childhood should be a time of fun, warmth, security, exploration and discovery. A daily program at our centers will provide an atmosphere that encourages all areas of development, physical, mental, emotional, social and creative. Our staff believes that when teaching each child is different and they will be met at their level of development. We strongly believe that all children can be taught. We do not discriminate based on race, color national origin or disability. All children with or without special needs accommodation will be taken into consideration at all times.

Operations

Fresh Start provides group child care for children between 6 weeks and 12 years of age. The centers are open for operation year-round, Monday- Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with the exception of designated holidays and closings due to inclement weather. Time may differ from center to center. Please see your director at that location.

All Fresh Start Centers have video surveillance throughout the building that is recording 24 hours a day.

Our Curriculum

Our MSDE approved curriculum allows each child to have a supportive environment. Every opportunity will be afforded for the child to:

- ✎ Develop self-control
- ✎ Develop a positive feeling about him or herself
- ✎ Develop all aspects of his or her personality
- ✎ Develop small and large muscle groups
- ✎ Develop and use new language skills
- ✎ Learn to share and get along with others
- ✎ Think of him or herself as a capable individual
- ✎ Understand his or her body and to feed and care for themselves

These objectives will be achieved through a balanced day of activity, rest, nourishment and involvement in the following:

- ✎ Language, math and science experiences
- ✎ Music and movement
- ✎ Field trips and special visitors
- ✎ Sand and water play
- ✎ Dramatic play
- ✎ Food experiences
- ✎ Indoor and outdoor play
- ✎ Block play
- ✎ Exercise

Our Daily Program

Fresh Start provides group child care for children between 6 weeks and 12 years of age. The Centers are open for operation year-round, Monday thru Friday from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM except on designated holidays and closing due to inclement weather. Some center hours are different be sure to check with your center's director.

Each Center is licensed to operate only between the hours of 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM. For this reason children should arrive and depart from the Center between these hours only. Our operating staff cannot admit anyone prior to 6:30 AM.

Each teacher's program is designed to achieve goals and reach objectives. They develop activities aimed at providing a fun, enriching environment that will facilitate positive development for all children enrolled.

Every child group is supervised at all times by experienced, certified staff. The Program Director has an open-door policy and is available to discuss parent's concerns, children's programs and adjustments to the program.

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Daily Schedule

Every classroom has a daily schedule. The schedule describes the daily activities and may differ from class to class. Outlined below is an example of a daily schedule:

06:30 to 8:30	Arrival and Breakfast
08:30 to 9:00	Restroom Time
09:00 to 11:00	Classroom Activities & Lessons
11:00 to 11:30	Outdoor Play (weather permitting)
11:30 to 11:45	Clean Up & Restroom
11:45 to 12:30	Lunch
12:30 to 01:00	Music, Language/Story Time
01:00 to 03:00	Afternoon Nap
03:00 to 03:15	Restroom Time
03:15 to 03:45	Snack Time
03:45 to 04:15	Art, Table Games
04:15 to 06:00	Large Muscle, Outside Activities & Departure

Each class will have an individual and group learning time. Schedules are designed to incorporate all children including children with special needs.

Before & After School Program

School age children 6 to 12 years old may attend this program. Parents are responsible for arranging transportation to and from school and must sign a waiver releasing the Center from any responsibility during the time the child is not in the Center. This program is available during school closings when the Center is open. However, children who are dismissed from school as a result of behavior problems, illness, etc. are not allowed to attend the Center during regular school hours. The only exception to this rule is if school has been closed or instituted an early dismissal because of emergencies (i.e. water/heat problems, extreme heat, etc.)

Lateness

A fee is charged for late pick-ups, this fee is due that evening or the next day. The child may not attend the center unless this fee is paid or other arrangements have been made with the center director. This policy is enforced in compliance with licensing and insurance regulations.

You are considered late at 6:01p.m. Between 6:01-6:05 the late fee is \$20.00. After 6:05p.m. an additional fee of a \$1.00 is accrued for each additional minute you are late.

If you are going to be late please contact the center. You have until 6:30p.m. to contact the center or the police will be notified and your child will be taken to the proper authorities. Under the child care regulations, this is a form of neglect. Please keep in mind that the staff have families too!

If you are late to pick up your child 3 times in the same month, your childcare will be suspended.

All children must be at the center by 10:00am. This policy is enforced in compliance with licensing and insurance regulations to ensure proper staff ratios. ***No Children will be allowed into the center after 10:00 am unless prior arrangements have been made.***

Inclement Weather

The Center has a Weather Related Emergency Plan that has been established to notify employees, parents and the public of any changes in the regular Center hours as a result of inclement Weather and other emergencies. During weather emergencies, call the center or check the web site, e-mail and text messages by 5:00 AM to hear of closings or delays. If the Center is closed as a result of inclement weather, tuition is still due for that day. If the Center closes early, parents will be given 2-3 hours notice. If your child is not picked up during that time, a late fee will be charged (refer to "Lateness").

Emergency Preparedness Plan

Emergency plans for any emergency are posted by each classroom door and practiced monthly, so that your child is familiar with the drill and not alarmed in a real case of emergency. In case of an actual fire or other emergency's the child will be escorted out the building according to the emergency action plan and parents will be contacted immediately via phone, text or e-mail. All centers have their own designated location.

Classroom Changes

Children with birthdays in the middle of the year will not change classes until the following school year. Due to enrollment changes it may be necessary to make classroom changes at the Director's discretion and after the child is tested for various developmental skills. Parents will be notified before their child makes a class room change.

Holidays

The Center observes the following holidays each year:

New Years Day	January 1 st
Memorial Day	Last Monday of May
Independence Day	July 4 th
Labor Day	1 st Monday of Sept.
Thanksgiving Day & Fri	4 th Thursday & Friday .of Nov.
Christmas Day	December 25 th
Martin Luther King Day	Federal Holiday Schedule
Good Friday	Friday before Easter Sunday
Staff development training	TBD the date will be posted 30 day in advance

Holidays that fall on a Saturday are observed the preceding Friday. Holidays that fall on a Sunday are observed the following Monday. You must pay the regular tuition if a holiday falls on a weekday and the Center is closed.

Sick Policy

There are numerous ailments that children can and will contract during the year. If your child is diagnosed with a contagious ailment and requires medication, the child must have a doctor's note to return to the center. Please consider other types of ailments besides the ones listed below, and follow general guidelines.

Fever: Child will be sent home if their temperature is 100.4 or greater. He/she may not return to the Center until he/she is without fever for at least 24 hours. Children must be fever free for 24 hours without medication to return to the center.

Strep Throat: Child must have medication in their system for at 24 hours before returning to the Center.

Ear Infections: If your child does not have a fever, medication can be given at the Center. If the child is very uncomfortable (crying, pulling at ears frequently, etc.) you will be asked to pick up your child.

Any child will be sent home for any of the following symptoms: fever over 100.4, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive runny nose, excessive coughing, red or pink colored eyes, rash, or any other symptom that is making the child uncomfortable and may be contagious to other children. These are state licensing requirements that we must follow.

****If you give your child ANY medication prior to bringing them to the center you must inform the staff of the medication, amount, and time it was administered during drop off. This includes over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol and Motrin.**

Health and Well Being

We ask that once the parent is called the child is picked up within 2 hours. The exposure to communicable disease and any infectious illness should be reported to the center promptly. Your information will help our staff and they can look out for any early symptoms from other children. The center will also notify the parents when a child has been exposed to an infectious disease.

We strive to prevent the spread of illness and we ask you to keep your child home if he/she is exposed to any of the following. Here are *some* ailments that are **very** contagious and require immediate parent notification and removal of the child from the Center:

- ◆ Ringworm
- ◆ Head Lice
- ◆ Conjunctivitis/ Pink Eye
- ◆ Chicken Pox
- ◆ Measles

- ◆ Mumps
- ◆ 3 Diarrhea in one day
- ◆ Open sores

Summer Camp

There are 5 available camp sessions, each one lasting two weeks. These sessions include weekly trips, swimming, roller skating, bowling and other activities that are not included in the Summer Camp fee. Parents are always welcome to attend any field trip! (*Summer Camp applies only to the Center if Before/After school aged children ages 6-12 are enrolled*) *No child can attend summer camp that has an outstanding balance. No open toe shoes are allowed.*

Meals & Snacks

The Center provides breakfast, lunch, mid-day snack and afternoon snack daily. Your child will participate in the meal if he or she is present at the time of service.

All meals and snacks are nutritious and meet the government minimum nutritional meal pattern requirements.

Maryland state regulations do not allow the center to serve sugary drinks or candy brought from home. All menus are located on the front bulletin board weekly.

Tuition

Weekly or biweekly tuition payments are due on Monday (or the first day of the week that your child attends). All payments are to be made online at Myprocare.com or a bank account/ credit card must be on file. Payments received later than the second day will be considered late and will be charged a late fee of \$5.00. Monthly payments are due the first week of the month and are considered late on the fifth day. If your balance is two weeks behind your child will not be permitted into the center until the balance is paid or arrangements have been made

with the office. There will be a yearly increase of \$5 to \$10 dollars per child. Any tuition that remains unpaid will be turned over to a collection agency. If your child is not potty trained by the time they turn 3 they will remain in the two year old class and be charged the two year old rate because the child cannot move into the pre-k class until they are fully potty trained. This is because our pre-k room does not have the equipment or staffing for potty training.

Required Items

Each child is required to bring specific items that will remain at the center. Upon enrollment, you will receive a list of specific items to bring depending on his or her classroom. These items should be labeled with your child's name.

Your child should come to the center in play clothes every day! From outdoor play, art, painting, etc. we are here to have FUN! We are not responsible for clothes that get dirty or ruined while at the center. In order to learn and explore, kids get DIRTY!

Medical Records

In order for your child(ren) to be enrolled at the center, all necessary medical records must be obtained. If your child(ren) does not have the necessary medical forms or *updated* forms, we ask that you see the director to obtain the forms and have your child's doctor complete them. MSDE requires each child to have a developmental screening within 90 days of enrollment.

Once your child is registered it is required that all forms are completed *prior* to your child attending the Center. Forms must also be periodically updated as needed. If the required forms are not received/updated, your child may be dismissed until the center receives those forms. If your child has a medical problem the centers ask that a care plan be written by the doctor or parent and provided to the center.

Any children that receive an IEP or IFSP we ask to provide the center with a copy of the forms prior to the start of enrollment. This is to help the center to provide the best care for your child.

Medication Orders

COMAR regulations permit child care centers to administer prescription and non-prescription medication to children in child care under certain conditions and with prior written permission from the child's parent. If possible, arrange the time of dosage so that the medication will not have to be administered more than once daily during the time the child is in the center.

Non-Prescription Medication: Except for acetaminophen (Tylenol) and topical medications, only one dose will be administered at the Center unless a licensed health practitioner approves additional administration of the medication and the dosage.

Prescription Medication: Must be in a container labeled by the pharmacy or physician with the child's name and expiration date. May only be administered according instructions on the label of the medication.

Attendance

Children should arrive on time for each day's lesson. If your child will be late or absent, please advise the office or your child's teacher by 9:00 AM. A child should not be in the Center more than ten hours per day. If your child remains over 10 hours, a fee will be imposed for the additional time.

If your child is going to be absent from the Center, you are still required to pay for the day(s). When your child is enrolled, we reserve a spot for him/her to continue until two weeks notice is given for termination of enrollment. Therefore, it is required that payment be made continuously, regardless of the presence of the child.

If there is going to be a prolonged period of absence, notice should be given with the intended return date. This will hold the child's spot without payment being due during the absence. Prolonged absences are generally more than one month and include, for example, summer vacation, extended sick leave for operations or severe illness.

Pick Up & Delivery

According to COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations), all children **must** be brought to the Center and picked up from the Center by parents or guardians whose names are on the child's emergency card. We cannot release to or accept a child from anyone under 16 years of age.

Please ensure that all phone numbers on Emergency Cards are operable. We require at least three alternate contact people for each child. If you have changed your number, residence or employment, please advise us of the new information immediately.

Discipline Policy

The most important thing when helping children learn to behave acceptably is for them to understand what is expected of them and to believe that it is the *behavior* that we do not like, not the child. It is equally important to explain to children why their behavior is unacceptable. In our explanations, we try our best to use as few negatives as possible and to state directions in a positive manner.

Acceptable behavior is encouraged by giving positive verbal rewards. This reinforces a child's good feelings about his or her behavior and serves as an example for the other children to model so that they too will receive praise. Asking a child to stop and think about unpleasant behavior enables that child to work at self control.

Corporal punishment is not considered an acceptable method of handling a child's behavioral concerns. Children will not be hit, slapped or spanked in any manner, for any reason. Standing in the corner or with body parts raised is likewise, not acceptable and is not a practice of Fresh Start Early Learning Center.

If behavior problems persist, the parent is asked to attend a conference with the child's Teacher and/or Director to discuss what may be helpful in motivating the child to behave in an acceptable way. It may be suggested that the child be involved in a behavior modification program with parental involvement. There are several steps that can be followed if your child has a behavior problem:

- ◆ In-house behavioral modification program
- ◆ Parent observations / evaluations
- ◆ Director / Teacher observations / evaluations
- ◆ Conferences with Parent, Teacher and Director

Referrals made for outside professional modification programs we work closely with The Judy Center, Infants and Toddlers, Child Find and many other programs.

Discipline Policy

If there is no parent or guardian participation or if there is no improvement in behavior within 2 weeks and after all avenues have been explored, it will be determined that the child is not benefiting, and their enrollment will have to be terminated.

Enrollment of a child may be terminated immediately by the Center for occurrences of the following:

- ◆ Hitting or biting or endangering him/herself or others
- ◆ Being uncontrollable
- ◆ Continuous use of profane language

For any of the above concerns, the child's parent(s) will be contacted immediately and asked to remove the child from the center that day and may not return to the Center until a conference is held with the Teacher/Director.

As all children are different, so are parents. If we work closely together, communicate and share experiences and ideas, we can be successful as we try to teach our children self control.

Parent Involvement

Parents are always welcome to observe or participate in the center's programs. We would like to stress the importance of participation in center activities, not only for the child's benefit, but also for the benefit of the center. Participation can include interest in daily activities, fundraising and field trips. We also invite parents to become members of the Center's Parent Advisory Committee. The center will have a mandatory Parents Advisory Meeting once a year. This is a time for all new and changed policies to be reviewed, and for parents and teachers to discuss suggestions or concerns. All parents are kept up to date using the KidReports app. KidReports will keep you involved by giving you a daily update as to what is happening in your child's class. You can send e-mails directly to your child's teacher/director.

Pandemic or Uncontrollable Circumstances

Fresh Start has been taking all precautions to keep all children and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have strict guidelines we must follow from the Maryland State Department of Education and from the Office of Childcare. We are following all CDC recommendations. Fresh start will not be held accountable if any person or child becomes ill. If a family member or child from the center does test positive for COVID-19, we have strict guidelines to follow that come directly from the health department. This may include closing the entire center or closing one specific classroom for whatever amount of time they mandate to keep everyone safe. Tuition will still need to be paid in full. We do understand that this is all repetitive and time consuming.

The following handbook provided will give you the rules/regulations of Fresh Start Early Learning Centers Inc. We follow the same guidelines as Maryland State Dept. of Education. As a parent/guardian you will be ensured we provide an exceptional learning in a safe and fun environment.

Please sign and return:

I understand the rules and regulations governing the operation of the center

Name

Date