
Golden Bear Academy



Parent Handbook 2024-2025

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Golden Bear Academy Parent's Handbook

I. INTRODUCTION

MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of GBA is to provide a safe, developmentally appropriate, and nurturing place to learn and grow. To foster a loving environment where children can prosper in their academic, physical, and social development. We will strive to emphasize a family rich place where children are curious and excited about the world around them. We want to grow lifelong learners.

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT:

Our program and services offer developmentally appropriate curriculum, and we strive to enhance social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth in young children. Our program fosters curiosity, creativity, and self-esteem by considering children's abilities and interests.

DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS:

1. To communicate both verbally and nonverbally with both peers and staff
2. Properly identifies colors, shapes, numbers, and letters.
3. Walk, run, jump, and climb on age-appropriate equipment.

PRINCIPALS:

1. Harbor respect between both adults and children.
2. Strengthen core life skills.
3. Encourage open communication.

STATEMENT OF SERVICES:

GBA is a year-round program that offers all day care for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. Our daily activities and program consist of a flexible schedule that has been created to provide diversity and challenge for children in all age groups. We offer a structured program for children of all ages that includes a year-round curriculum. Our activities include STEAM, Arts and Crafts, Music & Movement, Outdoor Play & Physical Development, Interactive Reading, Cognitive and Language & Literacy.

HOURS AND DAYS OF OPERATION:

- GBA is open from 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM, Monday through Friday.
- EHS CCP Monday through Friday 7:30am to 5:30pm.
- VPK Monday Through Friday 9:00 am to 12:00pm.

The latest time your child can arrive is **9:30 AM**. GBA will **NOT accept** your child for the day if they come after that time. Children cannot be dropped off later than 9:30 am unless they have a Dr. Appointment, please call us ahead of time and provide a Dr. note. If your child has an appointment, the cut off time is 11:30AM.

For the wellbeing of each, **we must limit to a max of 10 hours per day.**

CLOSED HOLIDAYS:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day.

If holidays fall on a weekend day the weekday closest to that day will be observed as a holiday. (i.e., Christmas Eve falls on Sunday and Christmas falls on Monday – GBA will be closed on Monday and Tuesday) These days will be decided in January of each year and will be posted for your convenience. All holidays will be charged at the regular rate.

OTHER CLOSURES:

Due to teacher training requirements GBA will be closed a day during the year for Pre-planning for new school year. This day will be decided before school starts in August of each year and will be posted for your convenience. You will be charged at the regular rate for the week this day falls.

STATE LICENSING:

We understand the importance of keeping strict compliance with the state licensing regulations to ensure a quality environment for your children. GBA complies with FL state licensing (DCF) regulations and policies. These requirements cover staff qualifications, facilities, playground, health and safety guidelines, and child/staff ratios.

II. ENROLLMENT

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS, INCLUSION AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:

Enrollment in our program is open to all families of our community. We operate on a non-discriminatory basis. No one shall be excluded from any of our programs because of race, color, religion, disability, sex, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, children, families we serve, and volunteers. Only the child(ren)'s parent or legal guardian may enroll a child(ren) (Proof of custody may be required). All forms provided to you upon enrollment must be completed before your child may attend GBA. All requested personal information is kept confidential. Parents are required to update all emergency data as needed, including address, home, cell, and work numbers and individuals authorized to pick up your child. Current immunization information must be submitted to the center upon enrollment, and all immunizations must be current. GBA must be informed of any custody situation in advance and will request that the proper paperwork be in the child(ren)'s file. Parents will be required to comply with all state regulations and center rules as set forth in this Parent's Handbook.

ADMISSION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Parents wishing to enroll their children in the center are encouraged to set up an appointment with the center office to come and tour the center and meet the director and their children's Lead Teacher. (We encourage tours to be scheduled between 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday). The purpose of the informal tour is to answer any questions you might have concerning our policies and procedures. At this time, we will give you a copy of the parent's handbook and any forms necessary to enroll your child(ren) in the center. All children shall be considered continuously enrolled from the time of enrollment until they are formally withdrawn, please let the front office staff know at least a week in advance of your child's withdrawal date, account must be in good standing. Re-enrollment is based upon space availability.

PAPERWORK, FORMS AND ANNUAL RENEWAL:

We are required by the state to have current and updated information on each child in our center. This is also for your safety. As mentioned above, we require all forms to be filled out for each child prior to their initial attendance at GBA. Also, each year in August, we will have you renew and refresh all your paperwork and all forms. There will be a deadline given for compliance with this requirement and a fine may be charged if the new paperwork is not turned in on time. Failure to renew and refresh paperwork does not constitute withdrawal from the program and fees will continue to accrue according to the newest published rates including all late payment convenience fees and all other fees due. Annual registration fees will also be added each year at this same time. If GBA is penalized or

fined for incomplete information on one of our admissions forms or for failure to update/renew this information due to a parent's neglect, that fine will be passed on to the client responsible including an additional \$50 administration fee.

DROP-OFF:

Parents must accompany their child(ren) into the GBA area every morning and clock their child(ren) in immediately before dropping their child(ren) off in the appropriate room. Children will not be permitted in the building prior to opening hours. New families will be given a code to use on the keypad and a fingerprint registration to clock each child in. The clock in/out system is located at the front office. The children are not allowed to come into the GBA alone or to sign up. This is for their protection in case of a fire or other emergency. We require that all children have direct contact with a person upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior which may adversely affect the child or the group. If any of these things are determined, the child must go home immediately.

PICK-UP:

All children must be picked up and clocked out by an adult and/or person approved by the parent and the center. All children must be clocked out before being picked up from their classroom. Anyone, including all parents, who are to be allowed to pick the child up, **must** be listed on the Pick-up Permission form or be approved in writing by a parent. In an emergency, parents may call the center and email us to give approval of an alternate individual. However, this is strongly discouraged. The center reserves the right to not allow any individual onto GBA property for drop-off or pick-up if they have created a problem. Anyone not recognized by sight will be asked for a picture ID. In the event anyone out of the ordinary is to pick up the child, please alert the office prior to that time. This is in addition to them being on the Pick-up Permission form or approval as stated above. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the office and make changes to this form whenever necessary. This form is re-done annually.

OPEN DOOR POLICY:

At GBA we have an open-door policy where Parent/guardians are not only welcomed, but also highly encouraged to volunteer and visit their child's classroom at any time, we just ask that you take into consideration that there are certain times in the day (such as a nap) that visiting can be detrimental to the children's daily routine as well as the other children in the class.

We also ask parents who plan to visit their children frequently to follow the classroom routine, to avoid disturbing classroom schedules/ activities and to be respectful of the other children in care, we suggest short visits or watching from the hallway, this is to ensure that the children are not distracted from their learning activities and classroom and routines.

GBA often has classroom celebrations that you and your child may want to be a part of. As much as GBA appreciates parent involvement, visitors can be overwhelming to teachers, children and even your own child.

PARKING POLICY:

PICK-UP PERMISSION FORM:

All persons authorized to pick a child up from the center must be listed on the PICK-UP PERMISSION FORM. To avoid confusion, it is the responsibility of the parent to sign the child into our center to properly fill out all forms. In a custody situation the parent signing the child into our center takes full responsibility to ensure that this is in accordance with their specific court agreement, which must be attached to the enrollment forms if any limitation of rights is suggested by the PICK-UP PERMISSION FORM. If a parent who is not listed, or who believes the information given to us was inaccurate, contests the authorization details they must first offer proof that they are indeed the legal parent or guardian and have legal rights to pick the child up. We then will require lawyers for both sides to be contacted and both attorneys will be requested to give us documentation as to the individuals

approved for pick-up. The center reserves the right to not allow any individual onto our property for drop-off or pick-up if they have created a problem.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Within Golden Bear Academy, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of GBA who have a "need to know" in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child. Confidential and sensitive information about faculty, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as GBA strives to protect everyone's right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and HIV/AIDS status or other health related information of anyone associated with GBA.

Outside of GBA, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law. Parents will be provided with a document detailing the information that is to be shared outside of GBA, persons with whom the information will be shared, and the reason(s) for sharing the information.

Any parent who violates the Confidentiality policy will not be permitted on GBA property thereafter.

You may observe children at our center who are disabled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e., biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy. Employees of GBA are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

INFORMATION CHANGE:

Parents are to notify the center of any change in home or work phone numbers and addresses. This is for your safety so that we may reach you in an emergency. The center requires that someone listed on the Pick-Up Permission form of each child be available within thirty (30) minutes notice to come and pick up a sick child or a child that GBA has determined needs to go home. It is required that all changes to phone numbers, places of employment, residence changes or changes in pick-up information be turned into the office immediately. Please give the front office written notice of the change as soon as possible.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION

PACIFIERS' POLICY:

Pacifiers are permitted **only** in the crib for Infants or on the sleep mat for Toddler's at rest/sleep time only. If a pacifier is to be used the Parent/Guardian should provide at least two pacifiers (labeled with their child's name using a waterproof label or non-toxic permanent marker) on a regular basis. Pacifiers are not permitted to be attached to the child's clothing in any manner or hung around the child's neck. Pacifiers are not permitted to have attachments such as stuffed animals. If an Infant refuses the pacifier at nap time, he/she will not be forced to take it. Pacifiers should not be coated in any sweet solution. Pacifiers should be cleaned and stored open to air; separate from the diapering area, diapering items, or other children's personal items.

DIAPER CHANGING, TOILETING AND TRAINING:

we ensure that toileting and diaper changing is conducted in a safe and hygienic manner in accordance with guidelines made available to all relevant staff to always uphold health and hygiene standards, we provide a safe and clean environment to facilitate diaper changing, we have a robust diaper changing schedule which is documented for each day. However, diapers are changed as and when needed regularly throughout the day. Items provided by the parents are to be used when cleaning a baby during diaper changing. Only authorized and certified staff is allow to do diaper change or in the toileting area.

Toilet training is best accomplished with the cooperation of teachers, parents, and children. Children learn toileting skills through consistent positive encouragement from adults and at home and at the center.

Toilet Training usually begins around 2 years of age. When a child shows an interest in toilet training.

Each child will begin at a different time and progress at a different rate. The bathroom staff are available as a resource to answer any questions about your child's toilet training progress at GBA. Several complete changes of clothes should be kept on-center during this process.

CLOTHING:

GBA offers the option of school uniforms. There are samples of each size in the front office you're your ordering convenience. We encourage the children to dress for play and comfort as the seasons change. Because our program is based on play and exploration your child **WILL** get dirty!! Children will have opportunities for outdoor play twice a day weather permitting. Children will go outside if the temperature is above 32 degrees or below 100 degrees with the wind chill and heat index taken into consideration. It is required that you bring one set of extra clothes for your child in case of a spill or accident. We have some extra clothes available, but we may not have the item your child needs in his/her size. If your child comes home in center clothes, please wash the clothes, and return them within one week. **It is strongly suggested that all clothing brought or worn to the center have the child's name on it.**

CHILDREN'S JEWELRY, HAIR ACCESSORIES & FOOTWEAR:

For the safety of all our children, they may **NOT** wear hair beads, hair barrettes/bobby pins, ponytail holders with balls (etc.) on the ends, jewelry (bracelets, necklaces, rings). Flipflops/open-toed sandals or slide-on shoes with no back are not permitted. If footwear cannot be replaced by the parent, the child will be sent home.

DIAPERS:

Please provide diapers, wipes, and diaper ointment (if needed) for your non-potty-trained children. All items must be labeled with the child's first and last name. You can bring a package of diapers to leave at the center. You will be notified when your child is running low on diapers. If you run out of diapers, we will provide them to you automatically for a fee of \$1.50 per diaper and pack of wipes for \$3.00. If you have any questions, please check with the office.

SUPPLIES:

Each child will be provided with all the instructional supplies necessary here at GBA. Please ***mark all items clearly with your child's name.*** Additional personal items which are needed include:

- 1) A small blanket for rest time
- 2) A crib sheet for the mat
- 3) Extra clothes

CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAYS:

Birthdays are special days for children. If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday at GBA, please make early arrangements with your child's teacher. Hard or chewy candy are not permitted because they pose a choking risk. (See "Bringing Food from Home" on the following page for more specifics concerning food snacks brought for parties or to celebrate a child's birthday)

QUIET TIME:

It is our philosophy that children under 5 years of age need adequate quiet time and or rest, as a part of their daily routine. Since all the children are constantly engaged in stimulating activity, we require that everyone rest on cots after lunch. Realizing each child's rest needs are different, we try to offer alternative ways of resting by providing soft music, stories, etc. for those who choose not to sleep. Infants' individual schedules will determine when they nap.

We believe that children need a balance of activities that include large motor and active play as well as structured quiet time. Our program includes a quiet time for all children Kindergarten and younger. All children from 1 year of age through pre-K will receive a quiet time each day for a specified length of time. This will be established by their flexible schedule posted in that respective classroom.

CHILDREN REQUIRING SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:

GBA complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable regulations pertaining to providing services to individuals with disabilities. We desire to provide special accommodation for children who require such accommodation, provided it is within our power and authority to do so. Accommodation can be a specific treatment prescribed by a professional or a parent, or a modification of equipment, or removal of physical barriers. The accommodation shall be recorded in the child's file. Whenever we deem it appropriate to the needs of the child to have a child with special needs in our center, the entire staff must follow the reasonable accommodation we have made for that child. Any questions about the accommodation of the child should be referred to the staff.

TOYS FROM HOME:

GBA has a wide variety of toys, games, and other resources to offer children during center time. Personal toys are **not** permitted in the center, as they can cause disputes and can be broken or lost. GBA is not responsible for misplaced, stolen, lost or broken toys or clothing. We ask that all valuables stay at home and all belongings are labeled.

Do not bring toy guns, war toys or other toys of destruction.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY:

Parents are responsible for their child's transportation to the center. GBA will provide transportation for school aged children to and from school at the locations that this service is offered. GBA will provide transportation for field trips as the opportunities arise. Parents will be notified about field trips in advance and written permission will be obtained. The center complies with all State laws that pertain to motor vehicles as well as transporting children who are enrolled in a licensed childcare center. The transportation policy in its entirety is found in section K of this Handbook.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS:

GBA complies with the minimum insurance coverage as suggested by our independent agent. For more information concerning policies and liability see management.

SMOKE FREE FACILITY:

GBA buildings and grounds are smoke/tobacco free. A "No Smoking" sign meeting the law's requirements is posted at the entrance to the preschool classroom building to inform people that they are entering a nonsmoking place. No smoking is allowed on the school grounds or within sight of any children.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE:

Persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not be permitted on the premises of GBA. At no time will children be released to a person under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

FIELD TRIPS:

Parents are required to give written permission for their child to attend a field trip. Notification of a field trip will be sent home in advance of the trip, with all pertinent trip information including, destination, date, time, reason for trip, cost, and mode of transportation. Accompanying the notification paper, teachers will include a permission slip to be filled out, signed, and returned to the front office prior to the date of the trip. The field trip permission slip must be filled out completely and

accurately, and all trip costs must be paid in advance for your child to attend. GBA provides all required supervision for all field trips, but always invites and welcomes parents to attend. Parents will not be permitted to transport any child, including their own.

PROGRAM EVALUATION, HANDBOOK DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW:

At GBA Owners, Director, parents, and program staff continuously (at least annually), review it and evaluate the effectiveness of the quality of the program and improvement plan, as our Parent Handbook, allowing us to identify goals and specific action steps towards completing those goals, including feedback from parents and staff.

We value parents' input as a key to developing and maintaining our quality care offering them opportunities to participate on small groups meetings or writing anonymously.

GBA reserves the right to edit or adapt the policies in this handbook as the needs arise. The center will make all changes and additions available at the time these changes are made. Clients and customers will be notified of these changes through the normal written communication system of the center at the time they are made effective.

IV. FINANCIAL POLICIES

REGISTRATION FEE:

There is a \$50 registration fee due prior to the child's first day at GBA, and \$25 if the child has school readiness. There is a \$25 fee every school year starts (August). Children who pull out of the program for a specified or un-specified length of time will be required to pay a re-registration fee upon returning. The exception to this will be children who physically pull out of the program but whose parents continue to pay their full weekly fees to retain the spot in our program. Children who attend in a "Drop In" fashion who pay the "Drop In" rate will be considered as continuously enrolled for that school year and will only be required to pay one registration fee provided, they continue to fit the definition of this program.

WEEKLY TUITION FEES:

It is our philosophy that clients are paying for the spot their child will take in our center. This is not based upon attendance but rather on a set weekly or monthly fee that is due regardless of the attendance habits of the child who has the spot. Our fee structure is based upon a weekly fee that is set by an agreement which is signed by the parents upon enrolling the child(ren) in the program.

PAYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Weekly fees are due in advance on Monday, as courtesy parents have the chance to make payments until the close of business on Tuesday. There will be a \$15.00 late payment fee added if the account is not paid by Wednesday. An additional \$5 maintenance and collection fee will be added on Thursday and Friday for a total of \$25 if the account is not paid in full.

We encourage parents to sign up for Tuition Express, a fast easy and secure way to pay your tuition always on time. Also, you can pay your tuition online on www.myprocare.com. Debit and Credit card, no checks will be accepted. Failure to pay on time may result in termination of services. No account will ever be allowed to carry a balance unless arrangements have been approved by the Director.

All tuition is non-refundable except for prepaid tuition that is over-and-above any additional charges. This will also be adjusted annually or as rates change. See the REFUNDS policy below. Registration fees are non-refundable. If GBA elects, it may immediately terminate all services provided by it including but not limited to the immediate dismissal of the children from its facility.

4C:

GBA is authorized to receive payments from 4C and other Federal/State daycare assistance programs. If you qualify for free or reduced meals at a public school, you might be eligible to receive help through 4C. Our participation in this program in no way limits our freedom or right to set and enforce the

policies listed in this handbook. Clients wishing to use 4C assistance must make these arrangements on their own and list us as their 4C Childcare provider. You may enroll in the program as a 4C client once the office has received a letter of authorization from 4C or a phone call/email, establishing your eligibility in our program.

GBA also requires that all 4C clients pay for any week's absence. 4C clients will be allowed to be absent for one vacation week each year without being charged the weekly fee. 4C clients may also be required to pay the difference between our private pay rates and the rates that 4C has established.

4C clients may also have a daily co-payment that is set by 4C. This is based upon family income. GBA requires that all 4C co-payments be made weekly on Monday in advance of service. All PAYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES listed above for self-billed clients will also apply to 4C clients. It is the responsibility of each 4C Client to ensure that they have no balance failure to do so will result in a late payment fee. Failure to make co-payment amounts will void your contract with 4C whether you stay at GBA or move on to another center.

DISCOUNTS:

GBA is pleased to offer the following discounts: 1) \$10 discount to all clients who work for Hospitals or are Militaries families 2) \$5.00 per week discount for each additional sibling currently enrolled full time in the program and are being charged weekly fees.

REFUNDS:

We do not issue refunds. In the event you have overpaid the credit will be applied to your next week's tuition. In the event you have a balance after your child's last day, all applicable fees will be subtracted from any balance prior to a final refund being issued.

RECEIPTS AND STATEMENTS:

Receipts are available upon request. Annual statements for tax and accounting purposes are available upon request for all accounts with a zero balance.

LATE PICK-UP FEE:

There will be a \$1.50 fee added per minute if pick-up takes place after closing. This fee is non-negotiable and is the responsibility of all clients. Parents, or those picking the children up, are required to call ahead if they feel they are going to be more than 5 minutes late. Parents notified that a child is ill and needs to leave the center for the day a "reasonable period of time" to pick-up the child or the above "Late Pick-up Fee" will also apply. If no parent or emergency contact can be located within 1 Hour of trying to contact the parent, the "Late Pick-up Fee" will also apply. An attempt will be made to contact individuals on the emergency contact list after children have been left 15 minutes past closing. Children left at the center later than 60 minutes past closing will be considered abandoned and DCF will be informed.

VACATIONS, ABSENCES AND LEAVING THE CENTER:

All families are allowed to request a vacation week after six months when you do not bring your child and no payment is made. Vacations and illnesses will be charged at the regular weekly rate. Parents are responsible to **pay full price** in the event of **child attended even one day**, also parents are responsible for **half price payment in the instance of a full week absence** due to illness, personal reasons, or vacation time (Parents may request 1 vacation week the child will be absent without payment every 6 months (2 weeks per year, no rollover, after 6 months of started date).

We request that all absences be reported to the GBA office prior to or the day of the absence. The center reserves the right to require the dis-enrollment of a child. The center also reserves the right to require the dis-enrollment of any child whose parent and or guardian has become a problem at the center or who has developed and un-cooperative, aggressive, dissatisfied, or angry demeanor towards the center, its policies, or its staff.

V. PARENT COMMUNICATION AND PARTICIPATION

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:

The success of our program is based on establishing a partnership between our parents and our staff. Open and frequent communication will help your child have a positive early learning experience. We will endeavor to keep you informed concerning your child's day and overall development through several written means.

- Monthly parent newsletters to keep you informed as to the overall program.
- Parent Board – updated with current information about GBA and curriculum.
- Daily written communication in the form of "Daily Report" forms, Incident/accident reports, and classroom memos will be placed in the child's "cubby" from time to time.
- Parent/Teacher meetings twice each year
- Parents always have the option of requesting specific parent/teacher interaction to aid in the child's development.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

We will endeavor to be communicative during drop-off and pick-up times. However, this is not a good time for extended conversations since the staff members/teachers have responsibilities for all the children in the group. Furthermore, the person caring for your child at pick-up time may not be the individual who has spent most of the day with your child. This is since many children spend 10 hours a day at the center and most of our employees only work 6-8 hours. Since children learn best in the morning, we schedule the teachers who are responsible for most of the classroom development for the earlier hours and most of the day. We suggest that you go to your child's teacher to obtain detailed information on your child's general growth and development. You can call to see how your child's day is going or to speak to your child's teacher for more detailed conversation. The best time to call and speak to your child's teacher is during naptime. There is always a member of management available for you to talk to in person or on the phone, you can also e-mail us.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND EDUCATION POLICY:

We encourage all parents and or guardians to be involved in the activities. We believe that parental participation is key to any successful childcare program. Children should be raised by parents. At GBA, we strive to fill the gap created during early separation and educational opportunities and when parents are not available. We welcome parental visits. We have an open-door policy that allows parents access to the center during operating hours. We have enclosed a sample list of some of the opportunities for involvement in our center. Parents are in no way limited to the involvement listed below. Any parent wishing to be involved in another area is strongly encouraged to contact the GBA office with their suggestion.

1. Parent Meetings (Usually 2 times per year)
2. New school year Open House
3. 2 individual conferences/year
4. Programs and Special activities, such as the Christmas/Winter Program
5. Special parent's involvement activities such as Thanksgiving feast/ Multicultural feast.
6. Come and eat lunch with your child.
7. Classroom Volunteer
8. Send special treats for snack or meals (please notify the teacher a day or two in advance)
9. Help with center Fund Raiser
10. Participation in a parent's group
11. Reverse Field trips (When we bring a "field trip" type activity to our property)

We also expect parental involvement in discipline and behavior intervention as outlined in these policies.

PARENT WORKSHOPS:

Parents are encouraged to attend our parent workshops that will be held throughout the year.

POLICY FOR PARENTS WHO CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL EVENTS:

If a parent feels like they would like to be more involved in the center but cannot be due to their work schedule, or due to other conflicts, we will help them find a project or area which they can do on their own time. We will offer suggestions to them based on their interests and time. For example, if the parent likes to sew, we may offer to have them make doll clothes or repair mat sheets.

ACCIDENT REPORTS:

Safety is a top priority of GBA. Yet, there are times when a child will have an accident/ incident between your child and another child. Our teachers will complete a report for you detailing what happened and the nature of the injuries. If any first aid is administered, the treatment will be described to you. A copy of this accident report, signed by the teacher in charge at the time of the accident, will be provided to you and a copy filed on child's file, to confirm that you were notified of your child's injury. This system is aimed at ensuring communication at all levels and can be a very good way to be certain little things are not forgotten in a hasty departure. If your child happens to be injured by another child, we ask you to please respect the child's privacy by not asking us to reveal the name of the child. It not only puts our staff in an awkward situation but could cause a confrontation between our families. We will handle all behavior problems in a professional and appropriate way.

PARENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION:

We at GBA are so glad to have you and your child in our center and we will do the best in our power to provide you with a quality service, however, it's likely that you'll eventually disagree with something we do or say. Recognizing when to say something, and how to approach the subject will help maintain a positive relationship and a healthy environment for your child. We truly believe that the best way to resolve a conflict is to never let it happen in the first place but recognizing that we all are humans and make mistakes we commit to dialogue with you and have a two-way communication, letting us know your expectations about the care you want your child to receive and for our end rules and policies. If there are things that you absolutely want a certain way, it's also important to understand that parents and providers can have different views regarding appropriate procedures, but we always have in mind the safety and health it is our top priority for the children that we care for. However, if a situation occurs that severely jeopardizes the health, safety and wellbeing of the children and staff in the program, the Director or Owner reserves the right to dismiss a child immediately, without advance warning or notice.

VISITING THE CENTER:

You are welcome to visit your child at the center at any time. We do ask that you check in with the office or sign-in desk before going to your child's room. It is the responsibility of each employee to make sure any visitor for a child or employee has checked in with the office. If you are coming to eat lunch with your child, please let us know in advance. Persons not listed on the "Pick-Up Permission" form, will not be allowed to visit your child. In a custody situation, please note that the same procedure will be followed as listed in the Pick-Up section. Parents are encouraged to pre-arrange opportunities to share lunch with their child or visit the class. Extended family members such as grandparents and aunts are also welcome to visit in certain pre-arranged situations. The custody challenges of our current society demand that we follow strict guidelines in this regard. Feel free to contact a member of the management team if you wish to set up a "visit" from an extended family member.

VOLUNTEERS: Any parent wishing to help chaperone an event must go through our screening process. Volunteers are also welcome in our center. Anyone visiting or volunteering for more than one day per semester must go through a screening process. Our screening process includes, but is not limited to,

1) a signed statement indicating whether or not they have had a conviction of any law in any state, or any record of founded child or dependent abuse in any state; 2) a signed statement indicating whether or not they have a communicable disease or other health concern that could pose a threat to the health, safety or well-being of the children; 3) undergoing a fingerprinting and background check 4) a signed statement regarding child abuse 5) going through New Teacher Orientation. Any "visitor" who spends extended periods of time in the center will be considered a volunteer and be required to go through the screening and training listed above.

INTRUDERS:

The safety of the children is our first concern. Although we have an open-door policy and welcome parents to visit their children, we also have a commitment to the parents of the other children in the program. Since we cannot attest to the background of anyone that has not gone through our screening process, we also cannot allow parents to spend extended periods of time in our facility without requiring them to fulfill certain screening and training requirements. These are set by state law and our policies. Any individual who does not submit to our safety policies concerning "Visitors" and "Volunteers" must be considered an intruder and steps will be taken according to the "Intruder" portion of our "Safety and Evacuation" policies.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY:

The State of FL requires that GBA and all members of childcare institutions be on the lookout for, and report to the State and appropriate authorities all suspected cases of abuse to a child.

At GBA our center and staff are mandatory reporters of Child Abuse. All incidents or suspected incidents will be turned over directly to the DCF for investigation. We are not allowed to do our own investigation and are required by law to report anything of a suspicious nature. It is advised that clients make the staff aware of any lingering bruising or other visible injury to minimize suspicion of possible child abuse or endangerment.

The following steps are to be taken if a staff member is suspected of child abuse:

- A staff member who has a situation or investigation pending should immediately notify the Director.
- The person who suspects abuse should bring it to the attention of the Director. The supervisor will check on the complaint and if they agree that there may be abuse, the supervisor will report the incident to DCF and our State licensing authority.
- We will then follow their advice regarding whether to suspend the staff members.
If a staff member is founded in a case of child abuse, we will take the following steps:
- We will allow the staff members to appeal against the decision.
- The Director will meet with the individual to go over the incident and form an opinion as to its validity and/or consequences to the Center and the individual.
- Based on the advice of our licensing agent, we will either suspend the staff members or allow them to continue their job until the appeal is completed.
- The staff members will meet with the Director during this time and steps will be taken to ensure that there won't be any problems.

If after the appeal the decision is still founded, we will take one of the following steps based on the advice of our licensing agent:

- The staff member will be terminated from their position at the Center, or
- We will inform the parents that we have a staff member who has a found child abuse on record. We will also let the parents know what the charge was.

DISCIPLINE AND EXPULSION POLICY:

At GBA the staff are trained in using positive reinforcement as a means of discipline. Our goal is to find solutions and to provide the very best environment for your child. We have a detailed Discipline policy including an early intervention system which we call our Behavior Intervention Policy.

DISCIPLINE POLICY:

GBA knows that every child should learn from their mistakes and be taught how to handle themselves properly in every situation.

Appropriate behavior will be highly praised.

Teachers use age-appropriate discussion, redirection, and positive reinforcement.

EXPULSION POLICY:

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to withdrawal a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know that we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) to prevent this policy from being enforced.

The following are reasons we may have to withdraw or suspend a child from our center:

PARENTAL IMMEDIATE CAUSES FOR EXPULSION:

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or him/herself.
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions towards staff members.
- Parents exhibit verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S EXPULSION:

- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
- Uncontrollable tantrums/ angry outbursts.
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children.
- Excessive biting.
- Running out of the classroom.

Prior to expulsion, a parent will be called, observation will be made indicating what the problem is, and every effort will be made by both the center and the parent to correct the problem, an action plan will be considered. If after one or two weeks, depending on the risk to other children's welfare or safety, behavior does not improve, and the center finds that they can no longer accommodate the child, the parent will be asked to remove him/her. The parent will be given a minimum of one week notice to find another center to provide care for this child.

VI. CURRICULUM & SCHEDULE

TEACHING STRATEGIES CREATIVE CURRICULUM SUMMARY

Our supportive curriculum is used to help our staff to provide children with developmentally appropriate programs that support active learning and promote progress in all developmental areas.

Teaching Strategies provides innovative, effective resources that empower and inspire our teachers during the critical, formative years from birth through five.

The Creative Curriculum is innovative, responsive, comprehensive, and research-based, and supports the development of the whole child. High-quality, comprehensive resources that empower our staff to intentionally teach and care for our youngest learners during the most critical and formative years of development.

Every child is different, it is no surprise that they learn differently that is why we plan with developmentally appropriate activities, promoting learning experiences designed for each age-group and flexibly tailored to each child's needs with high-quality, research-based resources.

Our Staff create responsive daily routines and meaningful learning experiences for the youngest learners, in their planning, teaching, and family engagement experiences inside the classroom and beyond, includes, developmentally appropriate curriculum to life in an early childhood classroom or at home in partnership with families.

In addition to digital access to curriculum, it provides dynamic planning tools that help individualize instruction, facilitates communication between our teachers and families, streamlines weekly planning processes, and offers access to new family-facing resources to build consistency in learning experiences. The 38 research-based objectives are at the heart of everything we do, and they define the path our teachers take to the children in their classroom.

Our objectives for development and learning span from birth through five years. They enable teachers to see children's development and learning along a progression across the whole of the early childhood years.

The objectives cover 10 areas of development and learning: Social-emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social studies, arts, including broad developmental areas, content areas, and English language acquisition. Many objectives also include dimensions that guide our teachers' thinking about various aspects of that objective and help clarify what it addresses.

The program provides developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to build and understanding of mathematics and numbers through naming and recognizing different shapes and patterns; counting objects and materials; recognizing quantity and number symbols; using measurements and sorting; and integrating mathematical terms and concepts, including time, into everyday use, also build and understanding of technology.

The children could build an understanding and appreciation of culturally diverse art, music, drama, and dance through encouraging and engaging in creative expression and play; expanding artistic skills by manipulating age-appropriate materials and child sized tools; reviewing personal art and others art; and integration artistic terms into everyday use.

The program builds an understanding of social studies through participating in group and community activities, exploring diversity in non-stereotypical cultures and family structure.

The program provides developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to build an understanding of technology. Media is used for a limited time of 30 minutes per week for educational materials/activities that are suitable to the developmental level of the children, we may use computers, tablets, listening centers all interactively with the children through teacher-initiated conversations and the use of open-ended questions.

DAILY SCHEDULE:

Although your child's schedule varies somewhat day to day, a typical flow of a day's activities is below.

Activity Time: Activities specific to the weekly theme are presented along with basic activities such as puzzles, table manipulatives, dramatic play, blocks, etc.

Group Time: Group times are child-centered participative sessions. The planned group activities include reading, music, movement, finger plays, discussion, dramatization, games, and experience stories.

Outdoor time: The playground is an extension of the classroom. Children can participate in an activity of their own choosing. Inclement weather, special events, or celebrations will occasionally affect the scheduling of outdoor time.

Mealtime: Staff sit with children while they are eating, encouraging, and participating in quiet conversation.

Rest Time: Children are given the opportunity to nap or rest each day.

Specific activities vary based on age; all are posted weekly in each room.

SUMMER CAMP

A summer camp program is offered during the summer months for school ages children. The camp is built around weekly themes. Activities include various art projects, music, water fun, sports, stories, cooking, theatre, and field trips.

VII. CLASS DIVISION, STUDENTS RATIOS & STAFF

CLASSIFICATIONS:

Due to strict licensing guidelines and safety issues, we require that all individuals on our property be categorized as one of the following:

- 1) A scheduled employee during the regular course of their workday
- 2) A Child who is in our care (all paperwork has been filled out)
- 3) Parents or others during regular drop-off or pick-up (This to be approximately fifteen (15) minutes)
- 4) Delivery personnel – From a regular or expected company delivering items to the center (should be always in eyesight of an employee and arriving at an expected time)
- 5) Visitors’ – Must be approved by the office and should always be accompanied by an employee not to exceed once per month and limited to a maximum of 2 hours.
- 6) Volunteers – Anyone who is helping with a class party or in any other capacity or anyone who has been a “visitor” for more than once a month or for over 2 hours.
- 7) An Intruder – Action will be taken by the staff to notify the proper authorities.

Therefore, anyone who is in the building or on the property for an extended period must be considered either a “visitor” a “volunteer” or an “intruder” including parents and employees who are off the clock.

CLASS DIVISIONS AND CLASS SIZE:

We endeavor to have a challenging and appropriate atmosphere for children of all ages. Homeroom class divisions are based upon three issues. These are: the individual developmental needs of each child, state set student to teacher ratios, and the overall enrolment management plan of the center. Children not yet in school are generally divided into classes by age since this usually keeps them with children at their own developmental level and keeps our age-based student to teacher ratios easy to calculate. In most cases it is our target to have children together with the children with whom they will be attending Kindergarten.

STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIOS:

Student to teacher ratios are based upon guidelines set by STATE law. The following chart shows the maximum ratios that we observe.

Age of children	Number of Students	Per teacher
Infants	4	1
Toddlers 12-24 months	6	1
2-Year-Olds	11	1
3-Year-Olds	15	1
4-Year-Olds	20	1
EHS	8	2
VPK	11 / 20	1/2
School-Age Children	25	1

In addition to the teacher to child ratios each group also has a group maximum. We always meet or beat these ratios and minimums.

TRANSITION PLAN

GBA will create an individualized TRANSITION PLAN to help children who are about to transition from one class to the next. This is to help the children become familiar with the new program, teachers, and children. It also allows the new teachers to get to know the individual needs of each child prior to the transition of an entire class group or several children together. The plan allows flexibility for us to best meet the needs of each child. Each child's individual needs are different therefore the TRANSITION PLAN may vary quite a bit from child to child. Your child's teacher or the director will provide more details about transitioning when your child moves to another classroom.

OUR STAFF:

At GBA we strive to provide nurturing, quality care in a highly interactive learning environment. Our friendly qualified staff are an integral part of providing this environment. Our current staff has had:

- A detailed interview and screening process.
- Approval by the state of FL through a background analysis that cross references state and federal criminal records as well as child abuse reporting records to ensure that each employee has a background that is clear.
- CPR and first aid requirements fulfilled.

We believe firmly in training and continued education for all our employees and staff. Each has qualified themselves to work with your children by attending specific training classes and often college level courses to learn about early education and the needs of children. We emphasize training and encourage all our employees to exceed the state minimum number of clock hours for training required to be qualified to continue to work in an early education setting.

STAFF AND CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS:

GBA considers it inappropriate for parents and clients to solicit our staff to work for them either in their business or homes. We are not legally or financially liable for our employees or any of their actions when they are off the clock or no longer employed by GBA. All employees have signed a statement saying that they will not engage in "care for hire" or any employment by or for any past or current client family of GBA while currently employed by GBA or for eighteen (18) months after their last day of employment. An employee who violates this policy has violated their employment agreement and is subject to possible termination. It is inappropriate for a client or parent to solicit any employee for any type of work. Clients who violate this policy may be subject to termination of services.

VIII.ACCREDITATION

ACCREDITATION:

GBA has distinguished itself as one of the top childcare centers in the area by seeking outside accreditation by National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA). It is our pride to be accredited by this institution. As a result, many of our center policies and practices are based on the standards and criteria established by them. For more information concerning this see the management.

IX. FOOD & NUTRITION

MEALS AND SNACKS:

Our meal and snack service consists of breakfast, a hot lunch, and a PM snack. All food served will be nutritious and healthy. Each child will be encouraged to eat what is prepared and to try new items as

introduced. Please alert our staff of any food allergies or food restrictions as we want to accommodate and respect individual preferences.

FOOD FOR INFANTS (6 weeks- 12 Months):

GBA provides food/ formula/milk for children in the Infant room. The Infant room is equipped with crock pots and a refrigerator. All bottles are required to have a sticker with the child's name and the date the bottle was made. Please be certain to inform staff in the classroom of the type of formula your child is using, and any other facts regarding diet. Do not bring open baby food jars - Licensing requirements restrict us from serving prepared baby food from previously opened jars. Any unused baby food will be sent home or thrown away each evening. Breast milk must be handled in a manner consistent with universal precautions. Please clearly identify all breast milk.

FOOD AND NUTRITION / BRINGING FOOD FROM HOME:

A wide variety of nutritionally balanced, high-quality foods are prepared and served at GBA each day. Meals are served in a way to encourage each child to take a "practice bite" of each food that is offered. To promote healthy eating habits, food is available only at scheduled times. Children who choose not to eat will be offered food again at the next scheduled meal or snack. Meal and snack times are planned so that no child will go more than three hours without being offered food. Scheduled mealtimes are 7:15-9:00, 11:30-12:30 and 2:30-3:30. If your child is absent during a scheduled meal or snack, please plan to feed him/her before he/she arrives. **Please do not bring your child with any food from home or fast-food as we participate in the Food Program** and the center will provide these meals for the children. Food cannot be brought into the center. If your child is eating breakfast in the car, he/she needs to finish before entering the building. Gum and candy are not allowed in the center at any time. It is important for us to work together to provide a safe environment for your child and accommodate them with a special diet if it is necessary, however since we have no way of knowing what happens when your child is at home, we rely on you to keep us updated about any changes in your child's allergies. Accommodations for food allergies will be made on a case-by-case basis. Food allergies are posted in the kitchen and Classrooms; confidentiality of the child's allergy will be maintained. If your child has religious or lifestyle dietary restrictions, we will make reasonable adjustments to the menu to accommodate his/her needs. The weekly menus have been reviewed and are planned with optimal nutrition in mind. Each menu is designed to provide a wide variety of components like Vegetables, Fruits, Healthy Proteins, and whole grains including those that are the children's favorites, new or unfamiliar, culturally diverse, and seasonally appropriate. In addition, menus are planned with children's ages and developmental abilities in mind. A Six-week rotation of menus changes seasonally to provide the children with a balance of variety and familiarity.

X. HEALTH CARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS:

All children enrolled must have their immunization records up-to-date or provide an exemption affidavit. The child's immunization record must be provided by the parent and all information must be current. The parent shall also provide proof of this with a form signed by a health care provider. This form will state that the child has received all current, age-appropriate immunizations. If GBA is penalized or fined for non-compliance of immunization forms due to a parent's neglect, that fine will be passed on to the client responsible including an additional \$50 administration fee.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL CONSENT FORM:

This form will give us your consent to call an ambulance or your child's doctor or dentist if he/she needs emergency care. Please list your child's doctor, dentist, and the hospital you would prefer. Also, please list phone numbers, addresses, and additional emergency numbers of contacts. It is strongly suggested that all emergency contacts be listed on your Pick-up Permission form. If your child has any allergies or is on any medications, please include this information on the form as well as filling out one

of the food or nonfood allergy forms. All these forms will be re-done annually. Immunization forms need to be presented on or before the first day the child attends the center. A photocopy of these will be kept on file. When your child receives additional immunizations, you are required to bring your immunization form back in for us to take a current photocopy of it so that we can update your file. Whenever any information on this form changes – it is your responsibility to notify us and up-date or re-do this form.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION:

All medication to be given to children must be in the original bottle with the instructions clearly printed on it as provided by the doctor's prescription or by the pharmaceutical company. All medicine must be in an up-to-date bottle and not be outdated or past-dated. All prescription medication must have that child's name on the script. A Permission to give Medication form needs to be filled out prior to the administration of any medication. All medicines must be personally handed to the front office staff at the time of arrival along with the Permission to give Medication form (Filled out). GBA reserves the right not to give medicines if the dosage is questionable or not according to the label. Medication bottles with any remaining will be given returned to the parent upon completion of the course of it.

ALLERGIES:

We must be aware of any food or other known allergies that affect our child. If your child has any known food allergies, you will need to fill out an Allergy/Food Exemption Medical Statement. This allows us to warn all our staff to be on guard about their allergy. The Allergy/Food Exemption Statement must be handed into our office as soon as this allergy has been identified. This form must be updated annually. You will also need to fill out an Authorization form to give Medication if your child requires an Epi-pen or other emergency treatment.

DAILY HEALTH SCREENING / ILLNESS AND CONTINUED HEALTH:

These guidelines are for the welfare of all our children. To provide safety and health we rely on our parents to monitor their children with these guidelines in mind. Outdoor play is essential to your child's development. We feel that if your child is too sick to play outdoors then they are too sick for group care. A child that is ill or has a temperature of 100.4 degrees or above should be kept at home. All children shall have direct contact with a staff member upon arrival for early detection of apparent illness, communicable disease, or unusual condition or behavior, see the Drop-Off section above. A child that is too ill to remain in the center shall be supervised and cared for until the child can be cared for elsewhere. The child will be sent home if he/she is running a temperature of over 100.4 degrees, if he/she is vomiting or has diarrhea (2 or more), or if it is suspected that he/she has a contagious disease. In the event you are called to come pick up an ill child, you must pick your child up within 1 hour, or overtime rates will apply. If a child needs to be sent home and their parents are unreachable, we will call the emergency contacts listed on the Pick-up Permission form. If no one is available by contact after 1 hour the overtime rate will apply. The center reserves the right to request the child to see a physician or have a physician's note prior to returning. GBA is not responsible for any illness your child may contract while in group care.

ILLNESS INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION POLICY:

GBA had reviewed with all families the inclusion/exclusion criteria, but it is solely the program staff who will make the final decision about whether children who are ill may attend, this decision will be based on the program's inclusion/exclusion criteria and the staff's ability to care for the child who is ill without compromising the care of other children in the program. This inclusion and exclusion Policy includes GBA Staff.

At GBA we encourage all families to have a backup plan for childcare in the event of short- or long-term exclusion. We consider the family's description of the child's behavior to determine whether the child is well enough to return, unless the child's status is unclear from the family's report.

A primary health care provider's note is required to readmit a child to determine whether the child is a health risk to others or if guidance is needed about any special care the child requires.

We perform Daily health checks on arrival of each child each day where staff objectively determine if the child is ill or well. Administrative Staff determine which children with mild illnesses can remain in care and which need to be excluded.

Staff will notify the parent/guardian when a child develops new signs or symptoms of illness or that require exclusion. Parent/guardian notification will be immediate for emergency or urgent issues.

For children, whose symptoms do not require exclusion, verbal, or written notification of the parent/guardian at the end of the day is acceptable.

If a Child Becomes Ill at the Center

All efforts will be made to make your child as comfortable as possible. GBA Staff members will gather information and work with the parent/guardian to decide in the child's best interest. Certain symptoms can be indicative of infection or communicable illness, in which case the child will be separated from the classroom with supervision to prevent the spread of illness. Parents/guardian will be contacted to pick up the child. Staff members will continue to assess the child's condition. If the staff assessment of the child's condition warrants medical attention, the child's health care provider, or if necessary, local emergency will be notified.

EXCLUSION POLICIES

Exclusion is often necessary to prevent the spread of illness. Exclusion also applies to children who have not been immunized for conscientiously held beliefs or medical contradictions.

Children cannot be admitted to the center with any of the following symptoms or illnesses:

Fever: It is GBA policy that children are fever-free before fever reducing medication for 24 hours before returning to the center. A fever is defined as a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher.

Signs/Symptoms of Possible Severe Illness: Child must be excluded until a medical exam indicates the child may return if the child exhibits unusual fatigue, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, etc.

Uncontrolled Diarrhea: Child must be excluded when 2 or more stools compared with his/her normal pattern, watery stools, and/or decreased stool form that cannot be contained by the diaper or use of the toilet. Child may return after a medical exam indicates that it is not a communicable illness. A child whose diarrhea cannot be contained in a diaper or use of a toilet will be excluded until these symptoms are no longer evident for 24 hours.

Vomiting: Child must be excluded until vomiting has stopped for 24 hours.

Mouth Sores with Drooling: Child must be excluded until a medical exam indicates that the child may return.

Rash: Child must be excluded until a medical exam indicates that it is not a communicable illness.

Eye Drainage: A child is excluded for 24 hours after treatment is started for contagious conjunctivitis or pus drainage.

Unusual Color: A child is excluded until a medical diagnosis rules out Hepatitis A.

Significant Respiratory Distress: Excessive coughing, wheezing or difficulty breathing.

Bacterial Infection: This includes strep, ear infection, or impetigo; child is excluded until 24 hours of antibiotic therapy have been completed.

Any contagious illness: All children must be excluded with any reportable illness such as scabies, chicken pox, ring worm, etc., that is untreated and contagious to others.

Head Lice: A child must be excluded until all lice, lice eggs, and egg cases are removed. Our center enforces a "no nit" policy. If nits are present upon the child's return to the center, the parent will be called to pick up the child for treatment or follow-up.

Unable to Participate: If the child is unable to participate in everyday center activities with reasonable comfort, or who requires more care than the team members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children, he/she will be excluded from the center.

