


ACADEMY RANCH
Preschool
Parent Handbook

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For questions, concerns or suggestions please email

[**Welcome@Academy-Ranch.com**](mailto:Welcome@Academy-Ranch.com)

For immediate help please text or call

Samantha Dreyer **(910)-691-4181**

Dan Dreyer at **(910)-691-8474**





Introduction

Welcome to Academy Ranch Preschool, an 18 acre outdoor-focused farm preschool nestled in beautiful Carthage, North Carolina. Our philosophy centers on providing a nurturing environment where children can learn, grow, and explore through hands-on experiences with nature and farm animals. We believe that outdoor adventure fosters creativity, critical thinking, responsibility and the framework for flourishing growth.

At Academy Ranch Preschool, our mission is to cultivate happy and curious explorers. The real world is the teacher of wisdom and children need to experience it. That is why we feel it is so important to immerse children in a vibrant outdoor farm environment. With the natural lifecycle as a backdrop, and focusing on the virtue of wisdom, we promote holistic development through: experiential learning, adventure, interactive play, active responsibilities, and natural consequences. It is always our goal to provide the highest level of caring attention from our staff, whose talent, care and rapport are the bedrock of our program. Finally, we will have every child over prepared, academically, for their first years of school.

Our Farm Friends

At Academy Ranch Preschool, your child will have the unique opportunity to interact with, learn to care for and love a variety of friendly farm animals. Our animal family includes:

- Goats - 11
- Pigs - 4 named and babies
- Cats - 12
- Chickens - 45
- Guinea Fowl - 10
- Mr. Bun Buns - Rabbit
- Our beloved dog, Chaand



These interactions will provide invaluable lessons in empathy, responsibility, and the natural world. All animal interactions are closely supervised to ensure the safety and well-being of both children and animals. Our animals will provide unique learning opportunities as they grow, love, get sick, get to know the children and pass on. They are real and that realness has no substitute.



Our Daily Adventures

At Academy Ranch Preschool, each day is an adventure filled with discovery and learning! Our daily schedule is designed to provide a blend of structured activities, free play, and outdoor exploration, all within the natural rhythms of our farm environment.



Schedule	Activity
7:30 AM - 8:00 AM	Arrival & Free Play
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Clean up, Wash-up, Breakfast, Manners Lesson & Bussing
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Chores and Feeding the farm animals, Daily animal lesson. Rain or Shine.
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Playground Time - Usually free play.
10:30 AM - 11:30 AM	Learning Activities (e.g., Story Time, Art, Sensory Play) daily letter and age-appropriate reading lesson. Usually outside.
11:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Clean-up, Free play, Wash-up.
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch & Quiet time.
1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Daily Big Idea - philosophical reading, usually lasts ten minutes until Nap/Rest Time.
Wake up - 4:30 PM	Afternoon picnic Snack and Second Learning activity, continuation of daily letter and reading lesson. Conducted Outdoors as weather allows.
4:30 PM - 5:00 PM	Outdoor free play on Playground
5:00 PM - 5:30 PM	Pick-up & Departure



Nourishing Our Little Explorers

We eat good here, real good. It's all included. We cook it ourselves, often incorporating fresh ingredients and eggs from our own chickens. Our meal plan is child led meaning we don't force food. We gently encourage strong appetite through hard play and offering delicious and healthy food. Our menu focuses on adventure. Be surprised to learn your kid loves salmon, or Indian food. Our food is of consistently high quality and we take a lot of pride in the meals we serve. The following is an example of what you can expect - but our menu changes weekly. You can see our current menu anytime posted in the Dining room or by request:

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Afternoon Snack
Monday	Scrambled eggs with whole-wheat toast	Chicken and veggie pasta with a side of fruit	Yogurt with granola and berries
Tuesday	Oatmeal with berries	Pulled pork sandwich Brocollini, veggie straws	Cheese and whole-grain crackers
Wednesday	Whole-wheat pancakes with fruit	BLT on whole wheat with asparagus and carrots	Deviled eggs, fresh self picked pears
Thursday	Sausage egg and cheese Muffin with Strawberries	Lentil Curry over Basmati rice and Cucumber yogurt.	Fruit smoothie
Friday	Breakfast burrito with eggs and beans	Fish Tacos! Pico de Gallo, Guacamole and Blue Corn Chips.	Freshly baked muffin

Please inform us of any dietary restrictions or food allergies your child may have, and we will make every effort to accommodate their needs.

About Us

We bring over thirty years of experience working with children in daycare and crisis. We also bring two great little kids of our own.



Samantha Dreyer was born and raised in England. She worked in daycare for four years there and also spent time working on children's adventure programs. She moved to the USA ten years ago after meeting Daniel whilst working for a summer camp in Connecticut. 6 years ago they moved together to North Carolina to seek out opportunities.

Sam has over 15 years of child care experience working with all ages. She has worked for structured daycares, as a nanny, in adventure programs, for summer camps and has been running this in home daycare for the last four years. Sam is also a fully certified personal trainer and loves making cakes. She also really loves animals - as you may have suspected.



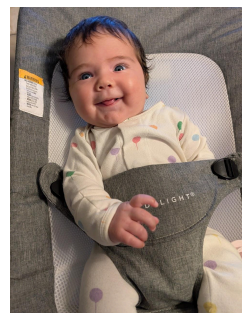
Mr. Dan graduated from the Savannah College of Art and Design with honors in painting. He served as a survival guide, chief instructor and lead tracker for Wilderness Quest, a survival rehab company in the high desert of Utah for six years. He then worked as a counselor and Creative Director for ten years at Ebner Family Camps Awosting, Chinqueka, Boulder Ridge and Eagle Rock in Connecticut.

Dan has years and years of experience working with children in crisis, having fun with children, creating epic group games and designing features for children to play on. You can see Dan's painting in downtown Carthage, where he curated and filmed the Carthage Mural Tour plaques and painted the "Landmarks and Legacies" mural. He also painted, wrote and performed the "Winnie the Pooh Adventure Trail" which was on display at Nick's Creek and Phillips Memorial Park in Cameron last year. He also does photography and videography and enjoys countless silly hobbies.



Otto is four years old. He loves firetrucks and will be a fireman some day. He is very kind and polite, especially in public. He loves living on the farm. We are very proud of him.

Imogen is brand new and loves her schedule, which she enforces enthusiastically.



Admissions, Tuition and Fees

Admission Requirements

1. Aged 2 or older upon starting date.
2. Able to provide weather appropriate clothing and 1 change of clothes.
3. Able to provide a pair of muck, rain or cowboy boots to stay onsite.
4. Be up to date on all vaccine requirements unless medically delayed or a religious exemption applies.



Tuition

- Full time tuition is \$400/ week
 - 07:30 to 17:30 Monday - Friday
 - Daily Rate is \$100/ day as available
 - get off the fence easily with a trial day whenever space allows.
- We guaranteed ecstatic satisfaction or your tuition waived.

Included in our tuition is: all food, activities, diapers, equipment, flexible drop-off/pick-up and adventures. If additional clothes are provided with name tags we also wash and return muddied clothes - because they will always be muddy.

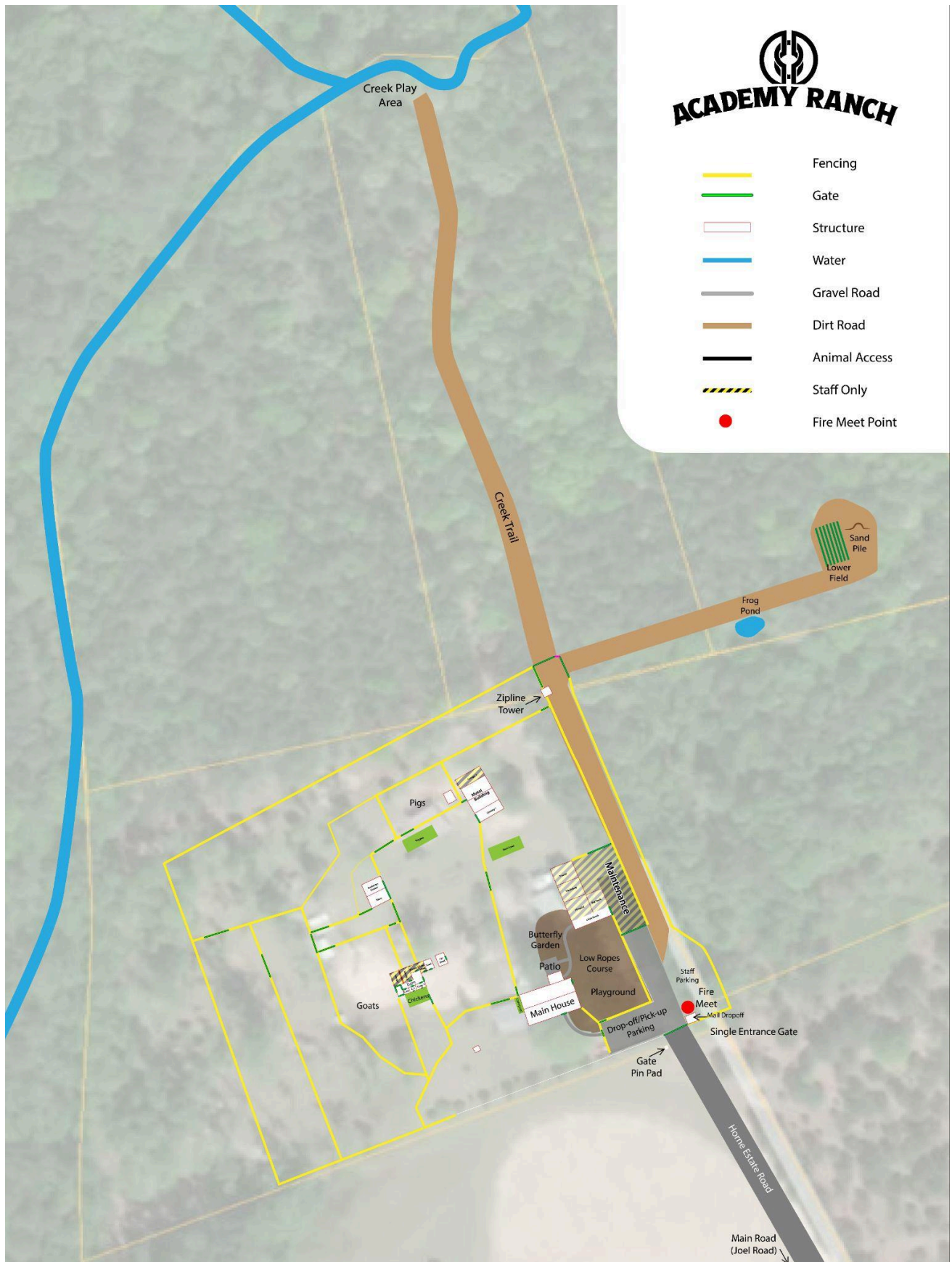
Fees

- An Admission fee of \$100 may be charged at our discretion for preadmission and inclusion on our Wait List.

Military Aware and Tuition Assistance

We are affiliated with the Military Aware childcare assistance program, which offers military families assistance with tuition. Please inquire if this applies to you and we can help arrange it.

We are willing to work with any tuition assistance program to which you have access, please call or email with inquiries.



Operational Policies

To ensure a safe and positive experience for all children, families, and staff, Academy Ranch Preschool adheres to the following operational policies:



- **Hours of Operation:**

- Our hours are from 07:30 to 17:30, Monday through Friday.

- **Arrival and Departure:**

- Children must be signed in upon arrival and signed out upon departure by an authorized adult.
- Please notify staff in advance if someone other than the primary caregiver will be picking up your child.
- We maintain a flexible dropoff and pickup schedule as part of our effort to be the best - but please warn us if you'll be super late.

- **Health and Safety:**

- Children must be free of fever, vomiting, or diarrhea for 24 hours before attending.
- Please inform us of any allergies or medical conditions your child may have. A Medical Report and Action Plan must be completed prior to enrollment.
- Ointment waivers must be signed annually to allow us to take preventative measures for sun and insect exposure and to treat minor burns, bites, and irritations due to exposure.
- Children will be washed with soap and water before and after each meal. Assistance will be provided if needed. Washing is not optional.

- **Meals and Snacks:**

- We provide home-cooked, omnivorous, often farm raised breakfast, lunch and snacks. Food is healthy, holistic and follows no specific plan (not all organic, not all kosher).
- Please inform us of any dietary restrictions or food allergies.



- **Communication:**

- We maintain open communication between parents and staff, there is no inappropriate way to reach out to us.
 - Bear in mind that cell phone service is not available everywhere on the farm, so do not be alarmed if nobody answers.
 - You should get a call back within the hour
 - Try another staff in an hour if you do not get a call back.
 - You are always welcome to arrive in person.
- Please feel free to discuss any concerns or questions you may have with us about any aspect of our program and care.

- **Photography**

- We take lots of pictures and will text them to parents.
- We respectfully request that each parent sign a model release for their child so that we can furnish documents and advertisements like this one with beautiful proof of fun. This is optional.
- Please inform us if you do NOT want pictures sent to you via text.
- We currently do not offer photography services beyond text but we are happy to work with you if you get one you really love.



- **Required Documents:**

- All required North Carolina child care enrollment forms must be completed and kept current.
 - A Day One packet will be provided upon dropoff and takes about ten minutes to complete - so there is no need to not start just for paperwork.
 - A Day One packet can be emailed to you to e-sign upon request. It is faster and easier this way since it will be autofilled with your information.
 - An Immunization History and Doctors Medical Report will have to be completed by day 30 of enrollment.

- **Holiday Closures and Vacation**

- We love our jobs, but we need breaks too. Also our kids deserve our occasional undivided attention.
 - We will be closed: New Years Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.
 - We also will take 2 weeks (10 daycare days) of vacation per year and reserve 7 sick days. We will always give as much notice as possible - at least a month before vacation - so that alternative childcare can be found. Full payment is required during vacation, sick days and holidays as well as any days your child is absent through sickness or your own vacation.

Discipline Policy

At Academy Ranch Preschool we know that busy kids don't cause much trouble - it's usually sitting around inside that causes problems - so our first course when things get rowdy is to head out and have fun. Sometimes that's not an option and rare cases it doesn't work. So...

We believe in guiding children toward wisdom through age-appropriate discipline techniques. Our approach includes:

- **Natural and Logical Consequences:** We help children understand the outcomes of their actions. Nature teaches wisdom. We show kids how to see and hear it.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** We focus on praising and acknowledging positive behaviors. We give out shiny stars too, and make a big deal of it.
- **Redirection:** When challenging behaviors occur, we gently redirect children to more appropriate activities.
- **Time-Outs (Age-Appropriate):** For unsafe behaviors and tantrums, a brief, supervised time-out allows a child to regain composure. The duration will be age-appropriate and focused on calming down. A plan of action will be established before rejoining the group - usually apologies and a recompense if appropriate.
- **Circles:** for outdoor misbehavior or attention seeking misbehavior we like to hold group circles, so that everyone can discuss how the misbehavior made them feel and everyone can learn how to avoid similar behavior in the future. Group circles are also a great way to work on everyone's patience and self regulation.
- **Physical Intervention:** In rare circumstances we may have to carry an unwilling child for safety purposes. This will be done as gently and safely as possible.
- **Open Communication with Parents:** We will communicate any ongoing behavioral concerns with parents to ensure a consistent approach between home and school.

Physical punishment, verbal abuse, or any form of humiliation are strictly prohibited.

Bullying Policy

We do not tolerate bullying of any kind. We understand that every child is struggling with different challenges and are willing to help anyone where they are, however, it is also our job to provide a safe environment for learning and adventure.

Persistent bullying will result in expulsion.

Summary of North Carolina Child Care Law

Academy Ranch Preschool operates in full compliance with North Carolina General Statutes and Child Care Rules and Regulations for FCCH (Family Child Care Home) facilities. Key aspects of the law that impact our operations and your child's care include:

- **Licensing and Inspections:** We are a licensed FCCH facility and undergo regular inspections by the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) to ensure compliance with health, safety, and program standards.
- **Staff Qualifications:** All staff members exceed the required qualifications, including background checks, specific training hours, and ongoing professional development.
- **Child-Staff Ratios:** We exceed state-mandated child-to-staff ratios for FCCH facilities to ensure adequate supervision and individualized attention.
- **Health and Safety Standards:** Our facility exceeds rigorous health and safety standards related to sanitation, indoor and outdoor environments, and emergency preparedness.
- **Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting:** All staff members are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect, as required by North Carolina law.
- **Parent Access:** Parents have the right to unlimited access to their child and the facility during operating hours. You are welcome any time.

A complete copy of North Carolina Child Care Law is available for review upon request at [Child Care Rules, Law, and Public Information](https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Services/Child-Care-Rules-Law-andPublic-Information) at:

[www.https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Services/Child-Care-Rules-Law-andPublic-Information](https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Services/Child-Care-Rules-Law-andPublic-Information).

Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome

Academy Ranch believes that preventing, recognizing, responding to, and reporting shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma (SBS/AHT) is an important function of keeping children safe, protecting their healthy development, providing quality child care, and educating families.

Background

SBS/AHT is the name given to a form of physical child abuse that occurs when an infant or small child is violently shaken and/or there is trauma to the head. Shaking may last only a few seconds but can result in severe injury or even death¹. According to North Carolina Child Care Rule (child care centers, 10A NCAC 09 .0608, family child care homes, 10A NCAC 09 .1726), each child care facility licensed to care for children up to five years of age shall develop and adopt a policy to prevent SBS/AHT².

Procedure/Practice

Recognizing:

- Children are observed for signs of abusive head trauma including irritability and/or high-pitched crying, difficulty staying awake/lethargy or loss of consciousness, difficulty breathing, inability to lift the head, seizures, lack of appetite, vomiting, bruises, poor feeding/sucking, no smiling or vocalization, inability of the eyes to track and/or decreased muscle tone. Bruises may be found on the upper arms, rib cage, or head resulting from gripping or from hitting the head.

Responding to:

- If SBS/ABT is suspected, staff will:
 - Call 911 immediately upon suspecting SBS/AHT and inform the director.
 - Call the parents/guardians. o If the child has stopped breathing, trained staff will begin pediatric CPR⁴.

Reporting:

- Instances of suspected child maltreatment in child care are reported to Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) by calling 1-800-859-0829 or by emailing webmasterdcd@dhhs.nc.gov.
- Instances of suspected child maltreatment in the home are reported to the county Department of Social Services. Phone number: (910) 947-2436

Prevention strategies to assist staff* in coping with a crying, fussing, or distraught child

Staff first determine if the child has any physical needs such as being hungry, tired, sick, or in need of a diaper change. If no physical need is identified, staff will attempt one or more of the following strategies:

- Rock the child, hold the child close, or walk with the child.
- Stand up, hold the child close, and repeatedly bend knees.
- Sing or talk to the child in a soothing voice.
- Gently rub or stroke the child's back, chest, or tummy.
- Offer a pacifier or try to distract the child with a rattle or toy.
- Take the child for a ride in a stroller.
- Turn on music or white noise.
- Warm up in the Sun

In addition, the facility:

- Allows for staff who feel they may lose control to have a short, but relatively immediate break away from the children.
- Provides support when parents/guardians are trying to calm a crying child and encourage parents to take a calming break if needed.

Behaviors that are prohibited include (but are not limited to):

- • shaking or jerking a child
- tossing a child into the air or into a crib, chair, or car seat
- pushing a child into walls, doors, or furniture

Resources for Staff in Crisis:

1. Contact Dan or Sam Dreyer for direct emotional or logistical support
 - a. Dan - (910)691-8474
 - b. Sam - (910)691-4181
2. Partners for Families and Children (910) 949-4045
3. Crisis and Suicide prevention Lifeline dial 988

Strategies to assist staff members understand how to care for infants Staff reviews and discusses:

- The five goals and developmental indicators in the 2013 North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development, ncchildcare.nc.gov/PDF_forms/NC_Foundations.pdf
- How to Care for Infants and Toddlers in Groups, the National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families,
www.zerotothree.org/resources/77-how-to-care-for-infants-and-toddlers-in-groups

- Including Relationship-Based Care Practices in Infant-Toddler Care: Implications for Practice and Policy, the Network of Infant/Toddler Researchers, pages 7-9, www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nitr_inquire_may_2016_070616_b508compliant.pdf

Strategies to ensure staff members understand the brain development of children up to five years of age. All staff take training on SBS/AHT within first two weeks of employment. Training includes recognizing, responding to, and reporting child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment as well as the brain development of children up to five years of age. Staff review and discuss:

- Brain Development from Birth video, the National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, www.zerotothree.org/resources/156-brain-wonders-nurturing-healthy-brain-development-from-birth
- The Science of Early Childhood Development, Center on the Developing Child, developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of-eed/

Resources:

Contact Dan Dreyer for direct assistance or logistical support (910) 691-8474

Partners for Families and Children (910) 949-4045

Parent web resources

- The American Academy of Pediatrics: www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/AbusiveHead-Trauma-Shaken-Baby-Syndrome.aspx
- The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome: <http://dontshake.org/family-resources>
- The Period of Purple Crying: <http://purplecrying.info/>

Facility web resources

- Caring for Our Children, Standard 3.4.4.3 Preventing and Identifying Shaken Baby Syndrome/Abusive Head Trauma, <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView.cfm?StdNum=3.4.4.3&=+>
- Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/trprev/Preventing_SBS_508-a.pdf
- Early Development & Well-Being, Zero to Three, www.zerotothree.org/early-development

References 1.

1. The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, www.dontshake.org
2. NC DCDEE, ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/general/mb_ccrulespublic.asp
3. Shaken baby syndrome, the Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/shaken-babysyndrome/basics/symptoms/con-20034461

4. Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED, American Red Cross,
www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240175_Pediatric_ready_reference.pdf
5. Calming Techniques for a Crying Baby, Children's Hospital Colorado,
www.childrenscolorado.org/conditions-andadvice/calm-a-crying-baby/calming-techniques
6. Caring for Our Children, Standard 1.7.0.5: Stress
<http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/1.7.0.5>

This policy applies to all staff and parents and will be included in their introductory handbooks on or before their first day of enrollment or employment.