CREATIVE BEGINNINGS
CHILDCARE CENTER



# PARENT/GUARDIAN

# HANDBOOK

# 2026-2027

Creative Beginnings Childcare Center

2401 Broadway

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(207)883-0881

www.creativebeginningschildcarecenter.com

## INTRODUCTION AND PHILOSOPHY

Welcome to Creative Beginnings Child Care Center, owned and operated by Kerry Falagario and Nichole Page. Creative Beginnings teachers are handpicked for their expertise in child development, as well as their ability to work well with all families. Our teachers hold degrees in early childhood education or a related field and receive 30 hours of training each year. In addition to training, our teachers are supported through classroom observations and evaluations by the director and assistant director.

Here at Creative Beginnings, we feel a child-centered approach is the most effective way for teaching young children. We incorporate natural surroundings into our classrooms and encourage social interaction among the children. Each child brings individual qualities that add to the uniqueness of our program. We strive to provide a strong school-home connection that best supports the needs of families and children.

The staff at our center is caring, well educated, and fosters the idea that the well-being and creative progress of each child is most significant. Our goal is to create a nurturing environment where children feel safe to learn, grow, and explore. Through active hands-on learning, the children will develop emotionally, physically, cognitively, socially, and creatively. We would like to think of our center as a place where the children can consider their home away from home, a place where they are all loved and accepted equally, and where their laughter and play are cherished.

## CENTER OPERATIONS

We are open for operation between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. We are authorized to serve a licensed capacity of 150 children, between the ages of 6 weeks to 7 years.

Our ratios, mandated and in accordance with the State of Maine regulations and guidelines, are as follows:

| Age | Staff to child ratio | Maximum Group Size |
|---|---|---|
| 6 weeks- 1 year | 1:4 | 8 |
| 1 year – 2 ½ years | 1:4<br>1:5 | 12 or<br>10 |
| 2 ½ years – 3 ½ years | 1:7 | 21 |
| 3 years – 5 years | 1:8<br>1:10 | 24 or<br>20 |

### Vacations and Holidays

Creative Beginnings will be closed on the following days listed below:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Labor Day** | Monday, September 7, 2026 |
| **Indigenous Peoples' Day** | Monday, October 12, 2026 |
| **Veterans' Day** | Wednesday, November 11, 2026 |
| **Thanksgiving Day** | Thursday, November 26, 2026 |
| **Day after Thanksgiving** | Friday, November 27, 2026 |
| **Christmas Vacation** | Monday, December 21- Friday, December 25, 2026 |
| **New Year's Day** | Friday, January 1, 2027 |
| **Martin Luther King Jr. Day** | Monday, January 18, 2027 |
| **February Vacation** | Monday, February 15- Friday, February 19, 2027 |
| **April Vacation** | Monday, April 19- Friday, April 23, 2027 |
| **Memorial Day** | Monday, May 31, 2027 |
| **Juneteenth (observed)** | Friday, June 18, 2027 |
| **Independence Day (observed)** | Monday, July 5, 2027 |
| **Labor Day** | Monday, September 6, 2027 |

**Tuition will not change as a result of any closure or absence (including personal vacation or illness) as tuition holds your child's slot at school.**

## ADMINISTRATION

### Tuition and Payment Arrangements

Creative Beginnings offers full-day curriculum between the hours of 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Full-day tuition is as follows:

| | PreK/Preschool | Wee Preschool | Toddler Room | Infant Room |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 Days | $440 | $440 | $440 | $440 |

Payments will be made through ACH for the current week of care. A $50 fee will be charged for any payment returned for insufficient funds. A $10/day late fee will be charged for any payments received after 5:00 on Thursday. Payments can be made weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. Care will be immediately terminated for any account that is two weeks past due.

Please be respectful of our 5:00 closing time. A $5 per minute charge will be added for each minute after 5:00. Families who are consistently (more than once in a seven-day period) picking up after 5:00 will be charged a $20 fee on top of the standard late fees.

A one-time enrollment fee of $100 is due upon enrollment (one fee per family). A $50 per week sibling discount will be offered for families with multiple children enrolled at Creative Beginnings. A $400 nonrefundable deposit will be needed to hold a spot more than two weeks in advance. The $400 will be credited to your first week of tuition. Should you choose not to take the spot once the deposit has been made, the money will not be credited back to you.

### Dismissal of a child by Creative Beginnings administration

Creative Beginnings reserves the right to permanently dismiss a child from Creative Beginnings for any of the following reasons:

- ❖ Child and or parent is requiring an excessive amount of time and energy from staff members, at the expense of the other children in the school.
- ❖ Child continually demonstrates destructive, uncontrolled, or inappropriate behavior, risking the wellbeing of the other children in the school.
- ❖ Parents' failure to comply with the State of Maine Immunization Requirements within 30 days of the child's admission to the facility.
- ❖ Parents' consistent failure to pay tuition.

## Removal of a child by the parent

If you need to withdraw your child from enrollment, Creative Beginnings will require a two-week notice prior to leaving.

## DAILY ROUTINES and PROCEDURES

### Typical Schedule

Each classroom's schedule differs to best meet the needs of the children in the room. Below is a basic schedule for the day.

7:30- Center Opens
7:30-8:30: Guided choices
8:30-8:45: Morning snack
8:45-9:00: Clean up
9:00-11:00: Academics/Outdoor play (timing varies based on classroom)
11:00-11:45: Lunch
11:45-12:00: Lunch cleanup/Get ready for rest
12:00-2:00: Rest
2:00-3:30: Academics/Outdoor play (timing varies based on classroom
3:30-3:45: Afternoon snack
3:45-4:00: Cleanup/ pack up
4:00-5:00: Guided choices/Outdoor play (timing varies based on classroom)

### Arrival

Creative Beginnings provides ample parking for drop off and pick up. For the safety of everyone, please proceed slowly through the parking lot. Please use the main entrance when dropping off and picking up.

If your child is going to be absent from school or will be arriving after 9:00, please call the school before 9:00 so we can plan accordingly.

Please check in with the classroom teacher upon arrival. Children are provided with a cubby to hang their coats and store their belongings.

### Dismissal

When arriving to pick up your child, please retrieve their belongings from their cubby and check their mailbox for any informational handouts or completed work. Please check in with a teacher before leaving with your child

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent or guardian, written permission must be provided prior to pick up. The person picking up must be listed on the authorized pick-up form. Said

person must provide photo ID at pick up. The ID will be copied and stored in the child's file for future reference.

Creative Beginnings closes at 5:00 p.m. As previously mentioned in this handbook, a $5 per minute fee will be charged after 5:00. Families who are consistently (more than once in a seven-day period) picking up after 5:00 will be charged a $20 fee on top of the standard late fees. Please be mindful of having lengthy conversations with your child's teacher close to 5:00. If you have concerns or questions, please feel free to email and your child's teacher will respond during working hours.

## Clothing

Children must arrive completely dressed in comfortable clothing each day. Please keep in mind that the children will be participating in a variety of activities throughout the day both indoor and outdoor, so clothing should always be practical and sensible. Children who are toilet training must be able to independently dress themselves and remove clothing if needed.

We ask that your children bring two complete sets of extra clothing (including socks), and one extra pair of shoes to be stored in a basket at the bottom of their cubby. If your child uses their extra clothing, please bring a new set in immediately. Please check your child's clothing basket frequently to ensure all clothing fits and is seasonally appropriate.

In the winter months please make sure your child has snow pants, boots, hat, mittens, and a winter jacket. Extra hats and gloves would be appreciated. Each child should have a pair of shoes to wear while inside. Please make sure all winter gear is labeled with your child's name.

In the spring and fall months please send a light jacket or a sweatshirt for your child to wear outside.

## What to Bring

Toddler, wee preschool, preschool, and preK children should bring a sheet (our nap cots measure 23 ½ x 55 ¼ inches), and a small blanket for rest time. If your child needs a comfort item for rest time, they may bring that in as well. The rest items should be brought to school on your child's first day of school for the week and brought home to be washed on their last school day of the week.

Lunch and two snacks are provided each day. If your child does not eat an item we are serving for lunch due to allergies or preferences, we do ask that you send in a replacement. A seasonal lunch menu is emailed to families every three months. **Please note we are a nut-free environment.**

Each child in toddler, wee preschool, preschool, preK, and Kindergarten will need to bring a water bottle to school each day. Please make sure water bottles are going home at the end of each day to be washed.

Children in the infant room should have bottles, formula or breast milk, and any food items needed for each day. If your child is not toilet trained, please send in diapers, wipes, and diaper cream for your child. If you are bringing pre-made bottles for your infant, please label each bottle with your child's name, and the date the bottles were made.

## Birthdays

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school with a class snack, we ask that you provide a **healthy snack (no sugary sweets, please)** to share with classmates**. Please do not send goody bags for your child's birthday.** If your child is having a birthday party, we ask that you do not distribute invitations at school unless the entire class is invited. A class list of names can be provided if needed.

## Photographs

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Creative Beginnings is required to obtain permission to use photographs of your child taken at school. Photos may be used for school projects, website, Facebook pages, or newsletters. If you do not wish to have your child's photograph used for the above purposes, please indicate so on the consent to utilize photographs form found in the registration packet.

## Outdoor Play

The outdoor play space at Creative Beginnings is divided into two playgrounds. The front playground, and the back playground. Each classroom has two scheduled outdoor play times. During outdoor play, there may be more than one group (same-aged children) in a playground area. The number of children on a playground shall not exceed those in an age group (there is no mixing of age groups on a playground). Staff will count the students in their group prior to entering and exiting the playground and throughout the outdoor play time. All teachers shall be present on the playground while their class is outside. One staff member will be designated to bring children inside for the bathroom or other situations. Children will be supervised at all times during outdoor activities. Staff will position themselves throughout the playground and rotate as needed for maximum student supervision. Staff will not congregate, but will spread out to ensure all areas of the playground are supervised. On the front playground, one staff member will monitor the areas in and around the slide structure**. If the water table is in use on the front playground a staff member will remain at the water table**. If the monkey bars are in use on the back playground, one staff member will remain at the monkey bars

Each classroom must bring their backpack to the playground for outdoor play. The backpack should be fully stocked with a first aid kit, an emergency chart, and emergency contact forms for the class. Classroom attendance will be brought outside for playground time. Mobile phone use is not permitted, unless in exceptional circumstances.

Maximum number of children present on the playground is as follows:

Toddler: 28 with seven staff

Wee: 24 with five staff

Preschool: 18 with two staff

PreK: 24 with three staff

## CENTER DISCIPLINE POLICY

We strongly believe in positive reinforcement and redirection as a solution to conflict. If a conflict occurs our first step is to redirect the child. If redirection does not work, we ask the child to take a break in a quiet area of their classroom where they can collect their thoughts, calm their bodies if needed, and take a moment to reflect on the situation. A teacher will always talk with the child after to reflect on what happened, and when appropriate, discuss a plan for what to do if the conflict arises again. Children will always be encouraged to talk about their feelings with their teachers and their friends.

## REFERRALS FOR SERVICES

Children who need extra support that cannot be provided by Creative Beginnings (for example speech and language development or motor development), will be referred to Child Development Services for evaluation. Parents and guardians will be contacted prior to the referrals to grant permission for Creative Beginnings to contact CDS. Children who qualify for CDS services will have the ability to receive said services at Creative Beginnings during the school day. Cumberland County CDS can be reached at 207-781-8811.

## PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

Yearly conferences will be held for PreK students. However, if you wish to meet with your child's teacher at a different time, a meeting can be arranged at the earliest convenience of the teacher and the family.

We believe that open communication between teachers and families is key for bridging the gap between home and school. Each classroom has an email address for parents and teachers to communicate regularly. Each classroom also has a closed Facebook group for teachers to share pictures of daily activities and share notices of upcoming events. If you do not wish for your child's photograph to be used on the classroom Facebook group, please indicate so on the consent to utilize the photograph form in the registration packet.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### Health

Our center operates for well children and staff only. We expect a child's health to permit them to participate in all activities at the center, including outdoor play. If anyone in your household is sick (parents/guardians/siblings) please keep your children home until everyone in the household is symptom free for 48 hours. If anyone in your household is showing any of the signs of illness below, please keep your child home, parents/guardians will be notified if your child exhibits any of the below symptoms at school. Please refer below for specific illnesses and when your child may return to school

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| | |
|---|---|
| **Fever above 100.4** | **48 hours symptom free with no medication** |
| **Diarrhea** | **48 hours symptom free with no medication** |
| **Vomiting** | **48 hours symptom free with no medication** |
| **Norovirus** | **48 hours symptom free with no medication** |
| **RSV** | **48 hours symptom free with no medication** |
| **Strep throat** | **24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment** |
| **Ear infection** | **24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment** |
| **Croup** | **48 hours symptom free** |
| **Conjunctivitis** | **24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment** |
| **Impetigo** | **24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and sores are completely covered** |
| **Hand foot and mouth** | **When sores are completely healed, and child is fever free for 48 hours without medication** |
| **Head lice and nits** | **When head is clear of all evidence of lice and nits. Please note we are a nit free environment.** |

**We are a non-medicated facility. We ask that you do not send your child at any time medicated with fever reducers, we will not administer any medication containing a fever reducer.** If your child has a medication prescribed by a doctor, you will be given a medication form to fill out with the time and dosage of the medication. Prescribed medication will need to be in its original container with the prescription label on the container.

If your child becomes ill at school and we are unable to reach a parent/guardian after 30 minutes, we will attempt to contact the emergency contacts as provided in the registration packet.

## Immunizations

Creative Beginnings must have on file a Certificate of Immunization which clearly illustrates his/her immunization status. Each child's record must reflect an up-to-date status according to the Day Care Immunization Standards set forth by the Maine Bureau of Health Immunization Program. Dates of immunizations and vaccine type shall be on the file for each of the following vaccine-preventable diseases:

- ❖ Measles
- ❖ Mumps
- ❖ Rubella
- ❖ Diphtheria
- ❖ Pertussis
- ❖ Polio
- ❖ Tetanus

❖ Influenza Type B

❖ Varicella

❖ Hepatitis B

❖ Pneumococcal Conjugate

**All children enrolled at Creative Beginnings Childcare Center are required to be immunized.**

## Mandated Reporting

Pursuant to Section XXII Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect of the Rules of the Licensing of Child Care Facilities, Creative Beginnings must report cases of abuse or neglect to the State of Maine Department of Health and Human Services when there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect of a child under the age of eighteen.

## Playground

For the safety of your child, the playground gate must always remain closed and latched. **At no time is a child to unlatch or open the gate.**

## Injury

If a child is injured at school, we will notify the parents immediately as indicated on their Emergency Contact form. If necessary, the child will be transported to a hospital by emergency personnel. Creative Beginnings will keep a written report of all accidents or injuries that occur. As mandated by the state, Creative Beginnings will report any major injuries or death to the state of Maine. Injury and incident reports will be filled out by teachers as needed and will be signed by parent/guardian at pick up. Parents and guardians may request a copy of the report.

## Fire Drills

For the safety of the children, we will perform monthly fire drills.

## Emergency Contact

Please keep your emergency contact forms up to date at all times. This includes new personal phone numbers and new work phone numbers for parents/guardians or an emergency contact. It is imperative that we can contact you or a person you have designated in an emergency. Emergency contact forms can be updated at any time by contacting the administration.

## Evacuation

Should the property of Creative Beginnings need to be evacuated, we will gather at Moody's Collision Center located across Broadway at 50 Postal Service Way in South Portland.

## State Licensing

In accordance with state licensing Creative Beginnings will self-report any licensing violations to the state immediately.

## Rights of Children

Children receiving child care from child care facilities have the following rights

- Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Each child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the child.
- Each child has a right to an environment that meets health and safety standards
- Each child must be provided child care services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition
- Children must be treated with dignity, consideration, and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the child care facility.
- Each child has the right to the implementation of any plan of services that has been developed for that child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the child care facility
- Each child has the right to developmentally appropriate activities, materials, and equipment
- Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to childcare facility policies and practices