

Bard Community Children's Center Parent Handbook

This handbook contains important information about the Bard Community Children's Center and our policies. We ask that you read it carefully, and please sign and return acknowledgement on the back page by your child's first day of school.

Program Information:

The Children's Center serves children 3 to 5 years of age. The maximum capacity is 20 children at any one time. The center is open from 8:30 am – 5:30 pm September-May. The center will run a summer program based upon the needs of the families.

The children are divided into small groups depending on the number of children at the center. Depending on activity or time of day, children will participate in mixed age groups when necessary.

The center program is based on an emergent curriculum. Themes and activities are organized around the children's interests, as well as keeping individual and group goals in mind. Project ideas come from the children. We encourage the children to meet with a teacher in small groups and come up with a plan on what they would like to work on. The children brainstorm their ideas, teachers help the children take notes of their plan, we gather materials, and we begin to build our idea! We continue our project or theme for as long as the children are interested. As the group moves to another area of interest, we begin the process over again.

The emphasis is based on the process rather than the product, with the special exception of special gifts or projects that the children may make throughout the year.

The center is divided into learning areas. We offer a writing table, a sensory table, a block building area, a housekeeping/dramatic play area, manipulative play, a science and math table, and an art table. All areas are set up based on what the children planned as well as teacher activities to help support their interest.

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to provide a secure, nurturing, and educational setting for all children. Through teacher directed and child-initiated activities and through play, we believe children will develop cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

We encourage children to plan, explore, question, and experiment throughout their day and encourage all children to be cooperative and respectful with others and their environment.

Philosophy:

*We believe that each child is unique and should be given the opportunity to grow according to his/her temperament and developmental level.

*We believe that children grow best when they are allowed and encouraged to express their true feelings in a safe and loving environment.

*We believe that children have the ability to solve conflicts on their own if guided with sensitivity and respect.

*We believe that children learn best through play and active participation in an environment where self-expression, creativity, and curiosity are encouraged.

*We believe that children should be exposed to nonviolent and nondiscriminatory values through books, toys and various activities.

*We believe that children's natural curiosity should be guided towards a respect for nature and for the diverse cultures of the world.

Absences:

If your child is going to be absent, please be sure to contact the center by email or phone by 10:00 am. 845-758-7444 or kwilliam@bard.edu. You will be required to pay for your child's day if they are absent for any reason.

Arrival and Pick Up:

Parents are to park their cars on top of the hill in the parking lot. Please be sure to not park at the bottom of the hill in front of the center. Parents and children will arrive up the ramp to the door. This is the only entrance used for arrival and pick up. Upon entering the center, you will either sign your child in or out at the sign in/out book in the entranceway. You may not leave your child at the center until a teacher has seen and greeted your child. If the group is on the playground at your arrival, please be sure to drop your child off on the playground by the lower gate, adjacent to our entrance ramp. For safety reasons children are not permitted to enter or leave the building without a parent.

Please be sure to arrive with your child by 9:00 am. Any time after that makes it very difficult for a child to transition into the program when activity has already started. We want to insure that your child is getting the most out of our program. If you need to arrive later than 9:00 am, please notify the Director, and a compromised arrangement can be made.

Authorization to Pick Up Your Child:

The Children's Center will only allow your child to leave the program with an authorized adult. Authorized adults are those who are included on your blue emergency card. If you have someone picking up other than an authorized adult, you will need to submit written permission by letter or email (with a phone call confirming). Please expect that if staff is unfamiliar with the person you authorized to pick up your child, they will be asked for a photo ID to insure proper safety. Always be sure your child knows who will be picking them up for the day.

Birthdays:

We celebrate your child's birthday at either AM or PM snack. You are welcome to bring in a favorite snack of your child's to share with the group. Please be sure to let the teacher know ahead of time what you are bringing. We need to be conscious of allergies. You are also welcome to join us for your child's celebration.

Books:

We can never have enough books. We have formalized a library system for our books, and we are very proud. If you are interested and would like to donate a book to our library, you are more than welcome. You may ask a teacher or the director for suggestions.

Cell Phones: There is to be no cell phone use in the center. Please be sure to complete your phone calls, emails, texts, etc. in the parking lot before arriving at the center. Cell phone use in the center is a distraction to all children, teachers, and families.

Changes:

If at any time your child has changes in his/her daily life, please be sure to let us know. Changes in families will often reflect in a child's behavior. Please keep us posted so we can help understand and support any behavior changes that may happen in your child.

Child Abuse - Mandatory Reporting Status

The staff and the administration work to protect and provide for the needs of each child. Our number one concern is for their ongoing safety. One of our roles as Teachers and Administrators is that we are mandatory reporters for child abuse/maltreatment.

As per NYS regulations:

All employees of New York State licensed child care facilities are, by law, mandatory reporters of child abuse or maltreatment. The law states that if a child care worker has "reasonable cause to suspect" child abuse or maltreatment, they are obligated to make a report. Our licensing regulations read as follows:

In accordance with the provisions of sections 413 and 415 of the Social Services Law, day care center workers must report any suspected incidents of child abuse or maltreatment concerning a child receiving child day care to the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment or cause such a report to be made when such workers have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their capacity as day care center workers is an abused or maltreated child.

The source of abuse does not need to be known in order to file a report. Childcare employees are required to report suspected abuse whether that suspected abuse is thought to be occurring on the premise of the school or elsewhere. The hotline number to report suspected child abuse is **1-800-635-1522**

Clothing:

Children actively play indoors and outdoors on a daily basis. Please be sure to dress your child appropriately for all kinds of play and activity. This includes clothes in which your child can get messy in and clothes that are not restrictive. Children are encouraged to dress and undress themselves when needed. Sweatpants and elastic waist pants are the easiest for children.

Each child is required to bring one change of clothes to school to keep in their backpack. This change of clothes will travel to nursery school as well.

We do go outside in all kinds of weather (light rain, snow, cold, heat) please be sure to dress your child in layers to accommodate for the weather changes throughout the day. If your child has an accident during the day, we will place dirty or soiled clothing in a plastic bag to be brought home. We are not permitted to wash this type of clothing.

Please remember to label all pieces of clothing.

Also, please be sure that children do not wear any jewelry of any kind. Jewelry can be a choking hazard to children.

Contracts/Payments:

Contracts are given out for fall/spring semester and for summer session. Your contract states the days and hours that your child will attend the center.

- *You are required to make payments on the 1st of every month.

- *Payment is based up the number of days and hours you are contracted for.

- *If payment is more than 2 weeks overdue, we reserve the right to cancel your contract.

- *Contracts can only be changed if a two-week notice is given ahead of time and if The Center Director can accommodate the change.

- *Tuition is due regardless of absences and vacations.

- *Families are required to pay for any extra days added on to your child's contract.

There are no make- up days without payment of an extra day.

- *If you are on sabbatical for more than 1 month, your child's spot will be held tuition free, but with a holding fee of \$50 for part time and \$100 for full time.

- *Please speak with the Center Director concerning any financial concerns.

Discipline and Guidance Policy:

Our program is designed to provide a structured environment, which supports children's efforts to control their own behavior and develop social/emotional skills. When children are actively involved in an enriched program, fewer discipline problems occur.

Our first job here at the center is to keep the children safe. We want to teach children to respect their environment and to respect each other. Teachers work with children to use their words and to talk about how they are feeling. We also give the children the opportunity to work out a problem with their peers while being facilitated by a teacher.

Our approach to behavior management is as follows:

- Anticipating potential problems to help minimize conflict

- Stating our expectations in a clear, positive way

- Redirecting children to another activity

- Providing clear limits

- Acknowledging positive behavior

- Giving choices whenever possible

- Allowing children to talk and listen to children with attention and respect

Teachers never belittle, threaten, or shame a child. Teachers never withhold food to discipline children. Corporal punishment is prohibited. A child will never be isolated in a "time out".

If a behavior is extreme or dangerous to others, the Director and teacher will meet with the parents to communicate a behavior plan. The Director may suggest an outside professional to observe and evaluate the situation. If the Director finds that the behavior is still extreme after all resources have been exhausted, the Director may suggest an alternate childcare service for the child.

Please note children other than your own, can only be disciplined by the Director, Teachers or Teacher Assistants.

Emergency Closings:

In the case of an emergency such as a power failure or severe weather, the Children's Center will close early. Parents will be notified by phone of the closing time. If parents are not available, their emergency contacts will be notified to pick up their child. If the center should close for the day or have a delayed opening due to severe weather conditions, please check www.cancellations.com, and an email will be sent to each family. **We do not follow the school district weather closings.**

Please note that the Director is responsible for ensuring the safety of the children and the staff at all times.

Emergency Contact Information:

It is extremely important that you include as many emergency contacts as possible on your blue card. Phone numbers need to be listed for each individual. It can be an issue when we have a sick or injured child and a parent cannot be reached. Please update the information on the blue card every semester or as needed.

Emergency Evacuations:

The emergency plan is for the safety and protection of the children in the care of this facility should a natural or man-made disaster and/or emergency situation occur. In case of an emergency, which requires the evacuation of the center, the Director or teacher in charge will pull the fire alarm, gather attendance records and blue emergency cards, and she/he will join and assist the staff in the process of evacuating the children. A walkie talkie or cell phone will be used to call campus security, which will notify the proper authorities to respond on site. All staff and children will meet outside the far side of the fence where attendance will be taken. If necessary the children and staff will relocate to the Nursery School or Stevenson Gym. Staff will insure each child's safety and comfort. The Director or teacher in charge will notify parents via cell phone.

Enrollment Policy:

The Children's Center accepts children without discrimination in regards to sex, race, creed, or national origin. Every effort is made to accommodate children with disabilities (with or without an aide, as applicable).

Enrollment priority is given in the following order:

1. Bard College employees that are enrolled in the Abigail Lundquist Botstein Nursery School

2. Bard College employees that have previously had children enrolled at the center
3. Students attending Bard College
4. Non Bard College employees that work on campus
5. Community members

Field Trips:

We do take walks on campus throughout the year. Visits may be planned for the Community Garden, The Fisher Center, the Stevenson Gym, the Library, and the Campus Center. Off campus field trips may take place during the year only when parent drivers are available or a school bus is available for rent.

Fundraising:

The Children's Center relies on fundraising throughout the year. With the profits, the center is able to buy larger items that our budget will not cover. In the past, parents have initiated small and large fundraising events to benefit the center. The center staff will hold fundraising events as well, on a much smaller scale. If you are interested in hosting a fundraising event, please speak to the Director.

Health Care Plan:

The Bard Children's Center is committed to protecting and promoting the health of all children, parents, and staff who participate in our program. The goal of our health care plan is to provide the best possible care for each child. By working together we can achieve a healthy environment for all children, parents, college students, and staff at the center.

Child's Health Records: No child may be enrolled in the Children's Center until the Director receives documentation of the child's immunization and physical examination on the medical form provided to you. The form must be completed and signed by a health care provider before the child begins attending the program and again one year later. This includes documentation of a TB test or a written note from the doctor saying that the test is "not indicated" at this time. Lead tests are also recommended and the medical form should reflect the results of the test or a statement by the doctor that the test was not indicated. If a child is behind or is receiving immunizations at a slower rate, a note from the doctor stating that is required.

Daily Health Information: The Director and/or teacher will carry out a daily health check of each child at his/her time of arrival. Each child will be observed for signs of illness/injury that could affect the child's ability to participate in the day's activities and for signs of abuse or maltreatment as per state regulations. **Children, who arrive at school sick or unable to participate, or become ill during the day, will be sent home.** Any child who becomes ill during the day will rest quietly with a teacher until the child's parent or emergency contact person arrives.

Information about children who attend both Nursery School and the Children's Center, will be shared with the teachers on an ongoing basis.

Planning Ahead For An Ill Child: As a parent choosing to place your child in a group setting, it is important to realize those young children's immune systems is still

developing, thus making them more susceptible to illness. During the first year of school or group care, your child may have an average of 6 episodes of minor illnesses, usually in the form of a cold or virus. It is important to anticipate the fact that you will need an alternative plan for childcare when your child is not well enough to be sent to school. Too often children are sent to school ill with their symptoms masked by medication, unwittingly spreading illness to other children and adults. We ask for every parent's cooperation in keeping their child out of school when ill, to help insure a healthy school environment for all of the children.

Children with any of the following symptoms should be kept home from school:

- *Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting in the previous 24-hour period
- *Thick, colored mucous from the nose (unless determined by a health care professional that it is caused by a non-contagious condition such as an allergy)
- *Extreme coughing that prevents the child from participating in the program
- *Impetigo
- *Mouth sores
- *Ear infection if accompanied by fever and pain. Ear infections themselves are not contagious but the bacteria or virus that causes them can be
- *Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- *Chicken pox- until all lesions have dried and crusted
- *strep - until 24 hours of treatment has begun
- *Infection with head lice, scabies, or pinworms - until 24 hours of treatment has begun. In the case of head lice, the Children's Center has a no-nit policy for attending school
- *Skin rashes - if associated with fever, behavior change or fungal infection (ring worm) should be diagnosed and treated for 24 hours before child returns to school
- *Measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis, hib, and tuberculosis
- *Antibiotic use - child being treated for infection should be kept home until 24 hours after the first dose

Incident/Accident Reports: As per NYS regulations, the staff is required to track and document all incident and accidents that happen at the center while your child is in our care. A copy of the report will be sent home, filed in your child's file, and filed a copy filed in our incident/accident report book. If your child should require medical attention, please be sure a copy of the report is taken to the doctor.

Medication: The only medication the center will administer is over the counter topical ointments, sunscreen, and insect repellent, upon the written instructions from a parent or guardian. If a child is on prescription or non-prescription medication, it should be administered before or after school, or parents can come in to school to administer the medication to their child. The center is not authorized to administer any prescription drugs. Whenever possible and only if desired, parents are asked to apply sunscreen and insect repellent to their child at home before school. We will apply again if needed in the afternoon.

EpiPens: In case of a severe allergy, the center is admitted to administer an epipen and/or Benedry with a doctor's note and a waiver from the state.

Emergency Care:

If a child is in need of immediate emergency care, the Director or teacher in charge will:

*Call 911

*Contact the parent, guardian, or emergency contact

*Accompany child to the hospital and remain until parents or guardian arrives

Hand Washing:

Hand washing is done several times throughout the day. Children wash hands after using the bathroom, before eating, after eating, after outside play, after handling animals, and after art activities. Children are supervised during hand washing in order to provide proper guidance and insure proper procedure.

Holidays:

Although we do not celebrate religious holidays in school, we would like to know about each child's tradition so that we can share the information with the children and recognize each child's experience. We welcome parents to visit and share traditions with us. If you have any questions or comments about holiday celebrations, please do not hesitate to speak to the teacher or director.

Late Fees:

Please abide by the schedule you have been contracted for. After first late pick up, you will be given a warning. After the first warning, there will be a fine of \$5.00 per every 15 minute increments before 5:30 pm. If you pick up late any time after 5:30, you will be fined \$20.00 for each late pick up. After 6 times of late pick - ups, the fine will increase to \$40.00 anytime after 5:30. Our late fees after 5:30 pm are heavily weighted due to the fact that our center is not licensed by the state to care for children after 5:30 pm. Any child here after 5:30 puts our center in jeopardy of losing our license

Lunches:

Children are to bring a lunch if they are attending the center after 12:00pm. We suggest that you discuss your child's lunch choices, so it's not a surprise at lunchtime. Please label your child's lunch box and any reusable containers. We encourage warm food be kept in a thermos, and cold foods should include an ice pack in the lunch box. Please include utensils if needed. Please include water or 100% juice. Please do not pack candy, soda, or gum. You may choose to put a "dessert" like food in your child's lunch box, but please understand that we allow children to eat their food in any order they wish. We find that if we ask them to wait to eat their dessert food, they become distracted by that treat and tend not to eat their "growing food". We want children to feel successful at lunch. We will save any unopened piece of food or anything that can be recovered by its original container or wrapper. We will not save half eaten yogurt, applesauce, or juice boxes.

If the staff finds that a child's lunch is inadequate and/or completely unhealthy, the staff has the right to compliment the child's lunch with added fruits, vegetables, and proteins.

Mail:

Mailboxes are located in the entranceway. Each family has their own labeled with their child's name. Please check your mailbox daily for any notes, invoices, newsletters, and artwork.

Make-Up Days:

There are not make-up days for sick or vacation days. If your child misses a day, you may add an extra day if room allows, but you are required to pay an additional fee for that day. The fee is based upon your contracted hourly rate. All make-up days need to be approved by the Director.

Nap and Rest Time:

After lunch there will be a nap/rest time for the children who attend nursery school in the AM session or children who attend the children's center full time. Each child will bring a crib fitted sheet, blanket, and a small pillow that will be used on a rest mat. Please label all items and store in a bag that will be kept at the center. Nap items will be sent home 2-3 times a month for washing. Parents will be required to sign off on the center's nap policy according to the NYS regulations.

Nursery School:

The Abigail Lundquist Botstein Nursery School is located adjacent to our center. Nursery School holds a 3-year-old session from 8:45-11:30 am and a 4-year-old session from 12:45-3:30. Most children who attend the Nursery School attend the Children's Center for an extended day. Nursery School and the Children's Center work very closely together, however enrollment in one program does not guarantee enrollment in the other program. We often do our best to accommodate all families and their schedules.

Outdoor Play:

We go outside everyday, morning and afternoon. Please make sure your child is dressed with appropriate clothing for large motor activities and for the weather. We encourage you to dress your child in layers to accommodate quick weather changes. Also, please be sure to avoid flip-flops or loose fitting shoes to ensure proper safety. If you feel your child is not well enough to go outside, than your child should remain at home.

Parent Concerns:

If you have a concern or complaint about our program, please do the following:

1. Speak to your child's teacher, if relevant.
2. Speak to the Director
3. If your concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed, please contact New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Parent Participation:

The Children's Center has an open door policy for any parent who wishes to come visit their child during the day. We also encourage parents to come and read a story to the group, share a talent, or lead an art project.

Parent - Teacher Conferences:

Parent – Teacher conferences will be held in May only by the request of a parent or the Director. If you feel you need to address any concerns or questions prior to May, please be sure to speak to the teacher, and a meeting time will be arranged.

Snack:

The center provides the snack, however there is a fee of \$100 per year to help cover the snack charges. All snacks are healthy and always accompanied with a fresh fruit and/or vegetable. Water is served as the beverage. The snack menu is posted in the kitchen. The 4 year olds snack is offered for 1 hour during the morning activity time. Snack is an activity choice and within that hour, children may choose when to eat snack. Teachers will always encourage children to visit the snack table and will always announce “last call”. The 3 year olds snack will be eaten together as a group.

Scheduling:

Upon enrollment, you are asked to fill out a contract for fall and spring semester. If you need to change your contract at some point, please contact the Director with at least a one-month notice. Every effort will be made to honor your request, based upon availability.

School Calendar:

The center’s calendar follows the college holiday calendar. Additional closing days are scheduled for staff development and center turnover between spring and summer sessions. The center is open during January intersession. At this time a summer session will be determined on a yearly basis.

Sick Days and Absences:

Please call in the morning to report if your child will be absent. If your child is sick, please be sure to let us know the symptoms or diagnosis. We often will track illnesses to prevent an outbreak. If you know of a planned absence, please let us know in advance. You are required to pay tuition regardless of absence.

Staff:

1 full - time teachers and 2 part - time teachers staff the classrooms. The rest of the teacher/child ratio is made up by part time Bard Students. The child/teacher ratio is 7:1, however, the center is normally staffed with a 4:1 ratio. As a center policy, a teacher will never be left alone in the center regardless if the numbers falls below 7 children.

All teachers are qualified under the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. All staff is required by law to have a medical exam upon hiring and every other year that follows. Staff is required by law to be fingerprinted and to complete a form from the State Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment.

Throughout the year, staff attends Early Childhood trainings as mandated by OCFS. Staff is required to attend 30 hours of training in a 2-year licensing period.

Toilet Trained:

Being that we are a preschool center, children should be toilet trained upon their first day of enrollment. We do not have facilities to properly change diapers. If a child needs a pull up during naptime, we can accommodate that, however, we will try to phase the child out of that once he/she shows signs of readiness. If occasional accidents occur we will assist your child, but will encourage independence.

Please never force a child to become toilet trained before they are developmentally ready.

Toys From Home:

Often children want to bring toys from home, which can lead to unnecessary problems. If your child needs to bring something to school, we ask that you limit it to a book or a CD that can be shared with the group. If your child needs to bring a special stuffed animal to help him/her transition easier, they may do so. However, the stuffed animal will be put away once your child has settled.

Wish List:

We have many items that would be useful here at the center. Please keep us in mind when cleaning out your house browsing at garage sales. We just ask that everything be in good shape. We also have suggestions for new purchases.

Child size dress up clothes	Garden tools
Dress up shoes	Kitchen utensils (rolling pins, potato mashers, measuring spoons, etc)
Table cloths	Marbles
Dolls in excellent condition	Wood scraps
Doll furniture	Construction tools (hammers, screwdrivers, mallets, etc)
Beads	Yarn
Buttons	
Gift-wrap	
Egg cartons	
Wallpaper samples	
Carpet samples	
Yogurt containers	
Board games	
Puzzles	

*We would like to thank The Wimpfheimer Nursery School Program for their permission to use excerpts from their parent handbook.

