

# BRIGHTER FUTURES

## Child Development Center

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# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Effective: January 2026

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(843) 729-9796 | 1741 Central Avenue, Summerville, SC 29483

### NOTICE TO ALL EMPLOYEES

This handbook supersedes all prior employee handbooks, oral or written statements, and policies. It is not an employment contract and does not alter the at-will employment relationship between Brighter Futures Child Development Center and its employees. Brighter Futures reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, terminate, or change any or all plans, policies, or procedures, in whole or in part, at any time, with or without notice. Each employee must acknowledge receipt of this handbook in writing at hire and upon each subsequent revision.

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## SECTION 1: HISTORY, MISSION & PHILOSOPHY

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### History

Brighter Futures Child Development Center is a newly established childcare center dedicated to setting the highest standard for exceptional early childhood care. With highly skilled and experienced leadership and teaching staff, the Center provides a nurturing and stimulating environment where children learn, grow, and thrive. We are committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of our program — for the children and families we serve and for the staff who make that possible.

### Mission Statement

At Brighter Futures Child Development Center, we believe in the value and uniqueness of each child we serve. Our program is designed to promote each child's individual social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. As caregivers and educators, our mission is to provide a safe and developmentally appropriate learning environment that fosters a child's natural desire to explore, discover, create, and become a lifelong learner.

### Philosophy & Guiding Principles

Our program is grounded in the belief that children are born ready to learn. The following principles, drawn from the South Carolina Early Learning Standards (SC-ELS), form the foundation of our curriculum and professional practice:

- Children develop knowledge of their world through active interactions with caregivers, peers, materials, and events.
- Learning is sequential, building on prior understandings and experiences.
- Learning proceeds at different rates for each child across developmental areas.
- Learning is interconnected — young children learn best through experiences that incorporate multiple developmental domains.
- Learning is embedded in culture — children learn best when activities are rooted in familiar cultural contexts.
- Learning begins in the family, continues in early care settings, and depends on parent involvement and caregiver guidance.
- All children have the potential to achieve the SC Early Learning Standards with appropriate support and instruction.

## SECTION 2: WELCOME & AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT STATEMENT

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Welcome to the Brighter Futures team! We believe the strongest partnership in a child's life is between the child's family and the professionals who care for them each day. You are central to that partnership. We serve children ages 3 to 5 years old, individualizing our program to meet each child's unique needs. We continuously invest in staff training, tools, and support because we know that the quality of what we offer our children is inseparable from the quality of our team.

**AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT NOTICE: Employment at Brighter Futures Child Development Center is at-will. Either the employee or the Center may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause, and with or without advance notice. Nothing in this handbook creates or implies a contract of employment. No supervisor, manager, or representative of the Center — other than the Director in a separately signed written agreement — has the authority to alter the at-will nature of employment.**

## SECTION 3: GENERAL CENTER INFORMATION & LICENSING

### Administration

Director: Dr. Sabrina Marshall | [slmarshall@bfcddc.com](mailto:slmarshall@bfcddc.com) | (843) 729-9796

Address: 1741 Central Avenue, Summerville, SC 29483

### Licensing & Regulatory Compliance

Brighter Futures Child Development Center is a publicly licensed childcare center serving up to 68 children, licensed by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SC DSS), Division of Early Care and Education, pursuant to S.C. Code Title 63, Chapter 13. A copy of SC DSS licensing rules is posted in the Director's office, the staff break room, and is accessible at [scchildcare.org](http://scchildcare.org). All staff must be familiar with applicable licensing regulations.

The Center participates in the following programs and systems:

- SC ABC Quality Rating and Improvement System (ABC Quality)
- USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), administered by SC DSS
- South Carolina First Steps 4K Program (First Steps/CERDEP)

All staff must comply with the requirements of each program as applicable to their role. Non-compliance with any regulatory requirement is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### Hours of Operation

The Center is open Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Center is closed on all recognized holidays and five (5) staff professional development days per year. Staff schedules may vary; specific shift hours are assigned by the Director.

### Classrooms & SC DSS Required Ratios

CLASSROOM	AGE RANGE / CAPACITY
Exploratory Eagles	Ages 3–4   12–14 children max
Dynamic Discoverers	Ages 3–4   12–14 children max
Marvelous Minds	Ages 4–5   12–20 children max
Global Go-Getters	Ages 5–6   12–20 children max

AGE GROUP	SC DSS REQUIRED RATIO
Ages 3–4	Minimum 1 staff per 12 children
Ages 4–5	Minimum 1 staff per 17 children
Ages 5–6	Minimum 1 staff per 20 children

Per SC DSS regulation: when mixed age groups share a room (without infants or toddlers), the ratio shall be consistent with the age of the majority of the children. Brighter Futures strives to exceed minimum ratios by maintaining both lead teachers and teacher assistants in every classroom. Staff-to-child ratios must be maintained at all times, including during transitions, meals, outdoor play, and field trips.

## SECTION 4: EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY & NON-DISCRIMINATION

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Brighter Futures Child Development Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Center does not discriminate in any employment decision on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local law. This policy covers all aspects of employment including recruiting, hiring, compensation, benefits, promotion, transfer, training, discipline, and termination.

As a CACFP-participating institution, the Center is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its employment and program activities. Program information is available in languages other than English upon request.

### Anti-Harassment Policy

Brighter Futures strictly prohibits all forms of workplace harassment, including sexual harassment and harassment on the basis of any protected characteristic. Harassment includes but is not limited to: derogatory or demeaning remarks, offensive jokes based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or other protected classes, and any unwanted verbal, physical, or visual conduct that creates a hostile work environment. Any staff member who witnesses or experiences harassment must report it to the Director immediately. All reports will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and confidentially. Retaliation against any person who makes a good-faith report of harassment or discrimination is strictly prohibited and is grounds for immediate termination.

### Complaint Procedure

Any employee who believes they have been subjected to discrimination or harassment may report the matter to the Director. If the complaint involves the Director, the employee may contact the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission (SCHAC) at 1-800-521-0725, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) at 1-800-669-4000. The Center will not tolerate retaliation against any employee for filing a complaint.

## SECTION 5: EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATION & HIRING REQUIREMENTS

### Employment Classifications

CLASSIFICATION	DESCRIPTION
Full-Time Regular	Scheduled 40 hours/week; completed 6-month introductory period
Part-Time Regular	Scheduled fewer than 35 hours/week; not temporary
Temporary	Hired to supplement workforce or for a specific project
Introductory (First 6 Months)	Either party may end employment at will; benefits eligibility as specified per benefit

All employees are classified as exempt or non-exempt from overtime pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Non-exempt employees receive overtime pay at 1.5 times the regular rate for hours worked over 40 in a workweek. Classification is determined at hire by the Director.

### Minimum Hiring Requirements — All Staff

Pursuant to S.C. Code § 63-13-30 (as amended by S.B. 862, effective July 11, 2024), all caregivers at a licensed SC childcare center must meet the following requirements:

- High school diploma, GED, or equivalent credential recognized by the SC State Board of Education (Certificate of Completion or SC High School Employability Credential also accepted)
- Completion of all SC DSS-mandated preservice training before working independently with children
- OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen training prior to employment or within 10 days of hire
- Current CPR and First Aid certification, or completion within 30 days of hire
- Must be at least 18 years of age to be left unsupervised with children

### Introductory Period

All new employees serve a six (6)-month introductory period. During this period, either the employee or the Center may end employment at any time without cause or notice. Successful completion of the introductory period does not change the at-will employment status. Benefits eligibility begins as specified for each benefit type.

## SECTION 6: BACKGROUND CHECKS & HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

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### MANDATORY COMPLIANCE NOTICE

All background check requirements are mandated by S.C. Code § 63-13-40 and USDA CACFP regulations. No employee may be left alone with children until all required checks are cleared. Failure to cooperate with any background check requirement is grounds for immediate termination.

### Central Registry Check (SC DSS)

Pursuant to S.C. Code § 63-13-40(D)(1), a Central Registry Check must be completed by SC DSS to determine whether the applicant has a substantiated finding of child abuse or neglect. An employee may begin work provisionally before the check is returned only if they execute a sworn statement certifying they are not on the Central Registry. Provisional employees are never left alone with children.

### State Criminal History Check (SLED)

All staff must complete a South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) background check prior to or immediately upon hire, and every three (3) years thereafter. The SLED check includes South Carolina criminal history, the SC Child Abuse Registry, and the SC Sex Offender Registry.

### National Criminal History Check (FBI Fingerprinting)

All staff must complete Form 1706 and be fingerprinted by a certified technician, coordinated through the Director. Fingerprints are submitted to the FBI for a national criminal records check. Results must be on file before an employee may work independently with children.

### Sex Offender Registry — Absolute Prohibition

Any person required to register on the South Carolina Sex Offender Registry due to a conviction for a sex offense against a minor shall not be employed by, volunteer at, contract with, manage, or operate the Center and shall not be present on Center property under any circumstances, regardless of their relationship to any enrolled child.

### Health Assessment & TB Screening

Each staff member must receive a pre-employment physical examination and tuberculosis (TB) screening performed within six (6) months before or immediately upon beginning employment. Physicals must be updated every two (2) years. Employees have a 30-day grace period to submit updated physicals. After 30 days of non-compliance, the employee may be suspended without pay until the updated physical is on file. The Director may, at their discretion, also impose a fine not to exceed \$10.00 per week of continued non-compliance.

### Hepatitis B Vaccination

Consistent with OSHA requirements, all staff with potential occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials must be offered the Hepatitis B vaccination series at no cost to the employee, within ten (10) days of hire. If a staff member has already completed the HBV series or chooses to decline, a signed Hepatitis B Vaccination Consent/Waiver Form must be completed and placed in the personnel file.

## SECTION 7: GENERAL STAFF EXPECTATIONS & PROFESSIONALISM

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Every Brighter Futures employee is a childcare professional. Professional conduct is expected in the classroom, on the playground, during field trips, in communications with families, and in all other aspects of employment. The following standards apply to every staff member at all times.

### Core Professional Standards

- Arrive on time and remain for the entirety of your scheduled shift.
- Maintain regular attendance; arrange coverage in advance whenever possible.
- Follow the dress code at all times (see Section 8).
- Respond constructively to direction, feedback, and correction from supervisors.
- Protect the confidential information of children, families, and co-workers at all times (see Section 9).
- Maintain a positive, solution-focused attitude toward the program, children, families, and co-workers.
- Attend all required staff meetings, training sessions, and Center events.
- Complete all SC DSS-required training in a timely manner.
- Maintain current CPR/First Aid certification.
- Personal mobile phone use — including calls, texting, and social media — is prohibited while actively supervising children. Phones may be used only during designated break times in non-child areas.

### Active Supervision of Children

Staff must maintain active, attentive supervision of children at all times. Active supervision means staff are positioned to see and hear all children, continuously moving among them, and anticipating potential safety concerns. Children must never be left unsupervised, even momentarily. Before leaving a classroom for any reason, staff must communicate with a co-teacher and confirm that required staff-to-child ratios are maintained with a qualified staff member present.

### Substance Abuse — Drug-Free Workplace

Brighter Futures is a drug-free, alcohol-free workplace. Any employee who reports to work under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance will be sent home immediately and may be subject to suspension or termination. If a supervisor or co-worker has probable cause to believe a staff member is impaired while on duty, the staff member may be required to leave immediately. Refusal to comply with removal or testing is grounds for termination. Violation of this policy is grounds for immediate termination.

### Tobacco & Vaping Policy

All tobacco products, e-cigarettes, and vaping devices are strictly prohibited on Center premises (including all parking lots, outdoor play areas, and vehicles) and during field trips. Staff must not use tobacco products immediately before or during their shift, as residue remains on clothing and

hair. Staff must wash hands after any tobacco use before returning to work. A staff member who smells of tobacco or vaping upon arriving for their shift will be asked to leave, shower, and change before returning. Repeated violations are grounds for termination.

### **Personnel Files**

The Center maintains a confidential permanent personnel file for each employee containing all required DSS licensing documentation, background check results, training records, performance evaluations, and disciplinary records. Employees may review their own file by scheduling a time with the Director. No employee may access another employee's personnel file for any reason. Employees must promptly notify the Director of changes in address, phone number, emergency contact, email, marital status, or dependents.

### **Purchases & Reimbursement**

All purchases made with personal funds on behalf of the Center must receive prior written approval from the Director. Unapproved purchases may not be reimbursed. Original receipts must be submitted to the Director within one (1) week of purchase. Classroom budget requests are submitted by the Lead Teacher within the approved budget.

### **Parking**

Staff must park on the east side of the street, opposite the front entrance. Front parking spaces are reserved for families during drop-off and pick-up hours.

## SECTION 8: DRESS CODE

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All staff are expected to observe the Three Cs of appropriate professional attire:

### COMFORTABLE

Staff actively play with children throughout the day. Clothing must allow free, unrestricted movement. Staff are expected to participate fully in all activities, including art, outdoor play, and floor time, and should wear clothing they are comfortable getting dirty. Flip-flops, crocs, open-toed shoes, and high heels are never appropriate.

### CLEAN

All clothing must be clean and free of stains, rips, and tears. Personal hygiene must be maintained to a professional standard at all times.

### COURTEOUS

Standard dress is professional scrubs Monday through Thursday. Fridays are business casual. Clothing must not display references to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or controlled substances, or any vulgar, sexually suggestive, or offensive language or imagery. The following items are never appropriate:

- Halter tops, strapless or tube tops
- Skirts or shorts that do not reach fingertip length
- Sweatpants or excessively torn clothing
- Low-rise pants or shorts that expose undergarments

Staff not adhering to the dress code may be asked to leave and return appropriately dressed. Repeated violations are subject to progressive discipline.

## SECTION 9: CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

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Confidentiality is a fundamental professional and legal obligation. All information about children, families, and co-workers is strictly confidential and may not be shared with any person without prior written consent, except as required by SC DSS, CACFP, SC First Steps 4K, or other regulatory and legal authorities.

Mandatory confidentiality practices include:

- When discussing a child's activities, use first names only.
- Never disclose the identity of other children involved in behavior incidents or Accident/Incident Reports to families.
- Never discuss Center operations, sensitive situations, or individual cases in public spaces, including parking lots or social gatherings.
- Children's personal information (last name, address, phone number) may not be distributed, posted, or shared except through authorized systems (e.g., ProCare).
- Personal information of families and staff must never be used for personal purposes.
- Written parental consent must be obtained before consulting any outside professional or agency about a specific child.

### Violations

Any employee who discloses confidential information without authorization, pressures co-workers or families for information they are not entitled to, or discusses confidential matters with uninvolved parties may be subject to immediate termination. Confidentiality obligations continue after separation from employment.

### Limitation — Mandatory Reporting

Confidentiality does not protect a staff member from the legal duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect. All employees are mandated reporters under South Carolina law. See Section 19.

## SECTION 10: PROPRIETARY INFORMATION, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & TRADE SECRETS

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### OWNERSHIP NOTICE

*All business systems, curriculum materials, documents, forms, records, procedures, branding, and operational methods of Brighter Futures Child Development Center are the sole and exclusive proprietary property of Brighter Futures Child Development Center. Dr. Sabrina Marshall retains all ownership rights as the sole proprietor of the Center. Nothing in this section limits the Center's right to pursue all available legal remedies for misappropriation, unauthorized use, or theft of proprietary assets.*

### What Constitutes Proprietary Property

For purposes of this policy, the following are the sole and exclusive proprietary property and trade secrets of Brighter Futures Child Development Center:

- The Center's name, logo, tagline, trade name, and all branding elements — including colors, graphic designs, marketing materials, and promotional content
- All curriculum frameworks, lesson plan templates, learning objectives, assessment tools, and instructional materials developed by or customized for the Center
- Staff training programs, orientation materials, onboarding checklists, and professional development curricula
- All forms, policies, handbooks, and procedural documents — including this Employee Handbook and the Parent Handbook
- Business operations systems including enrollment procedures, tuition structures, scheduling frameworks, and parent communication protocols
- All child and family records, enrollment data, attendance data, and developmental assessment records
- Financial information including rate sheets, revenue data, vendor contracts, and payroll information
- Vendor relationships, supplier contacts, and service provider agreements
- Digital content including the Center's website text and design, social media content, email communications, and marketing campaigns
- Any original creative works, photographs, videos, or multimedia produced by or for the Center

### Employee Obligations

During and after employment, all staff must:

- Protect all proprietary information as strictly confidential and use it only in the performance of authorized job duties
- Not copy, reproduce, distribute, publish, post online, or transmit any proprietary material without the Director's express written permission
- Not remove any proprietary documents, materials, files, or equipment from the premises without written authorization
- Not use any proprietary information, systems, forms, or methods to compete with, replicate, or establish any competing childcare business or program, whether independently or in conjunction with another entity

- Return all proprietary materials — physical and digital — immediately upon separation from employment. This includes all copies, whether stored on personal devices, cloud accounts, email, or external drives
- Not share access credentials, login information, or system passwords with unauthorized persons

### Copyright Ownership of Work Product

Any materials, content, forms, lesson plans, assessments, training materials, or other work product created by an employee during the course of their employment at Brighter Futures — whether created on Center premises or off-site, during or outside of scheduled work hours, using Center resources or personal resources — are created within the scope of employment and are the exclusive property of Brighter Futures Child Development Center. This includes any derivative works based on existing Center materials. Employees have no ownership rights in any work product created in connection with their employment.

### Prohibition on Competing Use

No current or former employee may use the Center's name, logo, branding, curriculum, forms, operational systems, or any other proprietary asset to operate, promote, or benefit any other childcare business, program, or enterprise without the express written consent of Dr. Sabrina Marshall. This prohibition applies during employment and for a period of two (2) years following separation from employment, regardless of the reason for separation.

**CONSEQUENCES FOR MISUSE, THEFT, OR UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURE: Violation of this policy — including unauthorized copying, distribution, use, or removal of any proprietary material or information — constitutes a serious breach of employment and may result in: (1) Immediate termination of employment. (2) Civil legal action for misappropriation of trade secrets, conversion of property, unfair competition, or breach of fiduciary duty, which may result in injunctive relief, compensatory damages, and punitive damages. (3) Criminal prosecution under the South Carolina Trade Secrets Act (S.C. Code §§ 39-8-10 et seq.) and applicable federal law, including the Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016 (18 U.S.C. §§ 1836 et seq.), which may result in fines and imprisonment. (4) Pursuit of all remedies available at law and in equity, including injunctions, attorney's fees, and recovery of damages. Brighter Futures reserves the right to pursue legal remedies against both current and former employees for any violation of this policy.**

### Reporting Suspected Violations

Any employee who suspects that proprietary information is being misused, stolen, accessed without authorization, or disclosed to unauthorized persons — by a co-worker, former employee, competitor, or any other party — must report the concern to the Director immediately. Reports will be investigated promptly and confidentially. No employee will be retaliated against for making a good-faith report of a suspected violation. Failure to report a known or suspected violation of this policy may itself be grounds for disciplinary action.

## SECTION 11: SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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This policy applies to all Brighter Futures employees and covers all social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, X (Twitter), YouTube, blogs, discussion forums, and all collaborative online spaces.

- No photographs or video of children taken at the Center, on the playground, or during Center activities may be posted publicly for any reason, except your own child with appropriate consent.
- Staff have no right to photograph or post images of other people's children without explicit written parental consent. Photographs used for the Center's digital learning journals, website, or marketing materials require documented parental permission.
- No public posts, comments, or discussions may reference children, families, co-workers, or the Center in a manner that is detrimental, derogatory, or violates confidentiality.
- If the Center is mentioned on any platform, it must not be done in a detrimental or derogatory manner.
- Staff may not create or administer social media groups or pages related to Brighter Futures without express written authorization from the Director.
- Staff may not make disparaging, defamatory, or threatening statements about the Center, leadership, employees, children, or families on any platform.

**VIOLATION: Any employee who violates this policy — including posts that breach confidentiality, damage the Center's reputation, or harm any person associated with the Center — is subject to immediate termination. Violations may also expose the employee to personal civil and criminal liability.**

## SECTION 12: ATTENDANCE & SCHEDULING

### WHY ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Consistent staffing is essential to child safety and SC DSS ratio compliance. Every unplanned absence creates risk for children and burdens co-workers. Regular, reliable attendance is a core professional obligation at Brighter Futures.

### Attendance Point System

Each employee is allotted six (6) attendance points per calendar year. Points are assessed for unplanned absences not covered by approved paid leave, documented FMLA-qualifying leave, or two weeks' advance notice. Staff may avoid points by arranging a pre-approved shift swap with a qualified co-worker.

OCCURRENCE	CONSEQUENCE
Unplanned full-day absence	1.0 point
Unplanned half-day absence	0.5 points
Days 2 & 3 of consecutive absence (doctor's note required)	0.5 points each
Absence immediately before or after a holiday	1.0 point + forfeiture of holiday time off
4.0 points accumulated	Verbal Warning issued
5.0 points accumulated	Written Warning issued
6.0 points accumulated	Recommendation for termination; Director review

Exemption Requests: An employee who believes extenuating circumstances warrant forgiveness of attendance points must complete the Attendance Point Exemption Form and submit it to the Director. Approval or denial is at the Director's sole discretion.

### Reporting an Absence

If a staff member is unable to report to work, the Director must be notified by telephone at least three (3) hours before the start of the shift. Text messages and emails are not acceptable for absence notification. Failure to call within the required time frame may result in additional disciplinary action. If absent more than two (2) consecutive days, a physician's note specifying the nature of the illness and the expected return-to-work date is required.

### Scheduling

The Center operates Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. All scheduling requests must be submitted in writing to the Director at least two (2) weeks in advance. Schedules are created based on the needs of the children and staff availability. Staff may occasionally be required to

work outside their regular schedule for parent-teacher conferences, staff meetings, training, or other program obligations.

### **Voluntary Resignation**

Lead Teachers and Full-Time Assistant Teachers are requested to provide a minimum of four (4) weeks' written notice upon resignation. This notice period allows time to hire and train a qualified replacement to protect continuity of care for the children. Providing less notice may affect rehire eligibility.

## SECTION 13: PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE & TERMINATION

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### AT-WILL REMINDER

Brighter Futures uses progressive discipline as a constructive tool. However, progressive discipline is not a contractual obligation. All employees remain at-will. The Center reserves the right to skip any step or proceed directly to termination at any time, for any reason or no reason, consistent with applicable law.

### Step 1 — Verbal Warning

A verbal warning is issued when a staff member's performance fails to meet Center standards or when a policy violation occurs. The issue, consequences, and corrective expectations are discussed. The warning is documented in writing and signed by both the employee and the Director. After one (1) verbal warning within a six (6)-month period, a written warning will be issued for any further issue.

### Step 2 — Written Warning

A written warning is issued when a problem identified by prior verbal warning(s) has not been corrected, or immediately (without a prior verbal warning) for any serious policy violation that endangers the safety or integrity of a child or staff member. The written warning is documented and signed by both the employee and the Director. After one (1) written warning within six (6) months, any further violation is subject to suspension or termination.

### Step 3 — Suspension

The Director may suspend an employee, with or without pay, pending investigation of a serious policy violation, alleged child abuse, or other situation requiring fact-finding. A suspended employee may not enter Center property without prior authorization from the Director.

### Step 4 — Termination

Termination may result from progressive discipline or may be immediate without prior steps. Grounds for immediate termination include, but are not limited to:

- Committing child abuse or neglect under South Carolina law
- Physical, verbal, or emotional abuse of a child, parent, guardian, or co-worker
- Any form of prohibited corporal punishment or physical restraint of a child
- Harassment of any kind (sexual, racial, or other protected class)
- Reporting to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Theft, fraud, or intentional falsification of any records
- Possession or use of a weapon on Center property or at Center events
- Breaching child confidentiality in a manner that harms a child or family
- Abandoning children or leaving the classroom without required ratio coverage
- Failure to report suspected child abuse as required by law

- Violation of any policy in this handbook explicitly stating that violation may result in termination

The above list is illustrative, not exhaustive. Disciplinary action, including immediate termination, may be taken at the Director's discretion.

### **Appeal of Disciplinary Action**

An employee wishing to appeal a written warning, suspension, or termination must submit a written request for an appeal meeting to the Director within five (5) business days of the action. The Director will respond within five (5) business days. The Director's decision on appeal is final.

## SECTION 14: GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE & CO-WORKER COMMUNICATION

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### Grievance Procedure

All staff are expected to make good-faith efforts to resolve workplace conflicts directly with the person(s) involved. If a direct resolution cannot be reached, the staff member should seek the Director's assistance. The Director will work with the parties to find a fair resolution. Confidentiality is mandatory during the grievance process. Staff who discuss a grievance with uninvolved co-workers may be subject to disciplinary action. This expectation applies during and outside of working hours.

### Co-Worker Communication

Open, respectful, professional communication between all staff is essential to program quality and child safety. Before leaving a classroom for any reason, a staff member must inform a co-teacher and confirm that the required ratio is covered. All workplace issues should be addressed and resolved as they arise. All employees are expected to function as active, collaborative team members at all times.

### Open-Door Policy

The Director maintains an open-door policy and is available to discuss any work-related concern. Employees are encouraged to raise questions, concerns, or suggestions at any time. All concerns will be addressed in a timely, fair, and confidential manner. Questions, concerns, or policy change suggestions may also be submitted in writing to the Director.

## SECTION 15: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

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### REGULATORY REQUIREMENT

All staff must complete a minimum of 15 hours of professional development per year as required by SC DSS licensing regulations and SC First Steps 4K program guidelines. CPR/First Aid certification must be current at all times. Failure to meet training requirements is grounds for suspension without pay until compliance is achieved.

### Orientation & Onboarding

All new employees complete a structured orientation covering Center policies, curriculum and lesson planning, safety and emergency procedures, child development best practices, CACFP meal service, and SC 4K program guidelines as applicable. New staff work alongside a Lead Teacher for a minimum of 30 days before working independently. Orientation documentation is maintained in the employee's personnel file.

### State-Mandated Training

- SC DSS Child Care Caregiver Training (SCCCT) — required core topics within 90 days of hire; annual updates as required
- CPR and First Aid Certification — within 30 days of hire; must remain current
- Blood-Borne Pathogen Training (OSHA) — prior to employment or within 10 days of hire
- Child Abuse Prevention and Recognition — within 30 days; annually thereafter
- Shaken Baby Syndrome / Abusive Head Trauma Prevention — within 30 days of hire
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) Administration — required before conducting developmental screenings
- CACFP Meal Pattern Training — required for all staff involved in meal service
- SC 4K / First Steps Professional Development (15 hours/year minimum) — required for 4K classroom staff

### Ongoing Professional Development Opportunities

- Monthly In-Service Training — sessions on behavior management, inclusion, curriculum, and parent communication
- Annual Professional Development Days (5 per year) — full-day workshops and team building
- Continuing Education Support — staff pursuing CDA or higher-level credentials may be eligible for stipends or partial tuition reimbursement
- Mentorship — experienced Lead Teachers mentor new staff during and beyond the introductory period
- Conferences & Workshops — staff may be sponsored to attend industry conferences and regional training events

### Performance Evaluation

Each employee receives a formal written performance evaluation annually, covering adherence to Center policies, child development knowledge and application, classroom management, parent communication, attendance, and professional development. Evaluations are discussed with the employee and signed by both the employee and the Director. Performance-based raises may be granted following evaluations; raises are not guaranteed.

## SECTION 16: COMPENSATION & LEAVE BENEFITS

Eligibility for benefits is determined by employment classification, tier, and length of service. Benefits are provided without discrimination on the basis of any protected characteristic. The Center reserves the right to modify, suspend, or discontinue any benefit with reasonable written notice to affected employees.

### Benefits Overview by Classification

BENEFIT	ELIGIBILITY
Health Insurance (Aflac) — 50% employer premium contribution	Full-Time Regular after 90 days (Tiers I, II, III)
Paid Vacation (PTO) — accrual-based	All tiers after 6 months continuous employment
Paid Sick Leave — accrual-based	All tiers after 6 months continuous employment
Non-Paid Holiday Time Off	All tiers effective upon hire
Childcare Discount (50% off weekly rate)	All tiers (not combined with other discounts)
IRA Retirement (up to 3% match, when offered)	Full-Time Regular after 1 year
Sign-On Bonus — Tier I (\$100 after 90 days)	Tier I only, good attendance required
Referral Bonus (\$50 after new hire completes 60 days)	All tiers

### Paid Vacation (PTO) — Accrual Formula & Rules

Paid vacation accrues based on actual hours worked and years of continuous service. Accrual begins on the first day of employment. Earned vacation may not be used until the employee has completed six (6) months of continuous employment. All vacation must be approved by the Director in advance.

SERVICE PERIOD	ACCRUAL RATE
Years 1–2 of continuous employment	0.0192 hours of vacation per hour worked
Years 3–5 of continuous employment	0.0384 hours of vacation per hour worked
Year 6 and each year thereafter	0.0586 hours of vacation per hour worked

Calculation Examples:

Years 1–2: An employee working 25 hours/week works 1,300 hours annually (25 × 52). Vacation earned:  $1,300 \times 0.0192 = 24.96$  hours (≈3.1 days).

Years 1–2 full-time: An employee working 40 hours/week works 2,080 hours annually. Vacation earned:  $2,080 \times 0.0192 = 39.94$  hours (≈5 days).

Years 3–5 full-time:  $2,080 \times 0.0384 = 79.87$  hours (≈10 days).

Year 6+ full-time:  $2,080 \times 0.0586 = 121.89$  hours (≈15 days).

### Vacation Use Rules

- Vacation may be taken in increments of one-half (0.5) day or more.
- Requests of 1–3 days must be submitted on the Leave Request Form at least two (2) weeks in advance. Requests of four or more days require one (1) month advance notice. Director requests for more than one week require ninety (90) days advance notice.
- No more than one full-time staff member per classroom may be absent at the same time, except under extraordinary circumstances with Director approval.
- Paid time off may not be used during the first week of a new school year (August) or during a schedule change period.
- A maximum of one week (40 hours) of earned vacation may be carried over from one calendar year to the next. Unused vacation beyond that is forfeited at year-end.
- No more than one consecutive week of vacation may be taken without Director approval under extraordinary circumstances.
- If the Director cannot approve a vacation request due to scheduling conflicts, the employee may receive a cash payout at their regular hourly rate for the denied hours, at the Director’s discretion.
- Upon voluntary resignation with proper notice, unused accrued vacation is paid in the final paycheck. Upon termination for cause, unused vacation may be forfeited at the Director’s discretion, consistent with SC wage payment law.

### Paid Sick Leave — Accrual Formula & Rules

Sick leave accrues based on hours worked and years of continuous service. Accrual begins on the first day of employment. Earned sick leave may not be used until the employee has completed six (6) months of continuous employment. Sick leave may be used for the employee’s own illness, a scheduled medical appointment, or the illness of an immediate family member in the employee’s care.

SERVICE PERIOD	ACCRUAL RATE
Years 1–2 of continuous employment	0.01 hours of sick leave per hour worked
Years 3–5 of continuous employment	0.02 hours of sick leave per hour worked
Year 6 and each year thereafter	0.03 hours of sick leave per hour worked

Calculation Examples:

Years 1–2 full-time:  $2,080 \text{ hours} \times 0.01 = 20.8 \text{ sick hours} (\approx 2.6 \text{ days/year})$ .

Years 3–5 full-time:  $2,080 \times 0.02 = 41.6 \text{ sick hours} (\approx 5.2 \text{ days/year})$ .

Year 6+ full-time:  $2,080 \times 0.03 = 62.4 \text{ sick hours} (\approx 7.8 \text{ days/year})$ .

### Sick Leave Use Rules

- Sick leave may be taken in increments of one-half (0.5) day or more.
- For absences of more than two (2) consecutive days, a physician’s note specifying the illness and expected return-to-work date is required.

- Planned medical leave of more than one week should be submitted in writing at least ninety (90) days in advance when practicable.
- A maximum of one week (40 hours) of unused sick leave may be carried over from one calendar year to the next. Unused sick leave beyond that is forfeited at year-end.
- Unused sick leave is forfeited upon any separation from employment — voluntary, involuntary, or termination. Sick leave is not paid out in the final paycheck.

**Non-Paid Holiday Time Off**

The Center grants non-paid holiday time off to all eligible employees, effective upon hire, for the following observed holidays:

<b>HOLIDAY / CLOSURE</b>	<b>HOLIDAY / CLOSURE</b>
New Year’s Day	Independence Day (July 4)
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Labor Day
Presidents’ Day	Veterans Day
Juneteenth (June 19)	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Day After Thanksgiving
Christmas Day	Day After Christmas
5 Staff Professional Development Days	Dates announced in advance

To be eligible for holiday time off, an employee must have worked their complete scheduled shift on both the workday immediately before and the workday immediately after the holiday. An employee who is absent on either of those days without an approved excused absence will not receive holiday time off and may be assessed an attendance point. If a recognized holiday falls during approved paid absence, holiday time off is provided instead of the paid leave for that day. If a holiday falls during an unpaid leave of absence, no holiday time off is provided.

## SECTION 17: HEALTH INSURANCE — AFLAC

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### EMPLOYER HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFIT

Brighter Futures Child Development Center provides health insurance coverage through Aflac. The Center contributes 50% of the employee's individual monthly premium. The employee's remaining 50% share is deducted from each paycheck on a pre-tax basis, subject to IRS Section 125 rules. This employer contribution applies to the employee's individual coverage only. Dependent coverage may be available at the employee's full expense through payroll deduction.

### Eligibility

All full-time regular employees (Tiers I, II, and III) who have completed ninety (90) days of continuous employment are eligible to enroll. Part-time and temporary employees are not eligible for employer-subsidized coverage but may inquire about voluntary Aflac supplemental policies at their own expense.

### Enrollment

Eligible employees will receive enrollment materials during their 90-day onboarding period. Open enrollment occurs annually. Qualifying life events (marriage, birth or adoption, divorce, loss of other coverage) allow mid-year enrollment changes. Employees must notify the Director within thirty (30) days of a qualifying event to initiate a mid-year change.

### Employee Premium Share

The Center's 50% contribution is paid directly to Aflac on the employee's behalf. The employee's 50% share is withheld from each paycheck through a pre-tax payroll deduction where eligible under the IRS Section 125 rules. The Center's contribution level is subject to annual review. Employees will receive at least thirty (30) days' written notice of any change in the Center's contribution amount.

### Coverage Continuation

Upon separation from employment, employees may have rights to continue health coverage under applicable federal and state continuation provisions. Contact the Director promptly upon separation for specific information about coverage continuation options.

## SECTION 18: STAFF HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

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### Access Policy

Any person on Center premises who is not a verified staff member, background-cleared substitute, subcontracted staff, or approved volunteer shall not have unrestricted access to children. Such persons must be under direct supervision of a paid staff member at all times and may not assume any childcare responsibilities. Staff must approach any unrecognized individual on the property, ask the purpose of their visit, and contact the Director for approval. If the situation appears dangerous, staff must immediately follow the Dangerous Intruder procedure (Section 26).

### Visitor Sign-In

All visitors — anyone who is not a parent of an enrolled child, an authorized pick-up person, or current staff — must check in at the Director's office, state their purpose, and sign in before entering any area of the Center where children are present. All visitors must sign out before leaving. Visitors for maintenance or repair may not interact with children and must be escorted by a paid staff member.

### Staff Illness

Staff who are ill should not report to work if their illness poses a risk to the children in their care. Staff must stay home or be sent home for the following:

- Fever of 100°F or higher — may not return until fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication
- Vomiting or diarrhea — may not return until symptom-free for 24 hours
- Diagnosed communicable disease — must meet return-to-work criteria per Section 18
- Active, untreated skin rash — may not return until cleared by a physician
- Persistent uncontrolled cough or difficulty breathing

Staff sent home ill will be recorded as an unplanned absence. If absent more than two (2) consecutive days, a physician's note is required.

### Workers' Compensation

All work-related injuries, accidents, or illnesses must be reported to the Director immediately on the day they occur, regardless of severity. Failure to promptly report may affect the employee's eligibility for workers' compensation benefits. The Director will provide required forms and guide the employee through the reporting process.

### OSHA & Workplace Safety

Brighter Futures complies with all applicable OSHA and SC OSHA workplace safety standards. Employees have the right to a safe workplace, safety training, and the right to report safety concerns without retaliation. Workplace safety concerns should be reported to the Director immediately. OSHA safety information is posted in the staff break room.

## SECTION 19: CHILD HEALTH, ILLNESS & DOCUMENTATION

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### Child Illness — Exclusion Criteria

Staff must monitor children throughout the day for signs of illness. A child must be excluded when illness prevents comfortable participation, when care needs exceed what staff can provide without compromising others' safety, or when any of the following conditions are present:

- Fever of 100°F or greater — excluded until fever-free 24 hours without fever-reducing medication
- Severe illness: lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, unexplained irritability, difficulty breathing, wheezing
- Diarrhea (multiple loose/watery stools, not diet-related) — excluded until resolved 24 hours or physician-cleared
- Blood in stools not explained by diet, medication, or hard stools
- Vomiting — excluded until symptom-free 24 hours or physician-cleared
- Persistent abdominal pain exceeding 2 hours, or intermittent pain with fever
- Mouth sores with drooling — unless physician confirms non-contagious
- Rash — unless physician confirms non-communicable
- Pink eye — excluded until 24 hours after treatment begins with no discharge
- Scabies — excluded until treatment complete and all signs resolved
- Strep throat — excluded until 36 hours after antibiotics and fever-free
- Impetigo — excluded until 24 hours after treatment begins and no open sores
- Chickenpox — excluded until all sores dried and crusted (≈6 days)
- Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease — excluded until sores dried/crusted and fever-free
- Pertussis — excluded until 5 days of appropriate antibiotics completed
- Mumps — excluded until 9 days after onset
- Hepatitis A — excluded until 1 week after onset
- Measles — excluded until 7 days after rash onset; no active rash
- Rubella — excluded until 6 days after rash onset; no active rash
- Tuberculosis — excluded until physician confirms appropriate therapy and clearance
- Pneumonia — excluded until 1 week after onset
- COVID-19 — excluded 1 week after medical diagnosis; fever-free; no persistent cough
- Herpes simplex with uncontrollable drooling or open sores

When illness is identified, remove the child from the classroom, bring them to the Director's office, and contact parents for immediate pick-up. The Center makes the final exclusion determination.

### Communicable Disease Notification

If a child is exposed to a communicable disease, post a notice at the Center entrance and classroom door. Email parents of children in the affected classroom individually. The Director notifies SC DHEC as required by law. Staff must immediately notify the Director of any confirmed communicable disease in any enrolled child.

### Medications

Prescription medications must be provided by the parent in the original pharmacy-labeled container with the child's full name, date of birth, prescribing physician, medication name, dosage, and administration instructions. **NO OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS WILL BE GIVEN WITHOUT A PHYSICIAN'S WRITTEN PRESCRIPTION.** No medication may be administered without a signed Medication Authorization Form completed by the parent or guardian.

- All medications are stored in the Director's office; administered only by the Director or Lead Teacher.
- Prescription medications require a physician's note specifying start and end dates.
- Medications are administered at the Center only when they cannot be given at home (e.g., three-times-daily dosing requires a midday dose).
- Staff and parents may not add vitamins or medications to a child's food, beverage, or cup under any circumstances.

### **Accident & Incident Documentation**

All accidents and incidents must be documented using an Accident/Incident Report form on the day they occur. Use precise detail. Never include other children's names. If an injury is serious, contact parents before pick-up. Parents must sign the report on the day of the incident. All completed reports go to the Director for the child's permanent file. Biting incidents that break the skin require a separate report for each child involved.

### **Allergy Documentation & Management**

A current Allergy Action Plan must be posted visibly in the classroom and, for food allergies, in the kitchen. All staff in the classroom must review the Plan. All allergic reactions must be documented on a Health Incident Form. Rescue medications must be accessible, labeled, and unexpired at all times. Parents must complete a Release and Waiver of Liability for Administering Emergency Treatment form for each child with a severe allergy.

### **Hand Washing — Mandatory Protocol**

Staff and children must wash hands with soap and warm running water for at least 25 seconds before and after: every meal, diaper change or toilet use, administering medication, handling any bodily fluids, using the sensory table, returning from the playground, handling animals, and cleaning activities or handling garbage.

## SECTION 20: MANDATED REPORTING — CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

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**ALL BRIGHTER FUTURES EMPLOYEES ARE MANDATORY REPORTERS UNDER S.C. CODE § 63-7-310 ET SEQ. FAILURE TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT IS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE. THIS DUTY CANNOT BE WAIVED BY ANY SUPERVISOR, DIRECTOR, CO-WORKER, PARENT, OR ANY OTHER PERSON OR POLICY.**

All staff are legally required to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the South Carolina DSS Child Abuse Hotline. Staff do not need to investigate, confirm, or prove abuse before reporting. You may report directly without informing the Director first; however, you should inform the Director as soon as safely possible after reporting.

SC DSS Child Abuse Hotline (24 hours/7 days): 1-888-227-3487

Good-faith reporters are protected from civil and criminal liability even if the report is later unsubstantiated. The reporter's identity is protected by state law.

### Indicators That May Require Reporting

- Unusual, unexplained, or patterned bruising, burns, cuts, or marks on a child's body
- A child discloses abuse or makes statements suggesting abuse
- Severe verbal demeaning or humiliation of a child observed by staff
- Chronically improper clothing (season-inappropriate, excessively soiled)
- Apparent chronic hunger, malnutrition, or poor hygiene
- Child appearing over-medicated or sedated
- Parent drops off or picks up appearing under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Child behavior or statements consistent with sexual, physical, or emotional abuse

### Allegation Against a Staff Member

If a staff member is accused of child abuse or neglect, the allegation is reported to the Director immediately. The Director will determine whether to file a DSS report based on all available information. The Center will cooperate fully with any DSS or law enforcement investigation. The accused employee is informed of the allegation and given an opportunity to respond. The Director may suspend the accused employee pending investigation. Confirmed child abuse by a staff member results in immediate termination and mandatory DSS notification.

## SECTION 21: CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENTS & DAILY CLASSROOM DUTIES

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### Curriculum

Brighter Futures uses the Learning Beyond Early Learning Curriculum as the primary guide in each classroom. The curriculum encompasses child-initiated and teacher-directed activities supporting physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development, aligned with the South Carolina Early Learning Standards (SC-ELS). All lesson plans must be posted in the classroom and updated weekly.

### Lesson Planning & Project Studies

Lead Teachers and Full-Time Assistant Teachers collaborate to create the daily schedule and plan activities. Every staff member is responsible for carrying out the posted schedule. Lesson plans must be rooted in children's direct experiences and demonstrated interests, be age-appropriate, and include an outdoor learning component. Project studies may span one week to one month based on sustained interest. Teachers are encouraged to coordinate materials and activities across classrooms.

### Physical Environment

Classrooms are arranged per the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) by the Lead Teacher and Full-Time Assistant Teacher. Learning centers — blocks, dramatic play, art, large motor, small motor, and books — must be clearly defined with obvious boundaries. Quiet areas must be separated from noisy activity areas. Room decor consists primarily of children's artwork and photographs at child eye level. Staff must be positioned to see every child at all times. Changes to room arrangement require Director approval.

### Free Play

Child-initiated free play must be incorporated into both morning and afternoon schedules. During free play, teachers actively engage by asking open-ended questions, participating in play, reading with children, and encouraging exploration. Staff must circulate continuously and never be passive observers.

### Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is required twice daily and is an extension of the indoor curriculum. Staff must actively engage with children outdoors. Children go outdoors year-round, except when conditions are unsafe per SC DHEC's Childcare Weather Watch guidelines. Lesson plans must include outdoor learning components.

## Nap/Rest Time

SC DSS requires a regularly scheduled rest period. Children will not be forced to sleep. Staff must offer alternative quiet activities to children who cannot sleep and must maintain visual supervision of all children during rest time. Rest time must not be used as unstructured personal time by staff.

## Multimedia

All digital media must be rated G or PG with an educational theme aligned with weekly curriculum. Screen time is limited to a maximum of three (3) hours per child per week and must be offered as one of several center choices. Media used must be documented in lesson plans.

## Assessments

The Learning Beyond Assessment tool is used to evaluate and track each child's development on an ongoing observation-based basis. All staff must:

- Continuously observe, document, and record developmental observations in the ProCare system.
- Administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) within 45 calendar days of enrollment.
- Maintain up-to-date portfolios with photographs, artwork, assessment profiles, and conference forms.
- Conduct formal parent-teacher conferences at least twice per year and at each classroom transition.
- For SC 4K classrooms: report child progress to parents at minimum quarterly per First Steps guidelines.

## Daily Classroom Duties

### Morning Opening

Unlock program room doors; mix fresh bleach solution; put away sanitized toys; straighten toys and shelves; restock supplies (soap, paper towels, toilet paper, wipes, etc.); complete room set-up for the day's lesson plan; verify attendance clipboard is in place.

### Nap Time / Midday

Straighten shelves and materials; sanitize all toys used during the morning; clean tables, chairs, and floors; complete curriculum planning; wash dishes; complete daily activity records in ProCare; prepare for the afternoon session.

### Afternoon / Closing

Wash or spray all mouthed toys with bleach solution and air dry; take trash to dumpster, sanitize the trash can, and replace the bag; store all toys and equipment; check outdoor areas for items to secure; sanitize all tables, chairs, and shelves; wash all dishes; empty and rinse bleach solution containers; vacuum carpets; verify all children have been signed out; lock all classroom doors after the last parent departs.

## Arrival & Departure Procedures

Staff must greet each child and parent by name at every arrival. Observe the child at arrival for signs of illness, previous injury, or unusual behavior. Every child must have direct contact with a staff member upon arrival. At pick-up, verify photo ID of any unfamiliar authorized pick-up person. At the close of each day, confirm that all children on the attendance roster have been signed out. If an authorized pick-up person cannot be reached by 6:00 p.m., follow the Late Pick-Up procedure below.

### **Late Pick-Up Policy**

The Center charges a late fee of \$35.00 from 6:01 p.m.–6:15 p.m. and \$25.00 per additional 15-minute increment after 6:15 p.m. After three (3) late pick-up instances, enrollment may be reviewed and potentially cancelled. If parents and all authorized pick-up persons cannot be reached by 6:15 p.m., the Director will be contacted and the Summerville Police Department or SC DSS/CPS will be notified.

## SECTION 22: MEALS, NUTRITION & USDA CACFP COMPLIANCE

### CACFP COMPLIANCE

Brighter Futures participates in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). All meals and snacks served must comply with current USDA CACFP meal pattern requirements, updated consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. All staff involved in meal service must complete CACFP meal pattern training. Falsification of CACFP records is a federal offense and grounds for immediate termination.

### Meal Service Times

MEAL	SERVICE TIME
Breakfast	8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
Lunch	11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
PM Snack	2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Late Snack (if provided)	5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

### Required Mealtime Practices

- Before each meal: wash tables with soapy water, then sanitize with approved bleach solution, and air dry or wipe with a dry paper towel.
- All staff and children must wash hands for at least 25 seconds before and after every meal.
- Staff sit with children at tables, actively supervise, model good manners, and make mealtimes a positive social experience.
- First-serving child-sized portions are provided to staff. Each staff member is expected to eat the meal served to model healthy habits.
- Children are encouraged to try all foods offered but will never be forced or bribed to eat. All foods must be placed on the child's plate; a very small tasting portion is acceptable if the child strongly objects.
- Food must never be used as a reward or punishment. No child may be denied a meal or snack for any behavioral reason.
- After every meal: wash tables and chairs with soapy water and resanitize.
- The Center is peanut-free and nut-free. Additional allergen restrictions apply based on enrolled children's needs. Staff must know all active classroom allergens.
- Menus are posted weekly. Staff must follow posted menus and document meal service accurately in CACFP records on the day of service.
- Children may not share or exchange food items.

### Allergy Management at Mealtime

Before each meal, the Lead Teacher must verify no food served contains an allergen listed in any child's Allergy Action Plan. Substitution foods for allergic children must be prepared per

physician's instructions on the Allergy Action Plan. All staff serving meals must know which children in the classroom have food allergies and the associated emergency protocols.

### **CACFP Record-Keeping**

Staff responsible for meal service must accurately document daily meal counts, food items served, and attendance figures for CACFP reimbursement claims. Records must be completed on the day of service and submitted per the CACFP record-keeping schedule. Falsification of CACFP records is a federal violation and grounds for immediate termination.

## SECTION 23: SOUTH CAROLINA 4K PROGRAM — STAFF REQUIREMENTS

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### NOTICE TO 4K CLASSROOM STAFF

Staff in First Steps 4K or CERDEP classrooms are subject to additional requirements beyond standard SC DSS licensing standards, established by the SC Department of Education and SC First Steps for the current program year. Non-compliance may affect both individual employment and the Center's 4K program participation.

### Lead Teacher Qualifications — 4K

Lead Teachers in First Steps 4K classrooms must hold qualifications per current SC First Steps/CERDEP guidelines, which may include a four-year degree in Early Childhood Education or equivalent credential recognized by the program. Specific requirements are updated annually and communicated by the Director.

### Professional Development — 4K

All staff in 4K classrooms must complete a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of professional development per calendar year, meeting SC First Steps content area requirements. At least some hours must address literacy instruction aligned with the SC Early Learning Standards and the State Reading Proficiency Plan. Training documentation is subject to audit by SC First Steps and SC DSS.

### Assessment & Documentation — 4K

Staff must administer the ASQ-3 for all 4K children within 45 days of enrollment and maintain ongoing Learning Beyond Assessment documentation. Child progress must be reported to parents at minimum quarterly. Assessment records are subject to First Steps review and must never be falsified or altered.

### Attendance Monitoring — 4K

4K staff must accurately record daily attendance in required state systems (PowerSchool or equivalent). Chronic absenteeism must be reported to the Director who will follow up with the family per 4K program requirements. State-funded 4K students may not be disenrolled without written approval from SC First Steps, except for immediate safety suspensions of up to two (2) days. Accurate attendance is required for state funding compliance.

### Parent Engagement — 4K

All 4K classroom staff must actively participate in parent engagement activities per the Center's Parent Education and Involvement Plan submitted to SC First Steps, including at minimum: two formal parent-teacher conferences per year, quarterly progress reports, and regular communication regarding each child's learning and development.



## SECTION 24: CHILD GUIDANCE, DISCIPLINE POLICY & BITING POLICY

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### POSITIVE GUIDANCE ONLY

Brighter Futures uses only positive guidance and behavior management techniques consistent with SC DSS licensing regulations, SC First Steps 4K requirements, and evidence-based early childhood practice. Any staff member who uses prohibited discipline will be subject to immediate termination and mandatory reporting to SC DSS.

### Permitted Guidance Techniques

- Communicate with children calmly, positively, and at their eye level.
- Give attention and genuine praise for positive behavior.
- Set clear, consistent, developmentally appropriate expectations.
- Redirect children to acceptable alternative activities.
- Help children identify feelings and use appropriate words to express them.
- Give children meaningful choices and opportunities to solve problems.
- Use logical and natural consequences appropriately and consistently.
- Model appropriate behavior in all interactions.
- Use storybooks and group discussions to address common social conflicts.

### Prohibited Discipline Practices — Zero Tolerance

**THE FOLLOWING ARE ABSOLUTELY PROHIBITED AND WILL RESULT IN IMMEDIATE TERMINATION AND MANDATORY SC DSS REPORTING:**

- Any corporal punishment: spanking, hitting, slapping, shaking, biting, pinching, pushing, pulling, or any physical pain infliction
- Any strategy that hurts, shames, belittles, intimidates, threatens, or frightens a child
- Withholding or forcing food or drink as a reward or punishment
- Withholding physical activity, outdoor time, or rest as punishment
- Shaming or punishing a child for any toileting accident
- Embarrassing, mocking, or demeaning any child in front of peers
- Negative comparisons of one child to another
- Placing a child in a locked, dark, or isolated space
- Leaving any child unsupervised for any reason
- Allowing other children to discipline or demean a peer
- Criticizing, mocking, or belittling a child's family, culture, or background
- Any prone (face-down) physical restraint
- Denying meals or snacks for behavioral reasons

### Guidance Sequence for Persistent Behavior

1. Redirection — most frequently used; engage child and introduce an alternative activity.

2. Logical Consequences — consequences directly related to the behavior.
3. Participation in the Solution — child helps repair the situation or make amends.
4. Natural Consequences — when no health or safety risk is present.
5. Calm-Down Area (Cozy Corner) — child is guided to a designated calm space; behavior is discussed when child is ready.

If these strategies are insufficient for persistent behavioral concerns:

6. Staff document the behavior and attempted interventions and report to the Director.
7. Director observes and develops a behavior management plan with the Lead Teacher.
8. Plan is shared with and agreed upon by parents.
9. Progress is monitored; plan is adjusted as needed.
10. The Center may partner with outside specialists (e.g., Tri-County Therapy, PEAR) for additional support.
11. As a last resort, if a child's behavior is an immediate safety threat, the Director is contacted and the child may be brought to the Director's office.

### **Classroom Removal Policy**

Children may be brought to the Director's office in exceptional circumstances when a child's behavior becomes unsafe and the Director has been contacted beforehand. Staff must call the Director before removing a child from the classroom. No child may ever be removed and left unsupervised.

### **Biting Policy — Staff Response Protocol**

Biting is a common developmental behavior in young children but is unacceptable in a group care setting. Staff must respond consistently as follows:

12. Stop the biting child immediately. State firmly and calmly: 'Biting hurts.' Do not express anger or alarm.
13. Remove the biting child from the situation with minimal attention to avoid reinforcing the behavior.
14. Immediately provide first aid to the child who was bitten: wash the area thoroughly with soap and water for 15 seconds, apply a cold compress, and apply a bandage if needed.
15. If the bite breaks the skin: notify both families before pick-up; the biting child is sent home for the remainder of the day.
16. Complete a separate Accident/Incident Report for both the biting child and the child who was bitten.
17. Do not disclose the name of either child to the other family.

Trigger identification and prevention steps (ongoing):

18. Examine the context: overcrowded space? Too few materials? Excessive waiting? Was the biting child's needs being met?
19. Modify the environment, routine, or activities based on findings.
20. Work with the biting child on conflict resolution and frustration management.
21. Observe for patterns; identify children most likely to be targeted and take protective steps.
22. Meet regularly with parents and the Director to review the action plan and measure outcomes.

23. Seek outside resources if biting persists; consider a behavioral shadow plan if necessary.

## SECTION 25: PARENT RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNICATION

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Strong, respectful relationships with families are essential to quality care. All staff must maintain professional boundaries and communicate with families in a manner that is respectful, positive, and solution-focused.

- Greet each child and parent by name at every arrival and departure.
- At arrival, note disposition, appearance for illness or injury, and follow up on any special instructions.
- Keep pick-up and drop-off conversations brief — your primary responsibility is supervising the children. Schedule a conference if a parent needs more time.
- Discuss child concerns or sensitive matters only in private and only when not actively supervising children.
- Never discuss concerns about a child in front of other children.
- When raising a concern with a parent, pair it with at least two specific positive observations about the child.
- Never use another child's name when discussing behavior concerns or incident reports.
- Avoid saying 'I don't know.' Instead say: 'Let me find out and get back to you' — then follow up promptly.
- Staff are prohibited from dating, entering romantic relationships, or pursuing personal social relationships with the parents or guardians of enrolled children.

### Handling Parent Complaints

- Listen carefully and attentively without interrupting.
- Summarize the concern in one sentence and confirm with the parent that you understand correctly.
- State what you understand the parent would like to have addressed.
- Describe clearly what action you will take.
- Follow through completely and promptly. Follow up with the parent afterward.
- If uncertain how to resolve the complaint, refer the parent to the Director immediately.

## SECTION 26: FIELD TRIPS

Field trips enrich the curriculum and expand learning. All field trips must be approved by the Director. Field trips outside the Summerville city limits or longer than two hours require a signed Field Trip Permission Form from parents, with at least two weeks' notice. Short, unannounced local excursions (walks, nearby playground visits) require only the general permission form completed at enrollment.

### Ratios & Approval

No field trip proceeds without enough parent volunteers to maintain the following ratios (staff and volunteers combined):

AGE GROUP	MINIMUM RATIO
3-year-olds	1 adult per 12 children
4-year-olds	1 adult per 12 children
5-year-olds	1 adult per 12 children

### Volunteer Driver Requirements

- Valid driver's license and current auto insurance
- Safe driving record for at least 5 years with no at-fault accidents
- No substance abuse history or convictions for crimes involving children
- No alcohol or impairing substances within 12 hours prior to driving

### Car Seat Requirements

- Parents provide and install an appropriate car seat for their child.
- Remove winter coats before buckling child in a car seat.
- Five-point harness: chest clip at armpit level; straps pass the one-finger test.
- Booster seat: seat belt must remain across the front of the child.

### Head Count Protocol

Head counts every 5–10 minutes throughout the trip and at each of the following mandatory checkpoints:

24. Before leaving the classroom
25. Before starting the vehicle (after all children are buckled)
26. After exiting the vehicle at the destination
27. Upon entering the field trip location
28. Upon exiting the field trip location
29. Before starting the vehicle for return (after all children are buckled)
30. After exiting the vehicle at the Center
31. Upon returning to the classroom

### **Required Field Trip Materials**

- Signed permission slips; cell phone; fully stocked First Aid Kit
- Clipboard with attendance roster and children's 'If Lost' headshots
- Brighter Futures 'If Lost' ID lanyards on every child
- Teacher pocket lanyards with class roster, headcount, emergency contacts, and Center phone number
- Copy of the Brighter Futures Missing Child Procedure

### **Walking Trips & Bathroom Procedures**

One teacher walks at the front of the line; one at the rear. Head counts every five minutes. Only staff or a child's own parent may escort children to the restroom during field trips.

## SECTION 27: EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

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### Drills

Monthly fire, emergency evacuation, and lockdown drills are conducted without advance notice to staff or families. All staff must treat every drill as a real emergency. During any drill or actual emergency, parents may not sign children in or out until the Director issues an 'All Clear.'

### Medical / Dental Emergency

32. Lead Teacher or Director contacts parents at all available numbers.
33. If parents cannot be reached, emergency contacts and authorized pick-up persons are called.
34. The ill or injured child is supervised by the Director in the office until a parent or authorized person arrives.

If immediate medical attention is needed:

35. Witnessing staff member stays with the child; directs another staff member to call 911.
36. If alone, stabilize the child and call 911.
37. If EMS transports the child, a staff member accompanies with the child's physical records, immunization records, and Emergency Contact & Parental Consent Form.
38. Director contacts parents immediately.

### Fire / Bomb Threat / Evacuation

Immediately evacuate all staff and children to the sidewalk northeast of the building. In extended or complex emergencies, take shelter at Senior Helpers (adjacent to the Center). Confirm a complete headcount before allowing any parent pick-up.

### Tornado / Severe Weather

Direct all children to each classroom's designated shelter area (posted near classroom door). Remain there until the Director issues an all-clear.

### Severe Winter Weather

The Director monitors conditions and local news. If early closure or next-day cancellation is warranted, the Director notifies Lead Teachers, who contact parents. Regular activities continue until parents arrive.

### Missing or Abducted Child

- **MISSING:** Lead Teacher searches the immediate area while another staff member contacts the Director. If not located promptly, the Director contacts police, DSS, and parents.
- **ABDUCTED:** Lead Teacher immediately contacts the Director, local police (911), and parents simultaneously. Do not attempt to physically intervene with an abductor.

## **Dangerous Intruder**

39. Staff position themselves between children and the intruder.
40. A staff member attempts to redirect the individual to the hallway while closing the classroom door; a second staff member contacts the Director.
41. Director uses the 'All Page' intercom: all staff and children return to classrooms, lock doors, and move away from doors and windows.
42. Director contacts local police (911) immediately.
43. Staff wait for the Director's 'All Clear' before resuming any activity.

## **Power Failure**

Staff and children remain in the classroom and continue activities as possible. If power is not restored in a reasonable time, the Director closes the Center, contacts DSS and parents, and Lead Teachers arrange pick-up.

## **Weapons Policy**

No weapons of any kind are permitted on Center premises, vehicles, or at Center events by any person. This does not apply to law enforcement or military personnel on official duty. Violations are reported to law enforcement immediately. Employee violations are grounds for immediate termination.

## SECTION 28: EXPOSURE CONTROL PLAN — BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

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### OSHA COMPLIANCE

This Exposure Control Plan complies with OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogen Standard (29 CFR 1910.1030). All employees with potential occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) must comply with this plan. Training is required within 10 days of hire and annually thereafter.

### Universal Precautions

All staff must treat blood and all other body fluids (vomit, feces, urine, mucus, saliva, wound secretions) as potentially infectious at all times, regardless of perceived infection status. Universal precautions must be applied for every exposure incident without exception.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Disposable non-latex gloves must be worn for all contact with blood or OPIM.
- Gloves must be replaced if torn, punctured, or when moving between care tasks.
- Hands must be washed immediately after removing gloves.
- PPE is provided by the Center at no cost. Personal items may not substitute for provided PPE.

### Handling & Disposal of Biological Contaminants

- All materials in contact with bodily fluids (gloves, tissues, rags, disposable pads) must be placed in a sealed plastic bag and disposed of in a designated covered waste bin immediately.
- Contaminated surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water, then disinfected with an EPA-approved disinfectant or approved bleach solution (1 tablespoon bleach per 1 quart of water, prepared fresh daily).
- Soiled clothing must be placed in a sealed labeled bag and returned to the parent at pick-up.
- Staff must wash hands thoroughly after removing gloves following any exposure.

### Post-Exposure Procedure

44. Immediately wash the affected area with soap and water for at least 15 minutes. Flush eyes or mucous membranes with clean water.
45. Report the exposure to the Director immediately on the day it occurs.
46. Director completes required OSHA documentation.
47. Employee is referred for confidential medical evaluation and follow-up at no cost.
48. All exposure incidents are documented in a confidential exposure incident log.

## **Sharps & Hazardous Waste**

Sharps (needles, lancets, syringes) used for a child's medical needs must be disposed of by the parent or licensed medical professional in an approved sharps container. Staff may not handle, recap, or dispose of sharps under any circumstances. Report unexpected sharps to the Director immediately.

## SECTION 29: CLEANING, SANITIZING, DISINFECTING & HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

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### Cleaning, Sanitizing & Disinfecting Standards

There are three distinct levels of infection control, each required for different situations:

- Cleaning — removing visible dirt and organic material using soap and water. Always done before sanitizing or disinfecting.
- Sanitizing — reducing germs to a safe level on food-contact surfaces (tables, food prep areas) using the Center's approved diluted bleach solution.
- Disinfecting — killing most viruses and bacteria on non-food surfaces (diaper changing areas, toilets, blood/bodily fluid spills) using a stronger approved disinfectant solution.

### Bleach Solution Preparation

The diluted bleach solution for sanitization is prepared fresh daily: 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach per 1 quart of cool water (approximately 1,000 ppm). Label containers with date and time of preparation. Discard and replace bleach solution after 24 hours or if visibly contaminated.

### Diapering Procedure (as applicable)

49. Gather all supplies before beginning. Never leave a child unattended on the changing table.
50. Put on disposable non-latex gloves.
51. Place the child on the changing table; remove soiled diaper and clothing.
52. Clean the child's entire diaper area with disposable wipes, front to back.
53. Place soiled diaper, wipes, and gloves in a sealed plastic bag; dispose of immediately in a covered waste bin.
54. Apply clean diaper and redress the child.
55. Wash the child's hands, then assist the child off the changing table.
56. Clean the changing surface with soap and water; disinfect with approved solution; allow to air dry.
57. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for 25 seconds.
58. Document diaper change in daily log as required by SC DSS.

### Storage & Use of Hazardous Materials

- Toxic substances (chemicals, cleaning products, disinfectants, insecticides, gasoline products) must be stored in a locked cabinet, out of the reach of children, and away from food and medications.
- Toxic substances must not be used while children are present.
- Flammable materials must be stored in a separate building or area away from heat and ignition sources, inaccessible to children.
- Poisonous plants are not permitted anywhere in the Center.

- Chemical odor-control products (moth balls, synthetic air fresheners, essential oil diffusers, urinal deodorizer blocks) are not permitted in any Center space occupied by children.

### **Compliance & Monitoring**

All staff must adhere to this policy at all times. The Director is responsible for ensuring compliance, conducting regular checks, and arranging retraining for any violations. Violations may also result in formal disciplinary action. This policy is reviewed annually and updated as needed to remain in compliance with local, state, and federal guidelines.

## SECTION 30: POSITION DESCRIPTIONS & TIER PAY STRUCTURE

Brighter Futures uses a three-tier classification system to define roles, responsibilities, qualifications, and compensation. A staff member’s tier determines pay rate and benefits eligibility. Tier advancement is based on experience, education, performance, and demonstrated leadership, and requires Director approval.

### Tier I — Entry Level: Floater & Assistant Teacher I

FACTOR	DETAIL
Pay Range	\$10.00 – \$12.50 per hour
Position	Floater / Assistant Teacher I
Experience Required	No prior childcare experience required
Education	High school diploma, GED, or SC-recognized equivalent
Training	Must complete all SC DSS-required training within 90 days of hire

### Tier I Responsibilities

- Support classroom teachers as directed throughout the day
- Supervise children during transitions, meals, and breaks
- Assist with mealtime service per CACFP procedures
- Assist with daily cleaning and sanitizing duties
- Provide a nurturing, safe, and supportive environment at all times
- Complete all required training within the required timeframes

### Tier I Incentives & Bonuses

- \$100 sign-on bonus after 90 days of employment with good attendance record
- \$50 referral bonus for each new hire referred who completes 60 days of employment
- Annual loyalty bonus based on performance evaluation results

### Tier II — Intermediate: Assistant Teacher II & Experienced Floater

FACTOR	DETAIL
Pay Range	\$12.50 – \$14.50 per hour
Position	Assistant Teacher II
Experience Required	Minimum 6 months to 1 year of childcare experience

Education	High school diploma, GED, or SC-recognized equivalent
Certifications	CPR & First Aid (current or willing to obtain within 30 days)
Training	All SC DSS-mandated training completed

### Tier II Responsibilities

- Assist the Lead Teacher with implementing lesson plans and daily activities
- Maintain a structured, engaging, and safe classroom environment
- Communicate regularly with parents regarding children’s daily progress
- Support children’s development through interactive play and instruction
- Assist with CACFP meal service, documentation, and classroom duties
- Mentor Tier I staff as directed by the Lead Teacher

### Tier II Incentives & Bonuses

- \$150 bonus upon earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential
- \$50 performance bonus every 6 months for consistent attendance and positive parent feedback
- \$100 holiday bonus for employees completing one year of continuous service

### Tier III — Lead Teacher (Experienced & Certified)

FACTOR	DETAIL
Pay Range	\$14.50 – \$16.00 per hour
Position	Lead Teacher
Experience Required	Minimum 2 years of childcare experience
Education	Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher
Certifications	Current CPR & First Aid
Skills	Leadership, curriculum planning, ability to train and mentor staff

### Tier III Responsibilities

- Create and implement age-appropriate, SC-ELS-aligned lesson plans on a weekly basis
- Supervise and mentor Tier I and II staff and floaters within the classroom
- Ensure the classroom meets all SC DSS safety and licensing requirements at all times
- Track children’s developmental progress using Learning Beyond Assessment and ProCare
- Administer and document ASQ-3 developmental screenings per program requirements

- Conduct parent-teacher conferences at minimum twice per year and at each classroom transition
- Complete and submit CACFP meal service records accurately and on time
- Complete all 4K program documentation requirements (for 4K classroom staff)
- Build strong, professional relationships with families and co-workers
- Maintain all required DSS licensing documentation for the classroom

**Tier III Incentives & Bonuses**

- \$200 annual retention bonus for Lead Teachers completing 2+ consecutive years of service
- \$100 bonus for successfully mentoring a new hire through their first 3 months
- Quarterly classroom excellence bonus (\$50–\$100 based on parent and Director feedback)

**Bonus & Incentive Summary**

BONUS	TRIGGER CONDITION	TIER ELIGIBLE
\$100 Sign-On Bonus	After 90 days, good attendance	Tier I
\$50 Referral Bonus	Per new hire completing 60 days	All tiers
\$150 CDA Attainment Bonus	Upon earning CDA credential	Tier II
\$50 Performance Bonus	Every 6 months, good metrics	Tier II
\$100 Holiday Bonus	After 1 year of service	Tier II
\$200 Annual Retention Bonus	After 2+ consecutive years	Tier III
\$100 Mentorship Bonus	Per new hire mentored 3 months	Tier III
\$50–\$100 Excellence Bonus	Quarterly, based on feedback	Tier III

## SECTION 31: VOLUNTEER POLICY — DEFINITION, REQUIREMENTS & CONDUCT

### SC DSS REGULATORY BASIS

*This Volunteer Policy is established in full compliance with South Carolina DSS Child Care Center Regulations (SC ADC 114-500 et seq., effective June 22, 2018), S.C. Code § 63-13-40(E), and SC ADC 114-503.K. All volunteers at Brighter Futures Child Development Center must meet the requirements set forth in these regulations. Failure to comply with any provision of this policy will result in immediate removal of the volunteer from Center property.*

### Who Is a Volunteer? — SC DSS Legal Definition

Under SC ADC 114-501.A.(40), a volunteer is defined as: an individual parent, grandparent, other professional or skilled individual, artist, or craftsperson at least sixteen (16) years of age who infrequently assists with the daily activities for children in a child care center, provides services without compensation, and who is supervised by a qualified staff member at all times when providing direct care to children.

The key elements of this definition — each of which must be satisfied for a person to qualify as a volunteer at Brighter Futures — are:

- The person assists infrequently — not on a regular, scheduled, or recurring basis that resembles paid employment
- The person receives no compensation of any kind — no wages, stipends, in-kind payment, or regular benefits
- The person is at least 16 years of age at the time of volunteering
- The person is supervised by a qualified staff member at all times when in the presence of or providing any direct care to children

SC Code § 63-13-40(E) further specifies that the standard background check requirements applicable to paid staff (Central Registry check, SLED fingerprinting, FBI fingerprinting) generally do not apply to volunteers, provided that the volunteer remains under the direct supervision of a paid staff member at all times when providing direct care to children. A volunteer who is not directly supervised by a paid staff member is no longer operating within the legal definition of a volunteer and must meet all staff background check requirements.

### Types of Volunteers Recognized by the Center

VOLUNTEER TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Parent Volunteer	Parent or legal guardian of an enrolled child assisting on a field trip, at a special event, or with a classroom activity
Grandparent Volunteer	Grandparent of an enrolled child assisting with a classroom or Center activity

Community Professional / Presenter	Skilled individual, professional, artist, or craftsperson sharing expertise with children (e.g., a musician, chef, or author)
Student Volunteer	A student at least 16 years of age from a recognized educational institution who may receive course credit but no monetary compensation (see Student Volunteer note below)
Student Teacher	An individual in their final practicum for teacher certification — subject to additional requirements; see below

Student Volunteer Note: SC ADC 114-501.A.(32) defines a Student Volunteer as an individual at least 16 years of age from a recognized educational institution who may receive course credit, reimbursement for expenses, or a stipend for providing services in a trainee capacity under the supervision of a staff member at all times when providing direct care to children. Student volunteers are not counted in the staff-to-child ratio.

Student Teacher Note: SC ADC 114-501.A.(31) defines a Student Teacher as an individual enrolled in their final practicum for teacher certification. Student teachers must meet the same health standards as paid staff and must undergo the required background check process. Student teachers may be included in the staff-to-child ratio. Contact the Director for the full Student Teacher onboarding requirements.

## What Volunteers Are — and Are NOT — Permitted to Do

### Volunteers MAY:

- Assist with planned classroom activities or projects while a qualified paid staff member is present and in the room
- Participate in field trips as an additional supervising adult, maintaining the required field trip ratio alongside paid staff
- Read aloud to children, assist with art projects, demonstrate a skill, or share cultural knowledge as part of a planned lesson, always under direct staff supervision
- Assist with special events, celebrations, or parent engagement activities under staff supervision
- Observe classroom activities as part of a parent engagement visit (observation only, no caregiving role)
- Assist with meal setup, serving, or cleanup during mealtime, under direct staff supervision and consistent with CACFP hygiene requirements

**VOLUNTEERS MAY NEVER:** (1) Be left alone with any child or group of children — even momentarily. (2) Count toward the required SC DSS staff-to-child ratio. (3) Administer medications, provide personal care (diapering, toileting assistance), apply sunscreen, or provide any medical treatment to any child. (4) Make any childcare decisions on behalf of

or in place of a paid staff member. (5) Have unsupervised access to children's records, personal information, or the Director's office. (6) Discipline children using any method, including redirection, time-away, or removal from an activity, except under direct staff oversight and instruction. (7) Transport children to or from the Center or any activity without separate written authorization. (8) Take or share any photographs or video of children on personal devices.

## Supervision Requirements — Non-Negotiable

Per SC DSS regulations, a volunteer must be supervised by a qualified paid staff member at all times when providing direct care to children. At Brighter Futures, this means:

- The assigned supervising staff member must be physically present in the same room or area as the volunteer and children at all times — no exceptions.
- The supervising staff member must be a paid Brighter Futures employee in good standing who has completed all required background checks and training.
- The supervising staff member retains full responsibility for the safety and welfare of the children at all times, regardless of the volunteer's presence or activities.
- If the supervising staff member must leave the area for any reason, the volunteer must also leave the area or remain with the children only until a second paid staff member arrives — the children must never be left solely in the care of the volunteer.
- The Director must be informed any time a volunteer is present on Center property.

## Volunteer Age Requirements

All volunteers must be at least 16 years of age. Volunteers who are 16 or 17 years old must be supervised at all times by a paid adult staff member and may not perform any task that requires physical care of children (diapering, lifting, personal care). Volunteers who are younger than 16 are not permitted to participate in any activity involving direct contact with enrolled children, even with parental consent.

## Background Check Requirements for Volunteers

Under S.C. Code § 63-13-40(E) and SC ADC 114-503.K.(1)(b), volunteers are generally exempt from the mandatory Central Registry check, SLED fingerprint review, and FBI fingerprint review that are required for paid staff — provided that the volunteer is supervised by a qualified paid staff member at all times when providing direct care to children.

However, Brighter Futures requires the following for all volunteers:

- Volunteers must complete and sign the Center's Volunteer Registration Form prior to their first volunteer activity.
- Volunteers must disclose any prior criminal convictions, findings of child abuse or neglect, or sex offender registry status on the Volunteer Registration Form. Any person with a substantiated finding of child abuse or neglect or a conviction for any offense listed under SC Code §§ 16-3 (Offenses Against the Person) or 16-15 (Offenses Against Morality and Decency) is prohibited from volunteering at Brighter Futures under any circumstances, pursuant to SC ADC 114-502.D.(1).

- Any person required to register on the South Carolina Sex Offender Registry is absolutely prohibited from being present on Center property, as a volunteer or in any other capacity, regardless of their relationship to any enrolled child.
- The Director reserves the right to require a background check for any volunteer whose frequency of volunteering, scope of activities, or relationship to the Center raises concerns about child safety, at the Director's sole discretion.
- Any volunteer whose Volunteer Registration Form discloses information that raises a safety concern will not be permitted to volunteer pending review by the Director.

## **Health Requirements for Volunteers**

SC ADC 114-503 and 114-505 require that any staff member, including volunteers, who upon examination or as a result of tests shows a condition that could be detrimental to children or staff shall not participate in childcare activities until a healthcare provider confirms the condition no longer poses a threat. Additionally, per SC DSS regulations, no person known to be afflicted with a communicable disease in active form, or who is a known carrier, may be present in the center in a capacity that involves likelihood of disease transmission to children or staff.

Accordingly, all volunteers must:

- Disclose any known communicable illness or active infectious condition to the Director before beginning any volunteer activity. Volunteers with active illness will not be permitted on the premises.
- Follow all Center hand-washing protocols: hands must be washed with soap and warm water for at least 25 seconds upon arrival and after any activity involving contact with food, children, or materials.
- Comply with all Center health, hygiene, and illness exclusion policies applicable to staff, as described in Section 17 and Section 18 of this handbook.
- Not report to any volunteer activity if they are experiencing fever, vomiting, diarrhea, active rash, or any symptoms of a communicable illness.

## **Orientation for Volunteers**

SC ADC 114-503.K.(5)(a) requires that the Director provide orientation for all volunteers prior to their volunteering. Before a volunteer may participate in any activity involving children, they must receive and acknowledge the following orientation from the Director or a designated Lead Teacher:

- Center layout, including exits, emergency routes, and designated safe shelter areas
- Volunteer role and scope — what the volunteer is and is not permitted to do
- Supervision requirements — they must remain with their assigned staff member at all times
- Confidentiality expectations — children's names, family information, and anything observed at the Center is confidential
- Photo and social media prohibition — no photos or videos of children may be taken on personal devices
- Emergency procedures — fire evacuation routes, tornado shelter location, and who to follow in an emergency
- Child abuse reporting — volunteers are mandatory reporters under SC law; any concern must be reported to the Director immediately

- Prohibited discipline practices — volunteers may never discipline a child in any manner
- Sign-in/sign-out procedure — all volunteers must sign the Visitor/Volunteer Log at the Director's office upon arrival and departure

Orientation acknowledgment is documented on the Volunteer Registration Form, signed by the volunteer and retained by the Director. A new orientation acknowledgment is required each school year and any time there is a significant change in Center policies.

### **Confidentiality Obligations for Volunteers**

Volunteers are subject to the same confidentiality obligations as paid staff. Everything a volunteer observes, hears, or becomes aware of at the Center — regarding children, families, staff, or Center operations — is strictly confidential. Volunteers may not:

- Discuss or disclose any child's name, behavior, family situation, diagnosis, or personal information with any person outside the Center
- Post any observations, descriptions, photos, or comments about the Center, its children, staff, or families on any social media platform
- Share information learned during volunteering with other parents, community members, or any unauthorized person

Violation of confidentiality by a volunteer will result in immediate removal from the Center and may be reported to appropriate authorities depending on the nature of the disclosure.

### **Staff Responsibilities When a Volunteer Is Present**

The supervising paid staff member is responsible for the conduct, activities, and compliance of every volunteer in their area. Staff responsibilities include:

- Notifying the Director in advance of any planned volunteer visit
- Ensuring the volunteer has completed the Volunteer Registration Form and received orientation before beginning
- Directing the volunteer's activities and remaining physically present at all times
- Intervening immediately if the volunteer engages in any prohibited activity, including any attempt to photograph children, discipline a child, or operate outside their approved role
- Reporting any volunteer conduct concern to the Director immediately
- Verifying the volunteer has signed in and out in the Visitor/Volunteer Log

### **Volunteer Registration & Conduct Agreement**

All volunteers must complete the Brighter Futures Child Development Center Volunteer Registration and Conduct Agreement Form before beginning any volunteer activity. By signing the form, the volunteer acknowledges that they have:

- Read and understood the Volunteer Policy as stated in this section of the Employee Handbook
- Completed the required pre-volunteer orientation
- Agreed to abide by all Center policies, including confidentiality, supervision, prohibited conduct, and photo restrictions

- Disclosed all required information on the Volunteer Registration Form accurately and completely
- Understood that failure to comply with any provision of this policy will result in immediate removal from Center property

**VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION & CONDUCT AGREEMENT (Detach and return to Director)**

**Volunteer Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Relationship to Center (parent, grandparent, community professional, student):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Volunteer Activity / Visit:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

DISCLOSURE QUESTION	RESPONSE
Have you ever been convicted of any crime listed under S.C. Code §§ 16-3 or 16-15?	YES / NO (if YES, do not volunteer — see Director)
Have you ever had a substantiated finding of child abuse or neglect?	YES / NO (if YES, do not volunteer — see Director)
Are you required to register on any sex offender registry?	YES / NO (if YES, you are prohibited from the premises)
Do you currently have any communicable illness or active infection?	YES / NO (if YES, do not volunteer today)
Orientation completed and acknowledged?	YES / NO — Director/Staff Initials: _____

I understand that my participation as a volunteer at Brighter Futures Child Development Center is subject to all policies stated in this handbook, that I must remain under direct staff supervision at all times when children are present, that I may not photograph children, and that all information I learn at the Center is strictly confidential. I further understand that I am a mandatory reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under S.C. Code § 63-7-310 and that failure to report is a criminal offense.

**Volunteer Signature (Agreement):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Director / Staff Signature:**

**Date:**

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## SECTION 32: EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT

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### PLEASE READ CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING

This acknowledgment confirms that you have received, read, and understood the Brighter Futures Child Development Center Employee Handbook (Effective February 2025). By signing below, you acknowledge that this handbook is not a contract of employment, does not alter your at-will employment status, and that you are responsible for complying with all policies contained herein. You further acknowledge that Brighter Futures reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, terminate, or change any policy at any time with or without notice.

I, the undersigned, confirm that:

59. I have received a copy of the Brighter Futures Child Development Center Employee Handbook (Effective February 2025).
60. I have read and understand the policies, procedures, and expectations contained in this handbook.
61. I understand that this handbook is not an employment contract and does not create an express or implied contract of employment.
62. I understand that my employment with Brighter Futures Child Development Center is at-will and may be terminated by me or by the Center at any time, with or without cause and with or without notice.
63. I understand that Brighter Futures may revise, suspend, or eliminate any policy at its sole discretion, and that I will be notified of material changes.
64. I understand that I am a mandatory reporter of suspected child abuse and neglect under South Carolina law (S.C. Code § 63-7-310), and that failure to report is a criminal offense.
65. I understand that all information regarding children, families, and co-workers is strictly confidential and that my confidentiality obligations continue after my employment ends.
66. I understand that violation of any policy in this handbook may result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination.
67. I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about any policy in this handbook and that any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction.

### EMPLOYEE INFORMATION:

**Printed Name of Employee:**

**Date:**

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**Signature of Employee:**

**Date:**

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**Position / Job Title:**

**Date:**

---

**Hire Date:**

**Date:**

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**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Staff File Updated: YES / NO  
DSS Background Check on File: YES / NO CPR Certification on File: YES / NO  
TB/Physical on File: YES / NO HBV Waiver on File: YES / NO / N/A  
4K Eligibility Verified: YES / NO / N/A CACFP Training Complete: YES / NO  
Director Initials: \_\_\_\_\_