

Parent Handbook – COVID-19 Addendum

Introduction

Due to the current COVID-19 Pandemic, and in order to provide the safest environment possible for both families and staff, it is necessary that we implement new policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are directly correlated to mandates issued by Child Care Licensing, as well as in compliance with the recommendations from the CDC. We understand that each child, staff member, and situation is unique, and we recognize that no manual can cover all situations. It is possible that mandates and guidance can change at any time, and as they do, our policies and procedures will be altered to meet the regulations.

School Closure Decision Protocols

The decision to delay the start of school, or close once the school year has begun, will be made with the guidance of local and state health authorities, Child Care Licensing, and the local school districts. It is possible that Bright Beginnings may remain open even if the local ISDs decide to close (and vice versa), depending on the causes of the closure. Bright Beginnings is governed by Child Care Licensing mandates and all guidance issued from them will be followed.

Withdrawals Due to COVID-19 Concerns

It has always been the policy of Bright Beginnings that all fees paid at registration are non-refundable; however we also know that COVID-19 presents extraordinary circumstances. Any request for a refund must be made in writing to our Board of Directors. The board will evaluate each request on a case by case basis, doing their best to be fair and understanding, but also ensuring that the program's financial obligations are met. **No refunds, under any circumstance, will be issued after July 31, 2020.**

“Hold the Spot” Option for Families

Families will be allowed the option to not attend in the fall semester, but reserve their space for the spring semester. Each family choosing this option will be assessed a fee per child equivalent to 2 months' tuition.

- In exchange for this fee each child will be assigned a teacher in their age group. That teacher will provide the family a weekly email outlining ideas and activities that can be done at home.
- One teacher per age group will be assigned this responsibility for all participating children in that age group.
- This teacher may not necessarily be the teacher the child is assigned to when they return for the spring semester.
- The fee may be paid in one payment up front, or in 4 equal monthly payments through the auto draft option. (Cash or check will not be accepted for the monthly payment option.)
- All registration and supply fees and tuition deposits already paid with registration still apply.
- There will be no adjustment of fees if “in person school” closes or is delayed in starting.
- If a family decides not to return in the spring, no refunds will be issued.
- If a family decides to withdraw for the fall, but does not wish to pay to hold the spot for the spring, they may still re-enroll for the spring semester IF space is available. Additional registration and supply fees may apply at that time.

Pandemic Tuition Policy

In order to meet the school's financial obligations, the following tuition policy will be implemented:

- If the start of the school year is delayed, tuition will not be charged until the first class day. Tuition will be prorated based on the number of school days offered for the first month of school (not to be less than 25% of the monthly tuition fee).
- Should the program need to close for Pandemic reasons **after** the school year has begun:
 - Full tuition will be charged for the starting month of the closure.
 - Tuition will be prorated if the closure continues into the next month, based on how many school days the closure affects. (The maximum prorated rate will not be less than 25% of the monthly tuition fee.)
 - Example: Closure begins on October 15th and facility reopens on Nov. 6th: Full tuition charged for October and November will be at a prorated rate.
 - If an extended closure is required, (equal to or longer than one full month of school) a reduced monthly tuition rate of 25% will be charged. This will help Bright Beginnings maintain payroll continuity for our staff while they are working in our "Play and Learn at Home" format.
 - Families will have the option to withdraw if they decide they cannot or do not want to pay the reduced tuition rate.
 - If a family chooses to withdraw, they may re-enroll at a later date IF a spot is available. Additional registration fees will apply at the time of re-enrollment.
 - Withdrawals must be submitted in writing.
 - If a family is enrolled in the "Hold the Spot" option, there will be no adjustment of fees.

School Contact during a Closure

In the event Bright Beginnings must close after the school year begins, all efforts will be made to maintain contact with our children and families.

- School administration will relay all necessary information via a weekly email.
- Classroom teachers will send a weekly email with classroom updates.
- In the event a closure exceeds 2 full school weeks, teachers will transition into a "Play and Learn at Home" format. This may include but is not limited to:
 - Weekly emails with suggested activities that can be easily completed at home to help maintain continuity in our planned curriculum.
 - Virtual "face to face" meeting options for the age groups where it is developmentally appropriate.
 - Various other activities and communications created by the classroom teacher that are appropriate for each individual age group.

It is our goal to provide an in-person school environment where each child's educational and social emotional needs are met, while modifying and adding to our existing safety and health practices so that the safest environment possible is achieved. In order to do that, the following procedures and practices will be followed.

Tuition Payments

- In order to minimize contact, we HIGHLY encourage everyone to utilize the ACH payment option. If paying by cash or check, payment may be dropped off during arrival or dismissal at the designated boxes near the entry doors to the nursery building and education building.

Arrival/Dismissal Procedures

- Upon arrival and dismissal, the parents or adult dropping off or picking up the child must sign the child in/out via the ChildWatch app from their personal phone.
- A health check will be completed on the child upon arrival.
 - If the child presents with a temperature above normal, but below 100.0, administrative staff will determine if the child is admitted into care based on if the child is exhibiting possible signs of illness and additional health questions asked to the parent.
 - If a temperature is above 100.0, the child will be excluded from care.
 - Administrative staff reserves the right to exclude a child from care if they are showing any signs of illness, but do not present with an above normal temperature.
- Children will be dropped off/picked up at a designated location outside of the child's building and will be escorted to/from that location by a designated staff member.
- All children should be dropped off and picked up outside, and parents may only enter the facility when necessary.
- If a parent or other adult must enter the facility, a health screening/temperature check will be completed prior to entry.
- Physical Distancing will be practiced between staff and parents as much as possible during arrival and dismissal.
- All adults and children over the age of 2 are required to wear masks during arrival and dismissal.

Hygiene Stations

- Anyone entering the facility (adults and children) must wash hands or use provided hand sanitizer stations prior to entering the facility.

Illness Exclusion

Children will not be admitted into care if they have the following symptoms:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills and/or repeating shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees

If a child becomes ill while in the facility, the following plan is in place:

- The child will be isolated from the other children in a designated, supervised isolation room.
- The child's parent/guardian will be notified immediately to pick up the child.
- All CDC disinfection protocols and guidelines will be followed in all affected areas.

When children are ill, they must not return to the facility until they are symptom free without medication for 72 hours.

COVID-19 Protocols for Potential and/or Confirmed Infection in Staff or Students

- The local health authority and Child Care Licensing will be notified.
- All parents will be notified of the confirmed case within the school and if their child had direct contact with the infected person.
- Although all efforts will be made to provide as much information as possible, names and/or specific details cannot be disclosed due to HIPAA regulations.
- CDC disinfecting protocols and timelines will be followed.
- All closing and re-opening procedures and guidance will be issued to the school by the local health authority and will be followed.
- **When may a child or employee return to Bright Beginnings? (The following guidance is directly from Child Care Licensing and the CDC)**
 - In the case of an employee who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications)
 - AND the individual has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
 - AND at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
 - In the case of an employee who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above.
 - If the employee has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.
 - Employees or children with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to school until the end of the 14 day self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting Measures

Additional cleaning methods will be added to the existing cleaning protocols set forth by Child Care Licensing. This includes but is not limited to:

- Increased frequency of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting objects that are frequently touched (especially toys and games).
- Any item that is mouthed by a child is immediately removed from circulation and placed in a bin for sanitizing.
- If soft items (such as dress up clothing) are used they will be pulled to be laundered after each child's use.
- Toys that are shared among groups must be washed and sanitized before moving from one group to another.
- Frequent cleaning of high touch points (door knobs, light switches, sink handles, chairs, playground equipment, etc.).
- All bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day.

Material and Supply Sharing

- Material sharing will be discouraged as much as possible and practical.
- Sensory and water bins will only be used if they can be assigned individually to students and will be cleaned between each use.
- The use of classroom mascots, book bags, and other school- home connections that require shared materials will be discontinued until further notice.

Snacks, Lunches, and Water Bottles

- Bright Beginnings will provide each child their own individual snack bag for snack each day.
- Lunches and water bottles/cups will be provided by the parents marked clearly with the child's first name and last initial.
- Lunches and water bottles/cups will be stored in each child's individual cubby area so that it does not touch other children's belongings.
- Please provide disposable lunch containers and water bottles when appropriate and possible.

Student Personal Belongings

- Children need 3 complete outfits (tops, bottoms, underwear, and socks) in 3 separate gallon size bags, labeled with the child's first name and last initial.
- Emergency mandates require that all children and staff members to change any clothing with secretions on them. Children are not allowed to wear other children's clothing.
- Any contaminated clothing or bibs will be placed in a sealed plastic bag to be sent home with the child.
- Refrain from sending any unnecessary personal belongings to school.

Mixing Classrooms/Combining Children

- Mixing classrooms will be discouraged and will only occur when necessary.
- Each class will be assigned a cohort class, and any mixing that is necessary will occur only with that class, and only with administration approval.
- Each class will be assigned their neighboring classroom (shared bathroom) as their cohort class.
- Playground time will be assigned with cohort class.

Specials Classes (chapel, music, science, etc.)

- All specials teachers will travel to each specific classroom rather than the children attending that class in a common space.
- Ample time will be allotted between each class so that the all materials and supplies can be sanitized between uses.

Common Bathroom Spaces

- Each class will be assigned a designated time for the use of common bathrooms. The bathrooms will be sanitized by a designated staff member between each class use.

Napping Classes (one year old classes only)

- Children are assigned their own individual nap mat and will be placed head to toe and spaced as far apart as possible.
- Nap mats are disinfected before and after each use.
- Children's bedding will be kept separate and stored in individually labeled bins, cubbies, or bags.

Additional Social Distancing Strategies

- Distance between children at tables, centers, and on circle time rugs will be increased as much as possible.
- Movement and contact through the hallways will be limited as much as possible. All staff and children will be trained to wait and allow other classes to clear an area prior to the next class entering.
- Distancing at arrival and dismissal will be enforced.
- Physical Distancing will be practiced where it is practical and developmentally appropriate.

Personal Protective Equipment

- Adults entering the facility must wear a face mask.
- Employees may use PPE such as masks, gloves, and face shields when it is required and as needed, as long as it is done in a way that is developmentally appropriate.
- Masks must be worn by all adults and children (over the age of 2) during arrival and dismissal.
- Masks will be stored in individual storage containers, labeled with the child's name.
- All local and state orders regarding face masks must be followed.

Special Events

- All special events where classes are combined or utilize shared spaces are temporarily suspended until further notice. (Boo Hoo Breakfast, Fall Festival, Reindeer Games, etc.)
- All shared food events (classroom parties) must be adjusted and modified. Only individually packaged meals can be served. (ex. Individually bagged “Kids’ Meals” from a restaurant)

Disclosure Statements

- Travel
 - Parents/Guardians must notify Bright Beginnings Administration anytime they have traveled outside of the local Houston area.
 - Bright Beginnings reserves the right to exclude a child from care if they or a member of the household has traveled to a location that has been identified by the CDC as an “at risk” area.
- I understand that outside of care, in order to control my child’s exposure in the community, I will comply with any and all state, county, and/or local stay orders.
- I will immediately notify Bright Beginnings if I become aware of any person with whom my child or I have had contact, exhibits any of the symptoms listed above, is advised to self-isolate, quarantine, or has tested positive, or is presumed positive for COVID-19 any other infectious illness.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

(An electronic signature option will be made available via email.)