

Great Beginnings Early Learning Center Parent Handbook

Great Beginnings Early Learning Center is a preschool facility located in Monterey. We offer full-time and part-time care for children ages two to six years. We are committed to creating an environment that provides authentic and relevant learning experiences for children. It is our goal to help all children reach their full potential by honoring them as unique individuals. By drawing on a child's natural desire to investigate their world, we hope to instill a love of learning that will carry with them throughout their lives.

We value the relationships that we form with families enrolled in our program. Good communication between teachers and parents is essential in providing the best possible environment for the children enrolled in Great Beginnings. If at any time you have questions or concerns regarding any aspect of your child's education or development, please don't hesitate to talk with your child's teacher or the center director.

Days and Hours of Operations

Monday through Friday
7:30 AM to 5:30 PM

Holidays

Great Beginnings will be closed for the following holidays. Payment is due for these holidays if they fall on your family's contracted days.

- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day & the following Friday
- In addition to these holidays we will close for two weeks around Christmas and New Year's
- We will also close up to four days per year for staff development and training. Parents will be given 60 days notice as to these dates.

Tuition Rates and Fees

Tuition rates are determined by the number of contracted days your child attends Great Beginnings Early Learning Center. Tuition is paid for the days your child is registered and is due regardless of their attendance. There is a \$100 registration fee due at the time you enroll your child. A thirty day notice is required to make any changes to your child's schedule. This includes dropping days or terminating services. If it is not possible to provide a thirty day notice full payment may be made in lieu of notice. Payment is due in advance each month on the first day of the month. Families are given a five day grace period on their monthly payment. Payments that are not received **by the morning** of the fifth day of the month will incur a late charge of \$15.00 per day. If payment is not received **by the**

morning of the 10th day of the month your child will not be able to attend Great Beginnings until the bill is paid. Families who are enrolled three or more days per week have the option of splitting their monthly payment in two. The bi-monthly payments are due on the 1st and 15th of each month. There is a five day grace period on bimonthly payments as well. Payments not received **by the morning** on the 20th of the month will incur a \$15.00 per day late fee. If payment is not received **by the morning** of the 25th of the month your child will not be allowed to attend until the balance is paid in full.

Arrivals and Departures

It is the parent's responsibility to provide transportation to and from Great Beginnings Early Learning Center each day. In the morning upon arrival, please assist your child in putting their items into their cubby, their lunch into the refrigerator or food cabinet and washing their hands at the sink. You need to sign your child in and out each day on the sign in sheet. Please use your full legal signature. After you sign your child in please assist them in washing their hands at the sink. This is a very effective way to help cut down on the spread of germs with in the classroom.

You are welcome and encouraged to join your child in "The Gathering Place" to read a story and help them transition into the program. You may also join your child at any of the activity centers within the classroom. We invite you to take your time and spend a few minutes in the classroom with your child. If your child is having a difficult time separating from you, one of our staff will be there to assist you. It is important that you always let your child know that you are leaving and say good-bye. Keep it upbeat, let them know that you love them and will be back later that day. If your child experiences difficulty at departure on a regular basis, talk to his or her teacher or the director so we can work together to make this transition a little easier.

In order to minimize distractions for the other students, and give your child the opportunity to fully enjoy our program, we ask that all drop- offs occur prior to 9:30. If your circumstance is such that this will not work for you, please talk to the director to see if we are able to accommodate your needs. No drop-offs may occur in the preschool room during small group time, no exceptions. This is from 10:30 to 11:30 each day. The teachers need to be

focusing their attention on their group of children, and we have found that drop-offs during this time are too disruptive.

Our regular hours of operation are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. We do offer extended hours of 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM for families who must be to work by 8:00 and who get off of work at 5:00. There is limited space for these times. Please let us know if you need these extended hours. If there is no space available you will be placed on a waiting list.

Great Beginnings closes promptly at 5:30. The teachers at Great Beginnings work long hours and most of them have families and/or attend evening classes to further their professional development. Out of respect for them, we insist that parents are prompt in picking up their children. There is a late fee of two dollars per minute that will be charged beginning at 5:31 PM. This fee is to be paid, in cash, directly to the closing teacher on your child's next day. Repeated late pick-ups will result in a termination of the contract for care. Please make sure you arrive with enough time to gather your child and their belongings and be leaving the school by 5:30.

Meals and Snacks

Great Beginnings Early Learning Center provides the children with two snacks per day. One in the morning at approximately 9:30 and one in the afternoon at approximately 3:30. The snacks consist of two different items from two separate food groups. Some sample snacks would be bananas and graham crackers, carrot sticks and bagels, cheese and Ritz Crackers or peanut butter and crackers. If your child arrives after the morning snack time please be sure to provide them with a snack at home. Parents are welcome and encouraged to provide a class snack if they so wish. If you are interested in providing a class snack discuss it with me so we can coordinate it with our snack schedule. If your child has any food allergies or restrictions please make sure to list them on the Enrollment Questionnaire.

Parents are responsible for providing lunch and milk for their children each day. We ask that you please only send healthy foods in your child's lunch, no cookies, candy or chips. We do have a microwave if you are sending something that needs to be heated. Please send your child's lunch in an insulated lunch box if it needs to be kept cold. Milk can be sent in a cup labeled with your child's name, to be kept in the refrigerator until lunch. We ask that the food you send be appropriate for your child to feed themselves. Gaining self-help skills is very important for children. Learning to feed themselves is a big milestone for toddlers, and one that we value.

Naptime

The children will be provided with a rest time each day. All children will be asked to lay down on their mats and rest. Children who do not nap will be given quiet activities to do while resting on their mats, such as reading books, coloring, or doing puzzles. As children wake up they will be provided other quiet activities or outside play time while the other children wake up. Naptime occurs roughly between 1:15 and 3:00 each day.

Parents will need to provide a crib sheet, blanket and pillowcase, labeled with your child's name for rest time. The pillowcase will be used to store your child's mat sheet and blanket during the week. The pillowcase, blanket, and mat sheet will be sent home at the end of each week for laundering. Your child is also encouraged to bring any special comfort item they may have for nap time, such as a stuffed animal or special lovie.

Child Supplies

Child's Clothing

Please make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for his or her day at Great Beginnings. We try to play outside every day, so please be sure to send a jacket or sweatshirt. Appropriate shoes are also necessary. Sandals and open toe shoes aren't generally safe for active outdoor play. If you child has a pair of sandals that they insist on wearing, please send an alternate pair of shoes that we can use as a back up. We find that Velcro tennis shoes work very well. With Velcro "laces" the children are able to experience the success of being able to put their shoes on and take them off by themselves.

Please keep in mind that children often get messy during their day here. While we do our best to protect their clothing, by wearing paint smocks etc., things happen. It's best to dress them in clothes that can get messy.

Please use a permanent marker to label the tags on your children's clothing. This will help us keep track of everything and prevent it from being sent home with the wrong family.

Things to Bring

Families are responsible for providing diapers, wipes and ointment cream (if needed). You will also need to provide two changes of clothing, including socks. We will store these items here and will let you know when they need to be replaced.

Things Not to Bring

Please do not bring any candy, gum, money or coins to Great Beginnings at any time. Some children have a particularly difficult time sharing toys from home. For this reason we ask that children do not bring toys from home into the classroom. The one exception to this rule is if your child has a special “lovie” or comfort item. We have found that most children understand and are very respectful of other children’s special “lovies.”

Health Policy

Preventative Measures

We do our best to prevent illness by practicing frequent hand washing. Children are encouraged to cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing. Great Beginnings offers well childcare only, children with any contagious illness other than the common cold, will be required to stay home.

Illness

Children who have mild cold symptoms, such as coughing, sneezing or a runny nose will be allowed to attend Great Beginnings, as long as they are in good spirits and are able to participate in the day’s activities. A child who is not feeling well, cries for mommy or daddy, needs to be held throughout the day or is unable to participate in their usual activities, will need to remain at home.

Any of the following symptoms are reason for exclusion. If these symptoms are present within 24 hours the child will need to remain at home. If these symptoms present themselves while your child is in care, you will be called to come and get your child immediately. You will have a **maximum** of thirty minutes to pick up your child from the time we call you. If you are unable to make it here in that time you must make arrangements for someone from your emergency list to pick them up.

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher
- Symptoms and signs of severe illness such as lethargy that is more than expected tiredness, uncontrollable coughing, inexplicable or persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing or other unusual signs for the child
- Diarrhea within 24 hours
- Vomiting within 24 hours
- Mouth sores unless determined non contagious by a doctor
- Unexplained rash
- Conjunctivitis- defined as the whites of the eye being pink or red and having white, yellow or green discharge from the eyes
- Head Lice- child must remain home until treated and nit free

Your child may return to Great Beginnings 24 hours after the symptoms of illness have ended or the child has been on antibiotics (if deemed necessary by a doctor) for a full 24 hours and is no longer contagious. If you are unsure whether or not your child should attend due to illness please call and discuss it with me.

Dental or Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency staff will call 911 and then immediately notify the parents. For a dental emergency staff will first notify the parents and then the child's dentist if necessary.

Medication

Medications should be administered at home whenever possible. If it is necessary to administer medication during the time your child is in attendance, the following criteria must be met.

- All medication must be in its original packaging with dosage instructions. Only dosages listed on the packaging will be given. A dosage spoon, syringe, or cup must accompany the medication.
- A signed medication administration form must be filled out and signed each time medication is to be administered.
- Prescription medication must be current.
- Non-prescription medication must be labeled with the child's name.
- Sunscreen falls under the category of medication and is subject to these same guidelines.

Guidance and Discipline

One of our main goals at Great Beginnings Early Learning Center is to help children learn to be in charge of themselves. We believe in establishing consistent and understandable limits and responding to inappropriate behavior with insight, sensitivity and skill. When clear, consistent and age appropriate limits are in place, children become increasingly responsible for themselves. When unacceptable behaviors do occur, we believe it is important for children to understand why the behavior is inappropriate and how to modify it.

The Environment

We try to create an interesting and caring environment with plenty of developmentally appropriate activities, preventing many unacceptable behaviors from ever developing. Clear limits are set for the children, but the environment is arranged so that a minimal number of "no's" are necessary. We try to maintain a flexible schedule that can be adjusted to meet the needs of the children, for example going outside early if the children have extra

energy and can't stop running around the room. Whenever there are problems occurring within the group we first look at what we can do or change in the environment to help their behavior.

Modeling Acceptable Behavior

We make it a priority to model positive interactions and communication between the children and teachers. Teachers handle difficult situations in a calm and respectful manner, which gives the children a positive example to follow. We help the children "use their words" to resolve conflicts.

Keep it Positive

We use verbal methods to reinforce positive behavior. The teachers at Great Beginnings always try to phrase suggestions and instructions in a positive way. For example, "Use your walking feet please" instead of "No running." We also provide praise and thank the children when we see them making good choices and exhibiting appropriate behavior.

Redirection and Choices

When unacceptable behaviors do occur we first try to redirect the child to a more appropriate choice. The teachers will give a simple direction, focusing on what the child can do. For example "You may not throw the blocks. You can throw the ball instead." We let the children make choices about how they might handle a difficult situation. "Bobby is using the red ball right now; you may choose the green ball or wait until he is finished."

Respect for Others

Children are encouraged to be respectful toward one another. When a child behaves inappropriately toward another child we talk about why the behavior is unacceptable and how it might make the other person feel. Together we try to come up with a better way to handle the situation next time. Sometimes we try to think of something that might make the other person feel better.

Take a Break

As a last resort a child may be asked to take a break from the other children or a particular activity. This method is used only when all other methods have failed to work, or when a child needs to be removed from a situation to regain control of his or her behavior. This final step is used very sparingly, as its overuse makes it ineffective. A teacher will always sit and talk with the child to make sure they understand why a break was necessary, and how they might handle it better in the future.

Under no circumstances will anyone at Great Beginnings Early Learning Center use any form of corporal punishment such as spanking or hitting. Staff will not use discipline techniques that humiliate or intimidate or frighten the children in our care.

It is very important that teachers and parents work together to help children work through any challenging behaviors. If there are negative behaviors occurring in the classroom the teacher will discuss the behavior with parents. The teacher will give suggestions on how the parents can reinforce the things we are working on at home. If a child is engaging in behaviors that are dangerous to himself or other children in the class the teacher will request a formal conference with the child, his family, the teacher and the director. Together we will all come up with a plan of action to support the child in making more appropriate choices.

At Great Beginnings Early Learning Center we are committed to helping all children reach their full potential. However, if we have exhausted all possible ideas in helping a child work through difficulties they may be having and are still not seeing improvements, the parents and director may need to examine the possibility that the child may be better served in a different environment. Ultimately this decision is left to the discretion of the director, who must weigh the needs of the child and family as well as the needs of the other children in the center.

Parent Involvement

Open Door Policy

Great Beginnings maintains an open door policy. You are welcome to stop by and visit your child throughout the day. We do ask however that you try not to visit during nap-time as this can be disruptive to the children.

Visitors

Visitors such as family members or friends are welcome at Great Beginnings Early Learning Center; they must however be approved by me in advance and accompanied by the parent.

Volunteers

Parent volunteers are always welcome and encouraged. If you have a special interest or talent that you would like to share with the children please let me know. If you would like to volunteer in the classroom please talk to me and we can discuss ways in which you can help.

Holidays & Special Occasions

Parents are welcome to bring snacks or other items for holidays and special occasions. If you would like to bring something to share with the class please discuss it with me.

Field Trips

At times Great Beginnings will offer field trips for the children and families. This is something that is only possible with a lot of parent volunteers. More information will be given on a case by case basis when we are organizing the trips. We hope that all parents who are able to participate will.

Toilet Teaching

We will assist your child in learning how to use the toilet when your child demonstrates that he or she is interested and ready to begin learning. This will be done in conjunction with the same activities at home. For sanitary reasons we do not use potty chairs. We have three child sized potties for the children to use. Learning to use the toilet is a huge developmental milestone. When it is done at the child's pace and on their own terms it gives them a great sense of accomplishment. When your child starts showing an interest in the toilet, either at home or at school we will discuss how we can work together as a team to best support your child.

Photographs

We frequently take candid photographs of the children engaged in various activities throughout the day. We use these photographs to display in the room to enhance the children's learning and keep parents involved in our daily activities. We use them in our facility binder, which is shown to prospective clients, as well as on our web site.

In Closing

We want to thank you for the opportunity to care for your child. We look forward to getting to know your family and building a respectful and long-lasting relationship. Remember, if you have any questions or concerns regarding the care of your child or the program we offer, please don't hesitate to talk to us.