

# Parent Handbook

The following items are elements from the full Parent Handbook and should help you understand all the details needed to help make each day with us the best it can be for your child. The full and complete Handbook can be requested from the office. These policies allow us to employ consistency and structure first and foremost in your child's day to ensure a minimum of surprises and they help us manage our business expectations with parents. Don't hesitate to contact us should you have any questions.

## Parent/Staff Communication

We offer our families BrightWheel which is a communication app that allows you to send and receive messages, photos, and info about your child's day. Our Team tries to keep updates through BrightWheel as "real-time" as possible; however, the care and safety of the children always come first. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit The Ark at any time. Parents or teachers may request scheduled conferences at any time throughout the year. It is important that staff be made aware of any unusual situations occurring in the home so we will be better prepared to meet your child's needs. We ask that these matters be discussed in private.

## Arrival/Departure

Please park your car out of the normal flow of traffic in the parking area. Please do not block the entrance to the building. For the safety of the children, please turn engine off and remove keys. Children must be accompanied by a parent and brought into the building. A staff member must be made aware of the child's arrival and departure. We keep a daily roster of attendance and need to know the whereabouts of your child for their safety. Children will only be released to a parent or to persons listed on the registration and emergency contact information form. We request a note in writing when someone other than a parent is picking up the child. This note must accompany your child when they arrive in the morning. For an unforeseen schedule change, we request the parent call The Ark from work and verbally give permission for the alternative person to pick up. Because separation may be a difficult concept for children to understand, it is important that you as a parent plan to spend extra time with your child the first time they attend the Center. It may be helpful for him/her through the separation process. Your child may cry and be upset when you leave, this is common but never leave without saying good- bye.

## Security System

As an extra safety precaution for your child, each visitor must be identified on the video monitoring system in order to enter the building. Each classroom is equipped with a video monitoring system that is used for educational and monitoring purposes only. Due to the confidentiality of other children in the classrooms, parents will be unable to view footage. In the event of a serious child injury, the

camera footage may be retrieved and saved for our records. This footage, based on availability, will be provided to any governing agencies upon request.

## Breakfast/Lunch/Snacks

The Ark provides a "child approved" nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack to each of our children through the CACFP "USDA" food program. The USDA food program does not allow food or drinks from home unless your child has a specific medical need and then a note from your child's doctor is required. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the office.

## Meal Schedule:

The Meal Schedule varies slightly from center to center. Below is a sample Meal Schedule:

### **Breakfast:**

Schoolagers:

7:15 - 7:45

Infant/Toddler:

8:30 - 9:00

Preschool:

9:00 - 9:30

### **Lunch:**

Infant/Toddler:

11:00 - 11:30

Preschool/Kindergarteners:

12:00 - 12:30

### **Afternoon Snack:**

Infant/Toddler:

2:30 - 2:45

Preschool/Kindergarteners:

2:45 - 3:00

Schoolagers:

3:45 - 4:00

## Clothing and Skin Protection

The Ark Christian Nursery & Learning Center requests that all children be dressed in comfortable clothing appropriate for weather conditions. Please provide an extra set of clothes to keep in your child's cubby. (Please make sure you include a clean set of underwear and socks.) Accidents do happen and we want to make sure your child is as clean and dry as possible. Please label everything that comes in to the Center with your child's name. Parents may choose to provide sunscreen and bug repellent. Parents and staff will arrange use of these based on parent's preferences and child's needs.

## Naps and Rest

Rest and quiet time varies per room from 12:00p.m. - 3:00p.m. During this time a mat/crib, sheets, and a blanket will be provided for each child. If your child wants, they are welcome to bring a small stuffed animal for their comfort. During rest time, stories will be read and soft music played. Staff will sit quietly in the room. Children in care for more than five hours are provided with the opportunity for at least one hour of rest and relaxation. Children who do not fall asleep after 30 minutes are given the opportunity to do a quiet activity. Children will not be forced to sleep or stay awake. (Per N.H. licensing standards).

## Toys

Toys from home may not be brought to the Center. There may be a scheduled day in which your child may be asked to bring an item from home to “show and share.” These days will be announced in advance and a notice will be written on the white board outside of your child's room. Unfortunately, we cannot be responsible for lost or broken personal items brought from home.

## Behavioral Supervision

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services requires licensed child care centers to develop a written plan to address suspension and expulsion. Discipline is an ongoing process embedded in the child's experience and relationships. The Ark understands that children, especially pre-verbal children, use physical expression to share their feelings and needs. The Ark assures parents that an undesirable behavior indicates an opportunity for the child to develop an important skill; it is not a “morals” issue. It is possible that some children may exhibit consistent behaviors that are detrimental to the ongoing safety and security of the other children in the classroom. This may include aggression toward peers, such as biting, hitting, kicking, and swearing. The Ark will handle these situations discreetly and with compassion, and in partnership with the family. In the event that a child's ongoing behavior in child care poses a risk to themselves or to the other children in the program, the following steps will be taken:

- The Director will meet in person with the parents within 48 hours of the concerns being communicated to them.
- A written behavior plan signed by the parents and the Director will be put into place the day of the meeting. This must include:
  - Identify the specific behavior being addressed (e.g., leaving the classroom, attempting to leave the building unsupervised)
  - Identify supports in place (e.g., redirecting the child to a specific peer cohort, shadowing, talking about safety)
  - Identify needed supports (e.g., a pediatric developmental evaluation)
  - Identify a precise timeline for the behavior plan (e.g., three weeks)
  - Identify precise metrics of behavior improvement (e.g., “The child's attempts to exit the building are reduced to two incidents or less per week.”)
  - Identify peer respite strategy (e.g., “If the child attempts to leave the classroom twice in one day, the parent will take him home for the rest of the day.”)

- The parents will meet weekly with the Director to assess the efficacy of the written behavior plan, validate progress, and modify strategies.

In the unlikely event that behaviors do not respond to the efforts of teachers and parents to correct the behavior, The Ark will provide the family with a 2 week notice to determine a more appropriate child care placement.

If the child's behavior places himself, peers, or teachers in immediate harm or has the potential to jeopardize the health and safety of himself or peers and teachers (e.g. throwing chairs or tables at others), parents may be asked to immediately remove their child and find a more appropriate child care placement. The safety of all our children and teachers are our first priority.

**Please note that The Ark reserves the right to immediately terminate enrollment if parents/guardians refuse to sign and adhere to the written behavior plan (including incident reports) as our primary goal is the safety of all our Ark families and children.**

## Toilet Learning

Please see the Director to discuss your goals for your child's toilet learning. We recommend beginning toilet learning after a child reaches 2 1/2 years old. We prefer that your child has been working on toileting at home for 2 full weeks before we begin here at The Ark. Your child will have better success if his/her teacher knows and uses the same wording, prompts, etc. that you use at home. Please provide Pull-Ups until such time as you and your child's teacher agree it is time to switch to training pants/underwear. At this time, please provide at least 4 pairs of training pants/underwear and pants each day. Soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and put in your child's cubby to be taken home and washed

## Illness

Children who are ill or have a communicable disease should be cared for at home as well as children who have illness-related diarrhea or are running fevers. We recommend that a child be free of a fever at least 72 hours before returning to the center. Parents will be notified when a child is not feeling well and/or has a fever. At this time, parents may be asked to pick up their child. Arrangements must be made for the child to be picked up as soon as possible after being notified. A school-aged child dismissed by a school nurse for health reasons may not be brought to the Center for care. Children well enough to be in attendance are well enough to participate in all planned activities including outside play.

## Physicals

Each child must have a health form on file as required by State of N.H. The child's physician must sign this form. It is a record of age appropriate immunizations, allergies, developmental and medical concerns and physical examinations. No child may be admitted without an appropriate record of

immunizations. Physicals are required by N.H. licensing standards, to be on file no later than 30 days following entrance into the program and must be renewed **ANNUALLY**. Parents will be reminded by the center of the required renewal 30 days prior to the expiration date on a current physical. Please notify the center when a child receives immunizations at times other than at their annual physical.

## Medications

We will administer medications that have been prescribed by a physician. We ask that the Medication Authorization Forms to be completed and signed by a physician and parent or legal guardian (per NH Licensing Regulations). For the administration of any over the counter medication, an Authorization Form needs to be completed as well as a written signed prescription by the physician naming the over the counter medicine, dosage and time of administration. No open-ended prescriptions can be accepted (for example: children's Tylenol with no ending date).

All medication must come in the original, labeled container, no expired medication can be given. Prescription medication must have a printed prescription label that contains the child's name, medication, dosage, Physician's name, expiration date and time of administration. Parents must complete and sign an Authorization to Administer Prescription form each time they bring medication to the Center. Medications must be given to a staff member. **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE THEM WITH YOUR CHILD'S BELONGINGS**

## Injury

Parents will be notified of all injuries. Parents will be notified at pick-up when a bump or injury is minor. It will be recorded on the Child Care Injury Report. You will be notified by telephone immediately if your child's injury may require medical attention. In case of a serious health/accident emergency, we will call 911. The medical team will make the decision to transport the child to the appropriate medical facility. The parent will immediately be notified of the nature of the emergency and be advised to meet the child at the designated medical facility. Staff members certified in pediatric first aid and CPR are always in attendance.

## Staff Requirements

The staff shall meet the qualifications for their position as outlined in the Employee Handbook and as mandated by the State of New Hampshire's Child Care Program Licensing Rules. All new staff members shall be placed on a 90-day introductory period and will be permanently hired after all Onboarding has been completed. All staff members must pass a criminal background check and be fingerprinted with the State of New Hampshire.

## **Payment Policies**

Hours of operation are center-specific. Our Learning Center closes promptly at closing time. Parents who are late will be charged \$1 per minute. Full Payment is due in advance on Friday preceding each week. The Ark offers several convenient payment methods. The Ark uses BrightWheel's AutoPay system which allows families to pay their weekly invoices automatically using ACH or any major credit card. Cash and check payments can be made in the office prior to the due date of your invoice. Any remaining balance will be automatically charged through your BrightWheel payment methods. Parents are charged according to their contracted hours regardless of the child's attendance.

## **Returned Checks/Late Payments**

Checks returned by the bank as unpayable will result in a fee of \$25 per check. Any failed or unpaid BrightWheel invoices will be subject to a late fee.

## **Tax Information**

All payment records and tax information can be found on BrightWheel. Parents/Guardians may need to access their BrightWheel payment information on a desktop versus the phone app.

## **Birthdays**

Birthdays are exciting and important to each child. We ask that if you wish to bring a cake or special snack that you first speak to your child's teacher/Director and find out about special diets. Parents are invited to join their child on their special day. The Ark will recognize each child's special day.

## **Inclement Weather**

We will make every effort to keep our Learning Centers open. Unfortunately, due to power outages we may be forced to close. If there is a delay or closing of the Center, we will have it broadcasted on WMUR-TV News 9. Parents will not be charged for the day in the event of a non- opening.

## **Holidays**

The Ark WILL BE CLOSED in observance of the following national Holidays:

**LABOR DAY**  
**COLUMBUS DAY/INDIGENOUS PEOPLE DAY**  
**THANKSGIVING**  
**DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING**

**CHRISTMAS  
NEW YEAR'S DAY  
MEMORIAL DAY  
INDEPENDENCE DAY**

The Ark will also be closed for up to 2 Professional Development Days. Notice of these days will be provided at least 1 month in advance. If you have contracted for childcare or preschool, you will be billed for all National Holidays and Professional Development Days that we are closed, which fall within the preschool or childcare term session. (i.e. If your child would normally be here on a day that a holiday falls on then you will be billed.) You are responsible for payments for any day that is your child's scheduled day. We cannot substitute days if your child misses a regularly scheduled day.

## **Holiday Lessons**

Holidays are an important part of The Ark's curriculum. Each Holiday will be observed through a lesson. Through the lesson, the children will learn the history and meaning of the holiday. Every Thanksgiving our children enjoy a sit down, family style "Thanksgiving Dinner" which they have helped to prepare. At The Ark, Christmas is a special holiday, celebrated with gift exchanges and an exciting Christmas party!

## **Enrollment/Disenrollment**

The Ark actively manages a Wait List to accomplish full program enrollment. The Ark has an open enrollment policy. Applications will be accepted throughout the year. A separate Sibling Wait List is maintained; siblings are prioritized as a space appropriate to their age become available. To enroll, families will be contacted and offered placement and have three business days to secure the spot or the family will be placed back on the Wait List and the next family contacted. A family may choose once to "pass" on offered enrollment placement without compromising their spot on the Wait List, but a second "pass" will place the family in an inactive status.

Disenrollment Parents are required to provide a minimum two-week written notice to The Ark, or the financial equivalency. The Ark makes a strong effort to work with families in crisis, to find real and reasonable solutions that will support children and parents. It is a DHHS licensing requirement to state that The Ark reserves the right to terminate enrollment without notice for the following reasons:

- non-compliance with policies and procedures, including documentation
- adults choosing to exhibit behavior that threatens the physical or emotional safety of the children and teachers on site, including any negative communications they may have posted on any social media sites.
- non-payment or failed payment
- A parent/guardian demands special services that are not provided to other children's families and that cannot reasonably be delivered by the program (including requests that are outside the philosophy of the program).