

PARENT HANDBOOK

Bright Beginnings Learning Center

Because We Care

3225 Laplace Street

Chalmette, LA 70043

License #16259

Hours: 6:30 AM – 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday

Contents

1 Welcome & Our Program

Our History • Loving Care • Educational Program

2 Enrollment & Admission

Procedure for Admission • Immunization • First Day • Early Termination

3 Daily Operations

Daily Schedules • Technology • Photograph & Video • Water Policy

4 Health & Safety

Sick Policy • Infectious Disease Control • Safe Sleep Practices

5 Behavior & Guidance

Behavior Management • Biting Policy • Dismissal Policy

6 Family Rights, Privacy & Legal

Confidentiality • Non-Discrimination • ATF • Abuse & Neglect • Licensing & Concerns

Parent Acknowledgment

Signature page

SECTION 1 • WELCOME & OUR PROGRAM

Our History

Bright Beginnings Learning Center has been in existence since March 1995 under the directorship of Mrs. Deborah Rareshide. Prior to opening Bright Beginnings, Mrs. Rareshide worked in the private school system as a Pre-Kindergarten teacher assistant. During her five-year tenure in the private school system, Mrs. Rareshide attended Nunez Community College and received her associate of arts degree in early childhood education. After receiving her degree, Mrs. Rareshide opened Bright Beginnings Learning Center and prides herself on providing a quality learning center that follows the best practices in child care services. In the summer of 2014 the center was turned over to Leslie Christoffer.

Mrs. Leslie Christoffer has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of New Orleans and a Master's degree in Social Work from Southern University at New Orleans. Mrs. Christoffer has been with Bright Beginnings since November 1995 and has held many positions, from cook to teacher. Mrs. Christoffer currently holds the position of Director and Owner of Bright Beginnings Learning Center.

In August 2005, Bright Beginnings Learning Center was closed due to Hurricane Katrina. After several years of planning, Bright Beginnings Learning Center reopened in August 2008.

Upon reopening the center, Mrs. Rareshide and Mrs. Christoffer were dedicated to maintaining the quality of care it has always provided. In maintaining that quality of care, Bright Beginnings Learning Center participated in the Quality Rating System, and the center's goal is to provide better than minimal care to the children who attend. Bright Beginnings upholds the standards of high-quality child-to-teacher interaction, low child-to-teacher ratios, and growth and development of strong social-emotional skills.

We are currently participating in the ACT 3 Cohort 3 as part of the St. Bernard Early Childhood Coalition. This brings all early childhood centers and the public school system together to create a seamless and successful entry into the school system. The children who attend Bright Beginnings Learning Center will have the opportunity to learn through child-directed play. This environment is essential in developing the skills children need to be productive and successful in school. Bright Beginnings prides itself on upholding a "family environment" and encourages parental and family involvement.

SECTION 1 · WELCOME & OUR PROGRAM

Loving Care

“Your child is our child,” and we treat them just like that. All activities at Bright Beginnings are warm, loving extensions of the home environment designed to help your child feel comfortable in his or her new surroundings. You will see your child experience a wholesome, fun-filled day of love and laughter while learning to be polite, experiencing independence, and learning through play — while being given that extra hug and kiss when needed.

At Bright Beginnings we realize that each child has individual needs, likes, and dislikes. It is with this in mind that open channels of communication between parents and teachers are necessary. To keep parents aware of their children's activities, teachers provide daily and monthly communication through notes and calendars. Please keep those channels open so that together we may enhance your child's abilities rather than stifle them.

Educational Program

The educational component at Bright Beginnings Learning Center follows Louisiana's Early Learning Guidelines and Program Standards. Research has proven that “high quality, relationship-based programs avoid ‘early-learner burn-out’ by providing opportunities for child-directed play and exploration as opposed to teacher-directed lessons and projects.” This is done through modeling behavior, positive relationships, and arrangement of the environment.

Children from birth through 36 months will:

- Learn about others
- Learn about themselves
- Learn to express feelings
- Learn about communication
- Learn about the world
- Learn about moving and doing

Developmentally appropriate play will support this natural process of social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development and prepare your child for a life of learning.

Children from 3 years through 5 years will:

- **Develop Social and Emotional Skills** — such as self-esteem, positive attitude, cooperation, pro-social behavior, family, and diversity
- **Develop Language and Literacy** — through listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- **Develop Cognitive, Math, Science, and Social Studies Skills** — such as number concepts, measurement, geometry and spatial awareness, data collection and interpretation, patterns and

relationships, and cause and effect

- **Develop Natural Creativeness** — through music appreciation, creative movement, visual arts, and dramatic expression
- **Develop Health and Physical Awareness** — such as hygiene, nutrition, and gross and fine motor skills

Our program standards

Bright Beginnings Learning Center upholds the program standards of Close, Caring Relationships; Safe and Healthy Practices; Connections with Family; Knowledgeable, Responsive Caregivers; and Opportunity for Staff's Professional Growth. In following these standards, your child will learn to love, and love to learn, through self-guided, developmentally appropriate play.

We incorporate a curriculum that has been approved by the Department of Education and meets the current standards for children birth to 5 years.

Transitions

Our program also offers children an opportunity to transition through all stages and ages comfortably. When children begin their stay with Bright Beginnings, we provide three transition days to visit with parents at no charge. This allows children and parents to feel comfortable in a new setting and reduces anxiety. As children move to new classes, they will spend half days with the new teacher to create a comfortable transition as they age. When leaving our center to enter "big school," we provide parents with information on open houses for surrounding schools and offer before- and after-care.

SECTION 2 · ENROLLMENT & ADMISSION

Procedure for Admission

The admission procedure shall include the following:

1. An interview with the parent or guardian and child to secure the necessary information pertaining to the child, as well as a tour of the center. Any child receiving state funding will apply for admission through the St. Bernard Childhood Network. No child will be admitted without all necessary forms needed for admittance by the state, which includes but is not limited to up-to-date shot records.
2. Parents or guardians will be provided with the handbook for the center and all posted policies pertaining to the center, as well as a resource directory.
3. Parents or guardians are informed of all procedures the center abides by, including our open door policy and their freedom to visit the center at any time without the need for an appointment.
4. Transition days will be scheduled before the child is admitted to the center. Our reason for this is to have the child and parent/guardian become accustomed to our daily routine and be comfortable in their new surroundings.

Immunization

An up-to-date immunization record for every child attending Bright Beginnings must be provided by the parent before the child will be accepted into the center. It is now required that all children receive the Chicken Pox vaccine as well as the Hepatitis B vaccine.

If for any reason you decline vaccinations for your child, you must provide the center with a letter of dissent. In signing the letter of dissent, it is understood that in the event of an occurrence of disease or illness in the center, your child will not be able to return until there is no longer any danger of infection (usually a 21-day period).

Parent responsibility: Every time immunizations are due and/or given, the parent is responsible for bringing the updated record and/or notice of postponed immunizations to the office for documentation in the child's file.

SECTION 2 · ENROLLMENT & ADMISSION

Your Child's First Day

A special welcome is shown to all our new children. Parents are reminded that this is a brand-new environment and some adjustment time may be required. Please do not get discouraged, as your child looks to you for encouragement. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Prepare your child before arrival and share positive ideas about what they will be doing during the day. When your child is picked up, encourage them to share the experiences they had during the day. Remember, each day will offer an exciting learning experience for him or her.
- Feel free to spend as much time as needed in the morning to help your child get settled, but keep in mind that lingering too long may create more distress when you do leave. A loving kiss and hug says a lot, and we will comfort any child in need.
- Help your child put his or her belongings in his or her personal cubby. Hand washing in the morning is also a great way to ease the separation.
- Anything that promotes security is encouraged (blanket, stuffed animal, etc.) as long as it fits in the cubby.
- Feel free to call the center during the day if that will ease your concerns about how he or she is doing.

Early Termination

A **two-week notice** must be given in writing to Bright Beginnings Learning Center; otherwise, the parent or guardian is responsible for two weeks' tuition.

SECTION 3 · DAILY OPERATIONS

Daily Schedules

Hours of operation 6:30 AM – 6:00 PM Monday through Friday	Arrival deadline No later than 8:30 AM	Maximum stay 10 hours per day
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- Bright Beginnings Learning Center's hours of operation are 6:30 AM – 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday.
- Children should arrive no later than 8:30 AM, and **no child will be accepted after 8:30 AM without a doctor's note** (this includes dentist and WIC appointments as well as any type of occupational therapy). Even with a doctor's note, no child will be accepted after 11:00 AM.
- No child will be permitted to remain in the center in excess of 10 hours per day.

Please keep in mind that daily schedules are flexible and may change with the growing needs of the children.

Infants set their own schedule and are taken outside for a minimum of 30 minutes per day (weather permitting).

In inclement weather, children are allowed outside play along the covered walkways, or indoor centers are extended to allow for additional large motor activities.

Water Policy

Bright Beginnings has no wading or swimming pools on the premises. We provide supervised water activities, which include water tables (inside and outside), water painting (outside), and sprinklers (outside, summer months only).

SECTION 3 · DAILY OPERATIONS

Technology Policy

Any activities involving electronic devices, including but not limited to television, movies, games, videos, computers, and handheld devices, shall adhere to the following:

- Electronic devices and activities are not allowed for children under the age of two.
- A time limit of 20 minutes per day.
- Any devices that allow internet access will be monitored and have age-appropriate parental controls to prevent any inappropriate access or activity.
- Any program, movie, or game aimed at adult audiences (including but not limited to soap operas, news, and sports programs) with violent or adult content will be prohibited.
- All activities shall be suitable for the youngest child present, and nothing more than a G rating shall be allowed (children over 5 years of age will be allowed activities with a PG rating only with written permission of a parent/guardian).

Photograph & Video Policy

It is the policy of Bright Beginnings that any photograph or video of a child taken at the center will be used solely for the purpose of displaying within the classroom, for special events put on by the center, and/or posted to our private Facebook group.

We ask that parents and employees do not take any photos from the center (personal or already posted) to display on their personal social media if children aside from their own are pictured.

Bright Beginnings Learning Center also utilizes live recording of all classrooms and play yards for security and insurance purposes. These live feeds can only be viewed live by the Director.

SECTION 4 · HEALTH & SAFETY

Sick Policy

The following procedures are necessary for each parent to follow. These guidelines were written in the best interest of all the children and staff at Bright Beginnings. It is hard for our center to remain free of contagious disease if these guidelines are not followed.

1. If symptoms of contagious disease (vomiting, fever, uncontrollable diarrhea [2 or more uncontrolled loose stools], and extreme irritability or excessive sleepiness) develop while the child is in the care of Bright Beginnings, the parent/guardian will be called and the child will have to be picked up **within 1 hour** of onset of symptoms. The child will then be excluded from the center until he/she is **free of symptoms for 24 hours (without the aid of fever-reducing medication) AND has been cleared by his/her pediatrician.**
2. If a child has an above-normal temperature reading of **100.4°F or higher**, the parent will be called and the child will have to be picked up within 1 hour of onset of symptoms. The child will then be excluded from the center until he/she is **free of symptoms for 24 hours (without the aid of fever-reducing medication) AND has been cleared by his/her pediatrician.**
3. If a child is suspected of head lice, scabies, ringworm, conjunctivitis (pink eye), or any other similar disease, the parent will be called and the child will have to be picked up within 1 hour of onset of symptoms. The child will then be excluded from the center until he/she is **cleared by his/her pediatrician.**
4. A doctor's clearance will be required for the child to return to the center after being treated for ANY contagious disease, including but not limited to hand-foot-and-mouth, strep throat, RSV, and COVID.

Doctor's clearance notes

- Any child who is absent from the center for **2 days or longer due to illness** will require a doctor's clearance to return stating that the child is not contagious.
- Any time a child has an **outstanding viral test** (whether for strep, flu, COVID, etc.), the child cannot return until results are received and it is determined that the child is negative or non-contagious.
- All doctor's clearance notes must be returned prior to or upon arrival on the day of return and must have a return date on them. No child will be accepted while a parent is awaiting the doctor to send a note. Please be sure you ask for a note that clears your child to return to school **before** you leave the doctor's office.

Exclusion guidelines

Illness / Symptoms	Exclude Until
Meningococcal Disease	Well and proof of non-carriage
HIB Disease	Well and proof of non-carriage
Hepatitis A	One week after illness started and fever-free for 24 hours
AIDS or HIV Infection	Until child's health, neurological development, behavior, and immune status is deemed appropriate by qualified persons, including the child's health care provider and center director
Undiagnosed Generalized Rash	Cleared by pediatrician/dermatologist as non-contagious

Parents acknowledge this Sick Policy on the Parent Acknowledgment page at the end of this handbook.

SECTION 4 · HEALTH & SAFETY

Infectious Disease Control Policy

Staff and children shall wash their hands, at least, at the following times:

- Upon entering the center
- Before and after preparing or serving meals
- Before and after eating meals and snacks
- Any time hands become soiled with bodily fluids (urine, stool, saliva, blood, nasal discharge)
- Before and after messy play (paint, sand, water, etc.)
- After toileting or diapering
- After returning indoors from outside play

Procedures ensure that both staff and children use running water, soap, and automatic dryers or single-use towels. Hands are scrubbed for at least 20 seconds with running warm water and soap. These procedures are monitored regularly by the director and staff.

- Noses shall be blown or wiped with disposable, single-use tissues that are discarded in a plastic-lined, hands-free, covered garbage can.
- Draining or oozing cuts or sores shall be covered at all times.
- Staff maintain routine procedures for handling any bodily fluids and excrement (vomit, urine, blood, and feces):
 - Floors, walls, bathrooms, tabletops, toys, kitchen countertops, and diaper-changing tables shall be cleaned with soap and water and then disinfected with a bleach and water solution.
 - When cleaning contaminated areas, staff shall use gloves. Mops shall be cleaned and rinsed in a sanitizing solution, wrung as dry as possible, and then hung to dry.
 - Contaminated materials and diapers shall be disposed of in a plastic bag, tied, and discarded in a plastic-lined, hands-free, covered garbage can.
- The center is cleaned (swept, mopped, vacuumed) on a daily basis as well as after all meals and as needed. This includes all bathrooms and food preparation areas.
- All toys are sanitized on a daily basis, and sanitizing bins are provided to remove contaminated toys from the play area as needed.
- All soft toys and bedding are washed weekly or on an as-needed basis.

SECTION 4 · HEALTH & SAFETY

Safe Sleep Practices

- All infants shall be placed on their backs for sleeping. Written permission from the child's physician is required for any other sleeping position. A notice of exception to this requirement shall be posted on or near the baby's crib and shall specify the alternate sleep position.
- Infants shall not be placed in positioning devices for sleeping unless the child has a note on file from the doctor authorizing the device.
- All infants' cribs shall be free of toys and other soft bedding, including fluffy blankets, comforters, pillows, stuffed animals, and wedges, when the child is in the crib.
- Nothing shall be placed over the head or face of the infant. If a blanket is used, the infant shall be placed with the feet to the foot of the mattress, with only a light blanket tucked in along the sides and foot of the mattress. The blanket shall not come up higher than the child's chest.
- The room shall be maintained at a temperature not to exceed 75 degrees.
- Staff shall visually check on sleeping infants often.
- Infants shall be given the opportunity each day for supervised play while positioned on their stomachs.

SECTION 5 • BEHAVIOR & GUIDANCE

Behavior Management Policy

It is the policy of Bright Beginnings that:

- No child shall be subject to physical punishment, corporal punishment, verbal abuse, or threats.
- Cruel, severe, unusual, or unnecessary punishment shall not be inflicted upon children.
- Derogatory remarks shall not be made in the presence of children about family members of children in care or about the children themselves.
- No child or group of children shall be allowed to discipline another child.
- When a child is removed from the group for disciplinary reasons, he or she shall never be out of sight of a staff member.
- No child shall be deprived of meals or snacks, or any part thereof, for disciplinary reasons.
- No child shall be restrained by any devices, such as high chairs.
- Any method of behavior management that violates the spirit of this standard, even if not specifically mentioned as prohibited, shall not be used.

Our approach: redirection

At Bright Beginnings we use redirection. We feel that with proper redirection, children will learn the correct behaviors and apply them on their own. If any behavior becomes a continuous problem and redirection does not work, then a “*time to think*” will be used, where the child will be placed in a teacher's lap to talk about their behavior and think about the appropriate action.

If within that time the child continues to show unacceptable behavior, he or she will be sent to our director and the parent will be notified. A meeting will be scheduled with the teacher and the director to discuss the behavior and ways to redirect that behavior into a more positive one.

Dismissal Policy

The following are reasons for dismissal of a child from Bright Beginnings Learning Center:

1. Failure to meet the Policy, Procedures, and Tuition Agreement
2. Uncontrolled biting habits of a child, as outlined in the Biting Policy
3. Behavior of a child or parent that endangers another child, parent, or teacher

SECTION 5 · BEHAVIOR & GUIDANCE

Biting Policy

At any given time any child may bite, but it is our belief that if the child's needs are being met, biting will not occur. However, even under the most careful circumstances accidents happen, and if a child has a habit of biting, the following rules will be implemented:

Children of developmentally appropriate behavior and without verbal expression (2 and under)	
First bite	Try to identify a reason for the biting, document the incident (time, activity, mood), and discuss with the teacher ways to avoid or eliminate the behavior.
Second incident	Have a meeting with the parents to determine factors and explain shadowing, as well as consequences for further incidents; our director will work with the child on alternative behaviors.
Third incident (within a consistent pattern)	The child will be given a one-day suspension, and the parent will be asked to contact the child's physician for further advice. If the behavior persists, the parent will have to remove the child from the center until he or she shows improvement.

Children of an expressive age (3 and up)	
First bite	Try to identify a reason for the biting, document the incident (time, activity, mood), and discuss with the teacher ways to avoid or eliminate the behavior. Have a meeting with the parents to determine factors and explain shadowing, as well as consequences for further incidents; our director will work with the child on alternative behaviors.
Second incident	The child will be given a one-day suspension, and the parent will be asked to contact the child's physician for further advice. If the behavior persists, the parent will have to remove the child from the center until he or she shows improvement.

- The child who has been bitten will immediately be consoled (hugs and kisses), the bite will be cleaned with soap and water, and the parent/guardian will be called.
- Please remember that this is a very difficult situation for all involved, and the parents of both children involved feel very uncomfortable. If you have concerns, please address them with the director and not another parent.
- A biting report must be signed and dated and will be given to both the parent of the biter and the parent of the child who was bitten. An incident log will be kept in your child's file for our records.

SECTION 6 · FAMILY RIGHTS, PRIVACY & LEGAL

Confidentiality

The Director or Director Designee will supervise the maintenance of children's records and shall secure those records against loss, tampering, or unauthorized use. The center will also maintain confidentiality of all children's records and will not disclose or knowingly permit the disclosure of any information concerning the children and their families, directly or indirectly, to any unauthorized person. Bright Beginnings will obtain written consent from the parent prior to releasing any information or photographs from which the child might be identified, with the exception of authorized state and federal agencies.

In this technical age of e-mail, Facebook, and texting, it is becoming even harder to maintain the privacy of individuals. Because of this, we ask all employees and parents not to share any information, including pictures taken at school events, through these avenues. All employees sign an agreement to refrain from being “friends” with parents and from sharing personal e-mail addresses and cell numbers.

Contacting the center

If you need to reach anyone at the center, please do so through our school e-mail at **becausewecare123@att.net** (put your teacher's name in the subject line) or call the center directly. If there is a problem after hours, you can reach the Director, Leslie, on her cell at **504-975-3093**.

Non-Discrimination Policy

At Bright Beginnings we do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, handicapping condition, religion, ancestry, or whether a child is being breastfed.

If for any reason Bright Beginnings is unable to provide specialized care for a child due to any disability — be it physical, developmental, or emotional — the parent may provide that service through qualified professionals at their own expense. All ancillary members working with the children must meet all licensing requirements of staff.

SECTION 6 · FAMILY RIGHTS, PRIVACY & LEGAL

Safety & Reporting

ATF Policy (Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms)

Bright Beginnings prohibits the use of alcohol and tobacco, and the use or possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances, fireworks, firearms, and pellet or BB guns (loaded or unloaded) on the child care premises or on any center-sponsored field trip.

Abuse and Neglect Policy

Any suspected abuse and/or neglect of a child will be reported to the local child protection agency in accordance with L.A. R.S. 14:403.

Child Protection Services: 736-7033

Our Open Door & Your Concerns

We hope all parents with children enrolled at Bright Beginnings Learning Center will share with our staff the support and encouragement needed to allow us to be an important part of your child's life. With your help, we feel we can create the "family spirit" needed to make our center a place you will feel comfortable with. Once you have discovered the wonderful experiences your child has grown to love at Bright Beginnings, we encourage you to share those experiences with your family and friends.

We are happy to have you as part of the Bright Beginnings family, where we have an **Open Door Policy** and you are welcome to visit the center anytime during regular hours of operation as long as your child is enrolled. We also welcome parents for several yearly events, including Mother's and Father's Day celebrations, holiday parties, and our Annual Mardi Gras Parade.

If you ever have any concerns about the center or any of its policies, please do not hesitate to express those concerns to the director. The director will gladly set a conference time with you to discuss your concerns.

Bureau of Licensing, Louisiana Department of Education

If for any reason you are still not satisfied with the center and its policies, you may contact the Bureau of Licensing at **(225) 342-9905** or **(877) 435-2721**. A list of current licensing regulations can be found at www.louisianabelieves.com. Always follow up any verbal communication or complaints in writing at ldelicensing@la.gov.

PARENT ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Handbook & Sick Policy Acknowledgment

I have received and read the Bright Beginnings Learning Center Parent Handbook, including the Sick Policy, and I agree to follow the policies and procedures it describes.

Child's name

Parent/Guardian name (print)

Date

Parent/Guardian signature

Date