

# BRIGHTER FUTURES

## Child Development Center

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# PARENT HANDBOOK

Updated January 2026

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### NOTICE TO FAMILIES

This handbook is intended to familiarize families with the current Brighter Futures Child Development Center policies, practices, and standards as required by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SC DSS), South Carolina 4K (First Steps/CERDEP), and the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Print copies are available upon request. Brighter Futures reserves the right to revise its policies, practices, and standards as deemed appropriate by the Director. Families will be notified in writing of all material updates to this handbook. Receipt of this handbook must be acknowledged in writing by each family at enrollment.

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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 a high standard for exceptional care. With highly skilled and experienced owners and teachers, the Center is committed to offering a nurturing and stimulating environment where children learn, grow, and thrive.

### Mission Statement

At Brighter Futures Child Development Center, we believe in the value and uniqueness of each child we serve. Our childcare experience 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

Our program is built around the concept that children are born ready to learn. As caregivers, we strive to create a learning environment that is safe, stimulating, and encouraging. The following principles are drawn from the South Carolina Early Learning Standards (SC-ELS) and serve as the foundation for our curriculum:

- 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 in each area and each child; children will show a range of skills and understandings in any one area of development.
- Learning in each area is interconnected. Young children learn best through experiences that incorporate several areas of development.
- Learning is embedded in culture. Children learn best when their learning activities are rooted in a familiar cultural context.
- Learning begins in the family, continues in early care and education settings, and depends on parent involvement and caregiver guidance.

All children have the potential to achieve the South Carolina Early Learning Standards with appropriate support and instruction.

## SECTION 2: WELCOME

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Welcome to Brighter Futures Child Development Center! We believe the strongest partnership in a child's life is that between the child's family and the Center. Our staff teams with parents to ensure this is an excellent experience for your entire family. We are committed to providing the highest quality of care for your child and family.

We have an Open-Door Policy and encourage your active involvement. You are welcome to visit or volunteer in your child's classroom, chaperone field trips, and always advocate for your child.

We serve children between the ages of three (3) and five (5) years old. Our daily program promotes your child's intellectual, social, physical, and emotional development, individualized to meet each child's needs. We continually train our staff using the most current research in child development and early education.

### OPEN-DOOR POLICY

Parents and legal guardians have the right to visit the Center during operating hours at any time to observe their child's classroom without prior appointment, consistent with SC DSS licensing regulations (S.C. Code § 63-13-70). Please sign in at the front office upon arrival and follow access procedures outlined in this handbook.

## SECTION 3: NON-DISCRIMINATION, CONFIDENTIALITY & INCLUSION

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### Non-Discrimination Policy

Brighter Futures Child Development Center is an equal opportunity program. We prohibit discrimination in all programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or income. This policy applies to enrollment, access to services, program activities, employment, and all other aspects of program operations.

In accordance with the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) requirements, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information should contact the Director or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, at [www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint](http://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint) or write to: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410. Call (866) 632-9992. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

### Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality is a top priority at Brighter Futures. Unless written consent is provided, information regarding your child and family will not be released, with the exception of that required by SC DSS, CACFP, SC 4K program administrators, and other regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children in our program are confidential and maintained in accordance with state and federal law.

When discussing a child's activities and friends in the classroom, only first names will be used. In situations regarding behavior problems and/or Incident/Accident Reports, names of children involved will never be disclosed to other families.

### Violations of the Confidentiality Policy

The Center takes seriously the responsibility of maintaining confidentiality for all persons associated with the Center. The Confidentiality Policy applies not only to your own child and family, but to all children, families, and employees associated with the Center. Any parent who shares confidential information, pressures employees or other parents for information they are not entitled to, or otherwise violates this policy may be dismissed from the Center.

### Exceptional Children / Special Needs Policy

Brighter Futures is committed to meeting the needs of all children, including children with special health care needs such as asthma and allergies, children with emotional and behavioral issues, and children with chronic illness or disability. Inclusion of children with special needs enriches the childcare experience for all staff, families, and children.

- Confidentiality is assured with all families and staff. All families will be treated with dignity and respect for their individual needs and differences.
- Children with disabilities will be accepted into our program under the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Children with special needs will be given the opportunity to participate in the program to the fullest extent possible. We may consult with agencies and organizations as needed.
- An individual plan of care is developed for each child with a special health care need through communication with teachers, parents, and specialists. The plan includes information and instructions for daily care, potential emergency situations, and care during and after disaster. Plans are reviewed annually or when changes occur. IFSPs and IEPs are welcomed and incorporated into the planning process.
- The Center partners with organizations including Tri-County Therapy and PEAR to support children with special needs. All licensed therapists are welcome to work with children and must have a current Authorization for Intervention, Therapy, and Extracurricular Activities (DSS Form 2930) on file.
- All staff receive general training on working with children with special needs, individual plans, and updated training on specific special needs encountered in the classroom.
- Teachers, cooks, and other staff are oriented to any special needs or dietary restrictions by the Director.
- We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children based on their individual capabilities and needs, provided it does not impose an undue financial burden on the Center.

## SECTION 4: GENERAL CENTER INFORMATION

### Administration

Director: Dr. Sabrina Marshall | [slmarshall@bfcdc.com](mailto:slmarshall@bfcdc.com)

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

### Licensing & Regulatory Compliance

Brighter Futures Child Development Center is a public program voluntarily licensed to serve 68 children by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SC DSS), Division of Early Care and Education. Our license is issued pursuant to S.C. Code Title 63, Chapter 13 (South Carolina Child Care Licensing Law). A copy of the SC DSS licensing regulations is available for review in the office and online at [schildcare.org](http://schildcare.org).

Brighter Futures is a participant in the South Carolina ABC Quality Rating and Improvement System (ABC Quality). Our rating is publicly available at [schildcare.org](http://schildcare.org).

Brighter Futures participates in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) administered by the South Carolina Department of Social Services. Participation in CACFP ensures that all meals and snacks served meet current USDA nutritional guidelines.

#### LICENSING INSPECTION RESULTS

The Center's most recent SC DSS licensing inspection results are available for review in the Director's office. Parents may request a copy at any time. SC DSS regulations are posted in the main office and staff break room.

### Hours of Operation

Brighter Futures is open Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Center is closed on the following state and federal holidays:

HOLIDAY	HOLIDAY
New Year's Day	Independence Day (July 4)
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Labor Day
Memorial Day	Veterans Day
Juneteenth (June 19)	Thanksgiving Day
Christmas Day	

Additionally, Brighter Futures will be closed five (5) days per year for mandatory staff professional development. These dates will be announced in advance and will typically coincide with a holiday to minimize family disruption. Families are still responsible for tuition during all Center-closed days.

## Programs and Classrooms

CLASSROOM	AGE RANGE / CAPACITY
Exploratory Eagles	Ages 3–4   10–12 children
Dynamic Discoverers	Ages 3–4   10–12 children
Marvelous Minds	Ages 4–5   10–12 children
SC 4K	Ages 4–5   10–12 children

## Staff-to-Child Ratios

Brighter Futures maintains SC DSS-mandated staff-to-child ratios at all times:

AGE GROUP	MINIMUM RATIO
3 to 4 years	1 staff per 12 children
4 to 5 years	1 staff per 17 children
5 to 6 years	1 staff per 20 children

When mixed age groups are in the same room, the staff-to-child ratio shall be consistent with the age of the majority of the children, as required by SC DSS regulation. Brighter Futures strives to exceed minimum ratios by maintaining both lead teachers and teacher assistants in classrooms whenever possible.

## SECTION 5: FEES, BILLING & FINANCIAL POLICIES

### IMPORTANT – ALL FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE

Upon enrollment and upon any changes to tuition, families are provided with a Fee Policy & Financial Agreement. This agreement must be carefully reviewed and signed. All fees, once paid, are non-refundable unless otherwise stated in writing by the Director.

### Weekly Tuition Rates

FEE DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
Ages 3 and up (Full Time)	\$257.25/week
Ages 3 and up (Full Time – 2 <sup>nd</sup> child(ren))	\$244.40/week (see Director)
After School (2:30-6 pm, M-TH, Friday 5:30 pm)	\$175.00/week
ABC Scholarship Clients	Co-Pay amount (see Director)
Processing Fee – Debit/Credit Card	+4% on all card transactions
ABC Scholarship Processing Fee	+5% on card transactions
Registration Fee (non-refundable)	\$100.00 one-time
Late Payment Penalty	\$50.00 per day
Returned Payment Fee	\$50.00 per occurrence

Effective every January 1, an annual rate increase of 3% will be applied to all tuition rates. New rates take effect at the beginning of the fiscal year.

### Automatic Payments

All enrollments must make childcare payments electronically via checking or savings account. A Direct Debit Authorization Form, along with a voided check, must be completed and returned before or on the child's first day. Credit or debit card payments require prior arrangement with the Director and are subject to a 4% processing fee. Cash is never accepted. Payments are automatically withdrawn every Monday at 12:00 noon for the upcoming week of care. If Monday falls on a holiday, payments are withdrawn on the prior business day.

### Part-Time Enrollment

Brighter Futures does not offer a part-time enrollment rate. Families may pick up their child early but will be charged the full-time rate regardless of hours attended.

## Multiple Child Discount

Families with two or more children enrolled full-time at Brighter Futures are eligible for a 5% discount applied to the second child's weekly tuition.

## Late Pick-Up Fee

The Center closes at 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Late pick-up fees are charged as follows:

- 6:01 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.: \$35.00
- Every 15 minutes after 6:15 p.m.: an additional \$25.00

Teachers will record late arrivals for processing. Parents will receive written notice of any late pick-up fee, which will be added to the following week's payment. Three (3) instances of late pick-up will result in enrollment review and possible termination.

## Returned Payments / Insufficient Funds

All returned payments due to insufficient funds will be charged a \$50.00 penalty. Missed payments and late fees must be paid by the Friday of the same week. Repeated incidents of returned payments may result in termination of childcare services. Payment plans should be discussed with the Director if a family is experiencing financial difficulty.

## Delinquent Accounts

Any account more than one week (\$225) in arrears will be subject to immediate termination of childcare services. For information about assistance programs that may help with tuition, please speak with the Director. A written payment plan must be established before an account is considered in good standing.

## Summer Tuition Policy

All enrolled children will be charged the current full-time rate during the summer months. A Summer Activities Fee of \$250 will be charged on June 1st each year for extracurricular summer activities (water sports, KIDZ Summer Olympics, etc.). Field trip fees will be assessed with weekly tuition. If a child does not attend a scheduled field trip, the fee will not be refunded for any reason.

## Vacation Policy

Parents are entitled to two (2) weeks of vacation per year at half (1/2) of the regular weekly rate. A two-week written notice must be given to the Director before vacation begins. Vacation must be taken in full-week increments (5 consecutive business days) and cannot be broken into individual days. Vacation may not be combined with extended absence days. Two weeks is the only time a reduced fee applies.

## **Extended Absences**

In the event a child needs an extended absence (e.g., summer break, medical leave), and the family wishes to hold the child's enrollment spot, a fee of 50% of weekly tuition must be paid each week of absence. Absences exceeding two consecutive weeks without payment or contact with the Director will result in termination of enrollment (fees still owed). Extended absences must be approved by the Director at least 30 days in advance, except in emergencies. No extended absence may exceed 30 days.

## **Weather-Related Closings**

Brighter Futures will remain open during most severe weather forecasts. The Director will monitor weather and local news to determine when early closure or next-day cancellation is necessary for severe weather warnings and severe weather. Parents will be promptly contacted. Children must be picked up within a reasonable time to ensure safe travel. Families are still charged for weather-related closings.

## SECTION 6: MEALS, SNACKS & USDA CACFP NUTRITION PROGRAM

### USDA CACFP STATEMENT

Brighter Futures Child Development Center participates in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Meals and snacks served at this Center meet USDA nutritional guidelines. In accordance with Federal civil rights law and USDA regulations, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Children at Brighter Futures are provided a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack. All meals follow USDA CACFP meal pattern requirements. Menus are posted on the bulletin board near the main entrance and are available upon request.

Children will be encouraged to sample all foods offered but will never be forced to eat. Please notify your child's teacher if your child cannot eat a certain food or has different dietary needs (e.g., vegetarian, vegan, lactose intolerant). A doctor's note is required for documented food allergies. For certain dietary restrictions, you may be asked to provide food from home.

### Meal Service Times

MEAL	TIME
Breakfast	8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
Lunch	11:00 a.m. – 11:30 p.m.
PM Snack	2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.
Late Snack (if applicable)	5:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.

### Food & Meal Policy

All meals are enjoyed family-style, with children and teachers seated together at tables to promote good manners, healthy eating habits, and socialization skills. Children are never allowed to share or exchange food items for safety and allergy reasons.

The Child Development Center will never use food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in lunch or snack time for behavioral reasons. Food may be used by teachers as part of classroom instructional lessons.

The Center does not conduct fundraising events involving food or non-food items.

### Peanut / Nut-Free & Allergen-Aware Classrooms

Due to the extreme nature of some allergic reactions, Brighter Futures is a peanut- and nut-free facility. Based on the specific needs of enrolled children, additional allergens (e.g., eggs) may also be restricted. The teacher will notify families of any allergens present in the classroom. Per our Confidentiality Policy, only the allergen will be identified — not the child.

Parents of children in an allergen-aware classroom are responsible for providing foods free of the identified allergen for their child's birthday celebrations. Always read the entire food label,

including statements such as 'may contain traces of peanuts,' as even products not traditionally associated with nuts may be processed in shared facilities.

### **Food Allergy Action Plan**

If your child has a food allergy, a Food Allergy Action Plan form must be completed (available in the office). This form will be posted in the child's classroom and in all food preparation areas. All staff working with an allergic child must review the plan. If emergency medication (e.g., epinephrine auto-injector) is prescribed, your child's physician must sign the plan. All allergic reactions must be documented on a Health Incident Form.

Parents must execute a Release and Waiver of Liability for Administering Emergency Treatment to Children with Severe Allergies, which releases the Center from liability when staff exercise reasonable care in administering prescribed treatment. It is the parent's responsibility to monitor medication expiration dates and provide updated medications. The Center reserves the right to exclude a child with severe allergies who does not have current, unexpired rescue medications on site.

### **Malnutrition & Nutritional Health Policy**

At Brighter Futures, the health and well-being of every child is our priority. Proper nutrition is essential for growth and development.

#### **Prevention**

We provide balanced, nutritious meals and snacks that meet USDA CACFP guidelines. Menus are planned to include a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein sources. Mealtime practices encourage children to develop healthy eating habits.

#### **Identification**

Staff observe children for signs of malnutrition including sudden weight loss or failure to gain weight, fatigue, weakness, frequent illness, or poor concentration. Parents will be promptly informed of any nutritional health concerns.

#### **Intervention**

If malnutrition is suspected, staff will document observations and discuss concerns with parents or guardians. Resources and referrals to local nutrition programs or healthcare providers will be provided as needed. In cases of severe malnutrition or suspected neglect, mandatory reporting procedures will be followed.

#### **Parent Partnership**

Parents are encouraged to communicate any dietary restrictions, allergies, or concerns. Nutrition education and resources will be made available to families upon request.

## SECTION 7: ENROLLMENT, WITHDRAWAL & GENERAL POLICIES

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### Enrollment Requirements

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of all of the following:

- Completed enrollment application
- Signed Fee Policy & Financial Agreement
- Non-refundable \$100 registration fee and required deposit
- Current immunization records (signed by a licensed healthcare professional)
- Current physical examination record (updated at minimum annually)
- Signed Parent Handbook Acknowledgment Form
- Emergency Contact & Medical Consent Form
- Signed Direct Debit Authorization Form with voided check
- Completed family questionnaire (provided in welcome packet)
- SC 4K income eligibility documentation (if applicable — see Section 11)

Before new students start, teachers will provide families with a welcome packet including classroom-specific information and a family questionnaire to learn about your child's interests, developmental needs, and your goals. This information will be incorporated into ongoing classroom planning.

### Updating Enrollment Records

Each January, Brighter Futures conducts an annual audit of all enrollment records. Families will be notified if any documents require updating. The Emergency Contact and Medical Consent Form must be updated annually. Physical and immunization records must be updated whenever new information is available. Any time a family's contact information, place of employment, or health insurance changes, a new Emergency Contact and Medical Consent Form must be completed within five (5) business days.

### Immunizations

No child will be enrolled without state- and federally mandated vaccinations, consistent with SC DSS licensing requirements and SC 4K guidelines regardless of religious or medical exemptions must be documented that aligns with South Carolina law (S.C. Code § 44-29-180). Immunization records must be current and signed by a licensed physician or authorized health official.

### Dismissal

Every effort will be made to resolve differences. However, circumstances that may result in a child/family's immediate dismissal from the Center include, but are not limited to:

#### Behavioral Grounds (Child)

- A child who is not yet ready for a group experience or whose needs cannot be met in a group setting.
- A child who continually places the safety of themselves, other children, or staff at risk.

- A child with behavioral problems so severe that they cannot be accommodated within the regular program and staff-child ratio, with or without a written plan from a licensed mental health professional specializing in young children.

### **Parental Disregard for Policy**

- Tuition is five (5) or more days overdue with no written payment plan.
- Failure to adhere to an established payment plan.
- Consistent disregard for hours of operation.
- Failure to treat Center staff and children with respect.
- Violation of confidentiality or social media policies.

The Center reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time if the Director deems it necessary. When possible, the following procedure will be followed:

- Parents will be notified of the issue by the teacher or office staff as soon as possible.
- A parent-teacher conference will be scheduled within 48 hours.
- A follow-up conference will be scheduled for two weeks later.
- If significant improvement is not observed, parents will be asked to seek outside assistance.
- After a reasonable time, if a solution cannot be reached, the Director may communicate dismissal.

Any past due balances must be paid at the time of dismissal. Outstanding balances remaining after 30 days will be referred to the agency's legal counsel for collection. A dismissed family may appeal to the Board of Directors, though the Board will not overturn a dismissal unless it is shown the Director acted in a biased or unprofessional manner.

The Center will request police assistance if any parent becomes disruptive while collecting their child's belongings upon dismissal. A dismissed child and their parents must schedule an appointment with the Director prior to returning to Center property. Any subsequent harassment, threats, or harm directed at anyone affiliated with Brighter Futures will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

### **Withdrawal**

One (1) month's written notice via the Withdrawal Notice Form, effective at the end of a calendar month, is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. Following the last day of enrollment, parents and the child may not return to Center property without prior written permission from the Director.

### **Waiting List**

Classes at the Center typically remain full throughout the year. The Center maintains a waiting list by age and program. A waiting list application form and a non-refundable application fee must be submitted to be placed on the waiting list. Priority for enrollment is as follows:

- Current students transitioning to the next classroom level.
- Siblings of currently enrolled students.
- All others, in order of application date and paid registration fee.

Waiting list policies:

- First decline or non-response: the waiting list date is changed to the date of decline.
- Second decline or non-response: the child is removed from the waiting list. A new application and fee are required to re-enroll on the list.

## **Emergency Contact & Authorized Pick-Up**

At enrollment, parents must provide all persons who may at any time be asked to pick up their child. SC DSS regulations require each family to have at least one emergency contact (other than a parent) and one authorized pick-up person. In an emergency, parents are contacted first. If unreachable, emergency contacts and authorized pick-up persons are contacted.

All authorized pick-up persons must present a government-issued photo ID before the Center will release a child. No exceptions. All changes or additions to this list must be made in writing, dated, and signed by the custodial parent.

Parents may designate certain authorized persons as having In Loco Parentis status, which grants the right to receive confidential information about the child's day, including incident/accident reports and behavior issues. Without this designation, authorized individuals may only pick up the child.

Parents cannot be listed as emergency contacts. The Center reserves the right to refuse or ban any person listed on the Enrollment Form for violations of Center policies.

## **Center's Right to Refuse Admission**

The Center reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time, with or without cause. Possible reasons include, but are not limited to:

- Insufficient staff to maintain SC DSS-required ratios.
- Need to maintain compliance with SC DSS licensing regulations.
- Staff determination that the child is too ill to attend.
- Domestic situations that present a safety risk.
- Failure of parents to maintain accurate, current enrollment records.
- Failure to complete required documentation.
- Failure to comply with the tuition policy.

Parents will not be reimbursed tuition for days when admission is refused.

## **Attendance**

Regular attendance is strongly encouraged for the benefit of the child and the classroom community. The cut-off time for drop-off is 8:30 a.m., unless a prior arrangement (such as a morning medical appointment) has been communicated. If your child will be absent or you are running late, please notify the Center by 8:00 a.m. so that the teacher may adjust the lesson plan.

If your child will be absent for more than two to three (2–3) consecutive days, the Center must be notified in writing with the expected return date. Enrollment will be terminated if a child is absent for two (2) weeks or more without notice or contact from the family.

## **Court Orders Affecting Enrolled Children**

When an enrolled child is subject to a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, Protection from Abuse Order), the Center must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments. Court orders will be strictly followed. In the absence of a court order on file, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as provided by law. The Center cannot, without a court order, limit one parent's access at the request of the other parent.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or Restraining Order, the Center is obligated to follow the order for its entire effective period. Staff cannot, at anyone's request (except the issuing judge), allow such an order to be violated. Violations will be reported to the court.

A sex offender convicted of a sex offense against a minor who is required to register with the South Carolina Sex Offender Registry shall not operate, be employed by, volunteer at, or be present on the property of the Center, regardless of their relationship to an enrolled child. The Director is not obligated to consult with DSS prior to enforcing this restriction.

## **Pest Control**

Brighter Futures contracts with Terminix Pest Control for routine pest prevention and management. The Center uses integrated pest management practices, including monitoring, regular inspections, high sanitation standards, and environmental modifications. No harmful chemicals are used that would endanger children. Children are never present during pest control treatments.

## SECTION 8: ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE & ATTENDANCE

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### Arrival Procedures

Upon arrival, the parent or adult dropping off the child must sign the child in using the electronic tablet located outside the classroom doors. The Center utilizes a secure door system. Only authorized individuals may enter the building while children are present. Upon enrollment, each family receives a personalized PIN number for secure entry.

- Please do not hold the door open for unauthorized individuals.
- If you have forgotten your PIN, press the button to buzz the office. Do not follow another family inside.
- Children must be escorted by the drop-off adult directly to their designated classroom.
- Parents are required to help children put away personal belongings and get settled for the day.
- Idling vehicles may not be left unattended in the parking lot.
- Siblings or other children may not be left unattended in a vehicle during drop-off.
- Please briefly speak with the teacher at drop-off about your child's mood, sleep, eating, or any special circumstances.
- If your child requires medication during the day, follow the Medication Policy at arrival.

Most children go through periods of difficulty separating from parents. This is developmentally normal and expected. The following tips may help:

- Establish a regular, predictable routine for drop-off and follow it each day.
- Separate once. Returning to the classroom after leaving increases a child's stress.
- Be reliable. Return when promised. Phrase time in terms your child understands (e.g., 'I'll be back after snack time').

### Departure Procedures

Brighter Futures closes at 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Parents or authorized adults must sign the child out using the electronic tablet outside the classroom doors. Once a parent signs their child out, they are solely responsible for supervising the child on Center premises.

- All billing issues must be addressed before signing out a child.
- Parents must exit the building promptly after sign-out to avoid disruptions to the classroom.
- The classroom teacher can provide a brief update at pick-up. For in-depth discussions, please schedule a conference.
- If someone unfamiliar to staff is picking up, notify the teacher in advance and ensure the person is listed on the Emergency Contact and Parent Consent Form.
- All authorized pick-up persons must present a valid, government-issued photo ID.
- Always say goodbye to the classroom teacher before departing.

If parents do not arrive to pick up their child, staff will attempt to contact parents using all phone numbers on file. If parents cannot be reached by 6:30 p.m., the Director will contact the Department of Human Services and/or local police.

## **Persons Appearing Impaired by Drugs or Alcohol**

If a custodial parent appears to staff to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, staff will delay the parent as long as possible while simultaneously contacting the other custodial parent, local police, and Child Protective Services. The Center cannot legally deny a custodial parent access to their child, but staff will take every reasonable precaution for the child's safety.

Any non-parent authorized pick-up person who appears impaired will be denied access to the child. Staff will immediately contact the child's parents, local police, and Child Protective Services.

## **Parking**

Parking is in the front of the building only, not under the overhanging front patio. Do not park behind other vehicles during drop-off and pick-up. Please keep arrivals and departures brief. Do not leave idling vehicles unattended, and do not leave any child unattended in a vehicle.

## SECTION 9: HOME AND CENTER PARTNERSHIP

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### Teacher Qualifications

Brighter Futures strives to maintain highly qualified staff. All caregivers employed at this Center must meet the requirements of SC Code § 63-13-30, as amended by S.B. 862 (effective July 11, 2024):

- Any caregiver beginning employment after June 30, 1994, must hold at minimum a high school diploma, high school equivalency credential recognized by the State Board of Education, a Certificate of Completion, or a South Carolina High School Employability Credential.
- All staff must complete SC DSS-mandated preservice and in-service training hours, including blood-borne pathogen training as required by OSHA.
- Background checks: Pursuant to SC Code § 63-13-40, a Central Registry check must be conducted by SC DSS for all staff to determine any prior abuse or neglect of a child. Provisional hires must execute a sworn DSS statement confirming they are not on the Central Registry and are never left alone with children until all background checks are cleared.
- All staff complete a minimum of 15 hours of professional development annually, including topics required by SC DSS, CACFP, and SC 4K program standards.

### Tracking & Daily Sheets

Children are tracked from arrival to departure using ProCare Software. Upon arrival and departure, parents sign their child in and out through the computer portal or paper sign-in sheet. Teachers ensure sign-in and sign-out occurs at the classroom, to and from the playground, between classrooms, and at departure. Daily information — including meals, activities, and lesson plans — is recorded as needed.

### Room Transitions

Your child will transition to a new classroom when they have reached the developmental milestones appropriate for the next level. Before any transition, parents will receive written notification and are encouraged to schedule a meeting with the new teacher. Both current and future teachers are available to address any questions or concerns during the transition process.

### Parent Participation

Parent participation is strongly encouraged. Opportunities include:

- Field trip transportation and supervision
- Leading or assisting special projects (cooking, crafts, carpentry, etc.)
- Constructing or collecting materials for art projects or dramatic play
- Eating lunch or snack with your child (please notify teachers one day in advance)
- Volunteering in your child's classroom

Parents who wish to volunteer on a regular basis must provide verification of a cleared SC DSS background check if they will have direct, unsupervised contact with children.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Formal parent-teacher conferences are held a minimum of two times per year and each time your child transitions to a new classroom. Conferences provide an opportunity to discuss your child's development in the Center and at home, review assessment data, and establish shared goals. Parents may request a conference at any time. Telephone conferences are available if an in-person meeting is not feasible.

## **Program Evaluations**

Brighter Futures asks parents to complete an anonymous program evaluation annually. Information gathered is used to develop goals and improve overall care quality. Parent feedback is essential to our program's continuous improvement.

## **Communication**

The Center's primary form of communication is email. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure we have a current, valid email address on file at all times. The Center also uses ProCare Software for daily communications and will post physical notices on classroom doors and the main entrance bulletin board for urgent notifications.

## SECTION 11: SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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This Social Media Policy applies to all parents, employees, students, and Board members of the Center and includes, but is not limited to, all social networking platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok), blogs, discussion forums, collaborative online spaces, media sharing services (YouTube), and micro-blogging platforms (Twitter/X).

To safeguard the privacy and security of all families, children, and employees, the following rules apply:

- No photographs taken within the Center or at special events and outings may be posted publicly, except photographs of your own child.
- Parents do not have the right to photograph or post images of any other child without that child's parent's explicit written consent.
- No public discussions, comments, or posts may be made on social media regarding the Center, its children, staff, or administrators in a manner that is detrimental, derogatory, or in violation of our confidentiality policy.
- If a parent names the Center on any social media platform, they must do so in a manner that is not detrimental or derogatory to the Center.
- Parents are not permitted to establish private or public social media groups or accounts related to Brighter Futures Child Development Center without express written permission from the Director.

Any parent found in violation of this policy — including posts that breach confidentiality, bring the Center into disrepute, or are harmful to employees, children, or the Center — may result in immediate dismissal.

## SECTION 11: SOUTH CAROLINA 4K PROGRAM (FIRST STEPS / CERDEP)

### SC 4K PROGRAM NOTICE

Brighter Futures participates in the South Carolina First Steps 4K and/or Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP). Families whose children participate in state-funded 4K services are subject to the requirements of this section in addition to all other handbook policies. No parent is required to pay tuition or fees solely for the purpose of enrolling in or attending the 4K instructional program. Fees may be charged for extended care or wrap-around care provided outside the instructional day.

### Eligibility

The SC 4K program serves income-eligible four-year-old children (age 4 by September 1 of the program year) whose family income is at or below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines. Children may also qualify due to a documented developmental delay, an IEP requiring pre-kindergarten, incarceration of a parent, foster home placement, or homelessness. Documentation of eligibility must be on file before a child begins attending the 4K program.

Providers may continue to enroll and charge tuition for students whose family incomes exceed the eligibility threshold, provided total class size does not exceed 20 students and all children receive the same instructional program.

### 4K Program Requirements

All First Steps 4K classrooms at Brighter Futures operate in accordance with the most current First Steps 4K and/or CERDEP Guidelines, including:

- A comprehensive, developmentally appropriate curriculum aligned with the SC Early Learning Standards.
- Ongoing child assessment using approved tools, with results reported to parents at least quarterly.
- A minimum 180-day instructional year (Service Option extensions to 220 days or 8 hours/day may apply — confirm with Director).
- Parenting education and family engagement activities, including a Parent Education and Involvement Plan submitted to SC First Steps.
- Lead teachers holding qualifications consistent with SC First Steps/CERDEP requirements.
- A minimum of 15 hours of professional development per year for all instructional staff.
- Administration of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) within 45 days of enrollment.

### 4K Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance is required for all 4K enrolled children. The Center is required to report attendance to SC First Steps/CERDEP. If a child becomes chronically absent or tardy, the Director will contact the family to identify and resolve barriers to attendance. Pursuant to 4K program guidelines, noncompliance with attendance policies may result in removal from the state-

funded program. No state-funded 4K students may be disenrolled without the express written permission of First Steps, except in cases of immediate safety suspension (up to 2 days). Extended suspension (more than 2 days or more than 3 incidents) requires prior written approval from SC First Steps.

## **4K Parent Rights**

Families whose children are enrolled in a state-funded 4K program have the following rights:

- To receive information about the program, curriculum, and their child's progress at least quarterly.
- To participate in parent education and engagement activities.
- No family is required to pay tuition solely for the 4K instructional hours. Wrap-around/extended care fees may apply.
- To access information about other CERDEP providers in the area if a space is not available.

## SECTION 12: HOLIDAYS, VACATIONS & SPECIAL EVENTS

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### Paid Holidays

Brighter Futures is closed on all holidays listed in Section 4. Tuition payments are still due and no prorated fees are applied for Center-observed holidays. If a holiday falls on a weekend, the Center may observe it on the nearest weekday. Families will receive advance notice of any additional closings.

### Paid Staff Development Days

The Center is closed five (5) days each calendar year for staff development. These days will be announced in advance and typically scheduled adjacent to holidays. Staff development activities meet SC DSS and SC 4K professional development requirements.

### Special Events

To give back to our families, the Center hosts two quarterly special events:

#### Friday Night Out

1st Friday of January, April, July, and December | 7:00 p.m. – 11:45 p.m.

Dinner is provided with fun activities. Fees: \$15/child for currently enrolled children; \$20/child for non-enrolled children (registration paperwork required). A one-time registration fee of \$50 applies for non-enrolled children. If a family chooses to enroll full-time after the event, an additional \$50 will be charged to complete the \$100 full-time registration fee. Late pick-up fees apply. All fees are non-refundable for no-shows or parent cancellations.

#### Parent's Super Saturday

1st Saturday of February, May, August, and November | 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Lunch is provided with fun activities. Fees: \$15/child for enrolled children; \$20/child for non-enrolled children. Same registration fee structure as Friday Night Out applies. Late pick-up fees apply. Fees are non-refundable for no-shows or parent cancellations.

A sign-up sheet is available the week of the event. All fees and registration must be received by the Thursday before the event. A minimum of 15 children must be registered for the event to proceed.

## SECTION 13: CURRICULUM, DAILY SCHEDULE & ASSESSMENTS

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### Curriculum

Brighter Futures uses the Learning Beyond Early Learning Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum as our guides for planning in each classroom. The curriculums includes child-initiated and teacher-directed activities supporting physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. Lesson plans are posted weekly in each classroom and are aligned with the South Carolina Early Learning Standards (SC-ELS). Plans may be modified to accommodate children's changing interests.

Each classroom is organized into Learning Centers including blocks, dramatic play, books, gross motor, fine motor, and art. Self-selection (free play) is a daily part of the curriculum, allowing children to choose activities and develop creative expression and social skills.

### Daily Schedule

Our teachers create daily schedules and activities that meet each child's developmental needs. Schedules balance active and quiet times; large group, small group, and individual activities; large and small muscle activities; indoor and outdoor play; self-selection; and teacher-directed activities. Consistency is key — routines will be maintained whenever possible for arrivals, departures, meals, rest, and transitions.

### Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is incorporated into both the morning and afternoon daily schedule as an essential component of our curriculum. Children go outside year-round. Children will only remain indoors during extreme weather conditions as determined by the SC Department of Public Health's Childcare Weather Watch guidelines. Parents must send children in appropriate clothing and outerwear for weather conditions. Items should be clearly labeled with the child's name. If a child is not dressed appropriately, parents may be asked to bring suitable clothing. Brighter Futures does not take children swimming or maintain swimming facilities at the Center.

### Nap / Rest Time

SC DSS recommends that all children be provided a regularly scheduled nap or rest period. Children will not be forced to sleep but may be encouraged to rest quietly. Alternative quiet activities are available for children unable to rest. Children are encouraged to bring a small blanket or comfort item from home for rest time (clearly labeled). All classroom laundry is sent home weekly.

### Multimedia

Multimedia is used as an extension of classroom learning. All movies, television programs, and digital content must carry a 'G' or 'PG' rating and possess an educational theme. Children are limited to a maximum of three (3) hours of screen time per week. Viewing is offered as one option among several learning center activities and is never required.

## **Weapons & Violent Play**

Brighter Futures maintains a strict no-weapons policy. Any toy weapon (swords, ninja stars, etc.) brought to the Center will be held in the office, and parents will be called immediately to retrieve it. Violent play (boxing, fighting, 'cops and robbers') is minimized as it can increase negative behavior and decrease social acceptance. Bullying is not tolerated. Staff will guide children toward appropriate social interaction.

## **Pets & Visiting Animals**

No animal may be brought into the Center without prior written approval from the Director. Approved pets and visiting animals must have documentation from a licensed veterinarian or animal shelter confirming current immunizations and suitability for contact with children.

## **Assessments & Screenings**

Systematic, ongoing child assessment informs curriculum planning, teaching, and individualization. The Learning Beyond Assessment is the primary tool used to evaluate and track each child's development. Assessment is continuous — teachers observe, document, and share findings with families. Results are shared with parents within 10 days. All referrals and follow-up processes are discussed with parents.

### **Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)**

Teachers and parents must complete an ASQ developmental screening for all children within 45 calendar days of enrollment. Screenings are conducted using culturally, linguistically, and developmentally responsive materials, consistent with SC 4K and SC DSS requirements. Referrals are made as appropriate.

### **Hearing & Vision Screening**

Brighter Futures refers families to the OAE program for hearing screening and Focus First | Impact America for vision screening. Screening should be completed within the first 90 days of enrollment. Informational flyers are available in English and Spanish.

### **Assessment Portfolios**

A permanent assessment portfolio is maintained for each child and passed to the next teacher upon classroom transition. Portfolios contain photographs, artwork samples, assessment profiles, and conference forms. Portfolios may be temporarily taken home but must be returned promptly. When a child leaves Brighter Futures, the portfolio is given to the family.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Formal conferences are held at least twice per year and with each classroom transition. Goals, assessment data, and developmental progress are discussed. Parents are encouraged to request additional conferences at any time. For SC 4K participants, progress is also reported quarterly as required by program guidelines.

## SECTION 14: FIELD TRIPS

Brighter Futures offers a variety of learning experiences both at and away from the Center. Field trips inside the Summerville city limits and/or longer than two hours require a completed Field Trip Permission Form. Parents will be notified at least two weeks in advance of all such trips.

If you do not wish your child to attend a specific field trip, please arrange alternative childcare for that day. Staff cannot remain behind to supervise non-participating children.

Short, unannounced excursions (walks around the building perimeter, visits to local playgrounds or businesses) require a general Parent/Guardian Permission Form completed at enrollment.

### Field Trip Ratios

AGE GROUP	MINIMUM RATIO
3-year-olds	2 staff : 12 children
4-year-olds	2 staff : 12 children
5-year-olds	2 staff : 12 children

A sufficient number of parent volunteers must be available before any field trip is approved. Only staff members or a child's own parent may take children to the restroom during field trips.

### Transportation & Car Seat Requirements

Written permission from parents is required for all transportation. Volunteer drivers must be at least 21 years old and provide:

- Proof of a valid driver's license and current auto insurance
- Evidence of a safe driving record for at least 5 years (no crashes resulting in citations)
- No substance abuse history or convictions for crimes involving children or violence
- No alcohol or drugs that impair driving within 12 hours prior to transporting children
- No criminal record of crimes against or involving children, child neglect or abuse, or any crime of violence

Parents must provide and install a car seat for their child. Winter coats must be removed before buckling. In a five-point harness, the chest clip must be at armpit level with straps tight enough that no more than one finger fits underneath. In a booster, the seat belt must stay in front of the child.

### Head Counts During Field Trips

Head counts are taken every 5–10 minutes throughout field trips, and at the following specific points:

- Before leaving the classroom
- Before starting the vehicle (after buckling children)
- After students exit the vehicle at the field trip location

- After entering the field trip location
- When exiting the field trip location
- Before starting the vehicle for the return trip
- After exiting the vehicle at the Center
- Upon returning to the classroom

### **Required Field Trip Materials**

- Written permission slips from parents
- Cell phone and First Aid Kit
- Clipboard with that day's attendance roster and children's 'If Lost' headshots
- Each child must wear a Brighter Futures field trip 'If Lost' ID lanyard
- Teacher pocket lanyards containing: class roster, total headcount, emergency medical and contact information, and the Center's phone number
- A copy of Brighter Futures' Missing Child Procedure

### **Walking Lines**

When walking as a group, one teacher remains at the front of the line and one at the rear. Head counts occur every five minutes.

## SECTION 15: CLOTHING & ITEMS FROM HOME

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### Dress Code

Please send your child in comfortable, washable play clothes and appropriate shoes. Active, often messy play is a regular part of our program. All children must be dressed appropriately for both indoor and outdoor activities.

Two complete sets change of clothing, including underwear and shoes, must be kept at the Center at all times and replenished as needed. Due to health reasons, soiled underwear will be discarded. Please clearly label all items.

Please do not send children in sandals, crocs, flip flops, spaghetti-strap tops, or breakaway pants. Socks must be worn with all shoes. Tennis shoes are recommended for playground safety. Black-soled or slippery shoes are not permitted. Parents are also expected to dress appropriately during drop-off, pick-up, and special events. If your daughter wears a dress, we suggest shorts underneath.

### Items from Home

Toys and comfort items from home may help children during transitional periods. However, young children often struggle to share personal items with classmates. All items from home must be placed in the child's cubby upon arrival. Please clearly label all belongings. Items of monetary value (handheld gaming devices, jewelry, etc.) should be left at home. Brighter Futures is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items.

## SECTION 16: HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

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### Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse & Neglect

All employees of Brighter Futures are mandated reporters under the South Carolina Child Protective Services Act (S.C. Code § 63-7-310 et seq.). Mandated reporters are legally required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Staff are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting, and are not required to investigate the cause of suspicious marks, behavior, or conditions. Mandated reporters who fail to report suspected abuse or neglect may be held criminally liable.

Reports made in good faith to Child Protective Services are protected from civil or criminal liability even if ultimately determined to be unfounded.

Causes for reporting include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on a child's body
- Severe verbal reprimands directed at a child
- Consistently improper clothing (regarding size, cleanliness, or season)
- Transporting a child without appropriate restraints (car seats, seat belts)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Extended periods without appropriate meals or water
- Leaving a child unattended
- Failure to attend to the special needs of a child with a disability
- Sending an ill child to the Center over-medicated to conceal symptoms that would require the child to remain home
- Child behavior consistent with an abusive home situation

### Illness & Exclusion Policy

Our priority is a healthy and safe environment for all children. A child will be excluded from attendance if illness prevents comfortable participation in activities, if the child's care needs exceed what staff can reasonably provide without compromising other children's safety, or if any of the following conditions are present:

- Fever of 100°F or greater — excluded until fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication
- Signs of severe illness: lethargy, uncontrolled coughing and sneezing, unexplained irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, running nose
- Diarrhea (multiple loose/watery stools within one hour, not diet-related) — excluded until resolved for 24 hours or cleared by a licensed healthcare professional
- Blood in stools not explained by diet or medication
- Vomiting (one or more instances) — excluded until resolved for 24 hours or cleared by a healthcare provider
- Persistent abdominal pain for more than 2 hours, or associated with fever
- Mouth sores with drooling — unless cleared as non-contagious by a physician
- Rash — unless cleared as non-communicable by a physician
- Pink eye (conjunctivitis) — excluded until 24 hours after treatment begins and discharge is gone
- Scabies — excluded until treatment is completed and no signs remain

- Strep throat — excluded until 36 hours after antibiotic treatment and fever-free
- Impetigo — excluded until 24 hours after treatment and no open sores
- Chickenpox — excluded until all sores have dried and crusted (approximately 6 days)
- Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease — excluded until sores dried and crusted, and fever-free
- Pertussis — excluded until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment
- Mumps — excluded until 9 days after onset of symptoms
- Hepatitis A — excluded until 1 week after onset of illness
- Measles — excluded until 7 days after onset of rash, with no present rash
- Rubella — excluded until 6 days after onset of rash
- Pneumonia/Flu — excluded until 1 week after onset of illness or diagnosis
- COVID-19 — excluded for one week after medical diagnosis with no fever or persistent cough
- Herpes simplex with uncontrollable drooling or open sores
- Tuberculosis — excluded until a healthcare provider confirms appropriate therapy is underway

An ill child will be sent to the Director's office to await pick-up. Please contact the Center by 8:00 a.m. when your child is ill. The Center reserves the right to make final exclusion determinations.

### **Post-Surgery Policy**

Children may not attend the Center on the same day or the day following surgery. A physician's written release is required before the child may return.

### **Notice of Communicable Disease Exposure**

If your child is exposed to a communicable disease, a notice will be posted at the Center entrance and on the classroom door. If your child or any household member is diagnosed with a communicable disease, notify the Director immediately. In the event of a confirmed communicable disease case, the Director will notify the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) as required.

### **Hand Washing**

Frequent hand washing with soap and warm running water (minimum 60°F) is the most effective way to prevent illness. Hands must be scrubbed for at least 25 seconds. Children and staff must wash hands:

- Upon arriving at the Center or when changing classrooms
- After each diaper change or toilet use
- Before and after mealtimes
- Before and after administering medication
- After handling bodily fluids
- Before and after using the sensory table
- After returning from the playground
- After handling animals

- After cleaning or handling garbage

### **Documentation of Accidents / Incidents**

All accidents and incidents are documented using an Accident/Incident Report. Biting incidents are also documented as accidents. If a bite breaks the skin, a report is completed for both the child who was bitten and the child who bit. Parent(s) are notified before pick-up for serious injuries and must sign the report the same day. Copies may be given to parents. All reports are forwarded to the Director for the child's permanent file. Names of other children involved are never included in reports shared with families.

### **Documentation of Health Incidents**

A Health Incident Form is completed each time a parent is contacted regarding illness symptoms. Copies are given to parents; originals are filed in the child's permanent record. All parents receive notification of communicable illnesses via posted notices and email.

### **Documentation of Special Health Care Needs**

An Emergency Care Plan is maintained for any child with special health care needs (e.g., seizure disorder, severe allergy). A copy is kept in the classroom emergency binder. All relevant staff must be familiar with the plan and receive any necessary specialized training.

## SECTION 17: MEDICATIONS & IMMUNIZATIONS

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### Medication Policy

Prescription medications must be provided to a staff member in the original container, clearly labeled with the child's full name, date of birth, prescribing physician, dosage, and instructions. Over-the-counter medications will not be administered without a written doctor's prescription. No medication will be given without a completed, signed Medication Authorization Form.

- All medications are stored in the Director's office and administered only by the Director or a Lead Teacher.
- Prescription medications are only given if a physician's note specifies beginning and end dates.
- Medications are administered at the Center only if they cannot be given at home (e.g., three-times-daily dosing requires a midday dose at the Center; twice-daily dosing does not).
- Parents are responsible for ensuring prescription medications are properly labeled and replaced before expiration.
- Staff and parents may not add vitamins or medications to a child's food, beverage, or thermos.

### Physicals & Immunization Records

Each child must have a current physical and immunization record on file. Physicals must be updated annually. Immunization records must be updated whenever a new immunization is received. Records may be faxed directly from the child's healthcare provider. No child will be enrolled without state- and federally mandated vaccinations. SC 4K participants are subject to additional health record requirements per program guidelines, including a signed parental health statement prior to admission.

### Sunscreen & Insect Repellent

From March through October, all families must supply labeled sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) for their child. A signed permission form must be on file before sunscreen is applied. Teachers apply sunscreen throughout the day during outdoor activities. Parents are encouraged to apply insect repellent to their child before arriving, as Center staff are not permitted to apply insect repellent.

### Tobacco Policy

Smoking, vaping, and the use of smokeless tobacco products are strictly prohibited on all Brighter Futures premises, including parking lots and outdoor play areas, and in all vehicles used for Center transportation. Parents who are smoking in personal vehicles must fully extinguish and dispose of cigarettes before entering the parking lot. Do not discard cigarette butts on Center property.

## SECTION 18: POSITIVE REDIRECTION & DISCIPLINE POLICY

### POLICY STATEMENT

Praise and positive reinforcement are the most effective methods of behavior management. When children receive positive, nonviolent, and understanding interactions from adults, they develop healthy self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. Brighter Futures uses only positive guidance and discipline techniques consistent with SC DSS licensing regulations, SC First Steps 4K requirements, and best practices in early childhood education.

The following table summarizes our approach to guidance and discipline:

WE DO	WE DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate to children using positive statements.</li> <li>• Communicate with children at their level.</li> <li>• Talk with children in a calm, quiet manner.</li> <li>• Explain unacceptable behavior clearly.</li> <li>• Give attention for positive behavior.</li> <li>• Praise and encourage children.</li> <li>• Reason with and set limits for children.</li> <li>• Apply rules consistently.</li> <li>• Model appropriate behavior.</li> <li>• Set up the classroom to prevent problems.</li> <li>• Provide alternatives and redirect to acceptable activities.</li> <li>• Give children opportunities to make choices and solve problems.</li> <li>• Help children talk through problems and think of solutions.</li> <li>• Listen to and respect children's needs, desires, and feelings.</li> <li>• Provide appropriate words to help solve conflicts.</li> <li>• Use storybooks and discussion to work through common conflicts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflict corporal punishment of any kind (spanking, hitting, shaking, biting, pinching, pushing, pulling, or slapping).</li> <li>• Use any strategy that hurts, shames, or belittles a child.</li> <li>• Use threats, intimidation, or force.</li> <li>• Use food as a form of reward or punishment.</li> <li>• Use or withhold physical activity as punishment.</li> <li>• Shame or punish a child for bathroom accidents.</li> <li>• Embarrass any child in front of others.</li> <li>• Compare children negatively.</li> <li>• Place children in a locked and/or dark room.</li> <li>• Leave any child unsupervised.</li> <li>• Allow discipline of a child by other children.</li> <li>• Criticize, make fun of, or belittle a child's parents, family, or ethnic group.</li> <li>• Use prone restraint (face-down physical restraint).</li> <li>• Deny participation in meals or snacks for behavioral reasons.</li> </ul>

Conferences will be scheduled with parents if significant disciplinary challenges arise. If a child's behavior consistently endangers the safety of others, the Director has the right — after meeting with parents and documenting behavior and interventions — to suspend or terminate childcare services for that child. For SC 4K students, extended suspension requires prior approval from SC First Steps.

## SECTION 19: GUIDANCE STRATEGIES & BITING POLICY

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### Guidance Strategies Overview

Every adult who cares for children has a responsibility to guide, correct, and socialize children toward appropriate behaviors. Positive guidance promotes children's self-control, teaches responsibility, and helps children make thoughtful choices. Brighter Futures staff use only positive guidance techniques. Staff regularly reflect on the following:

- Am I validating feelings?
- Am I asking open-ended questions?
- Am I encouraging problem solving?
- Am I respecting children's choices?
- Am I using praise and positive reinforcement?
- Am I talking with children — not at them?
- Am I circulating throughout the classroom?
- Am I at the child's eye level?

### Understanding Misbehavior

Children may misbehave because they want to test rules, experience different expectations between home and the Center, don't fully understand rules or are held to developmentally unrealistic expectations, are asserting independence, feel ill/bored/hungry/tired, lack prior experience, or have been inadvertently reinforced by adult attention. Understanding these reasons helps staff respond effectively.

### Preventing Misbehavior

Proactive strategies include setting clear and consistent rules, maintaining a safe environment, showing genuine interest in children's activities, encouraging self-control through meaningful choices, focusing on desired behavior, building positive self-images, giving clear one-at-a-time directions, saying 'yes' whenever possible, noticing and praising positive behavior, setting a good example, and helping children see how their actions affect others.

### Responding to Misbehavior

When misbehavior occurs, staff use the following strategies in sequence:

#### 1. Redirection

The most frequently used strategy. If a child is not following rules, calmly redirect their attention to another activity.

#### 2. Logical Consequences

Consequences are directly related to the behavior, helping the child understand the connection (e.g., standing on a chair may result in a fall and injury).

#### 3. Participate in the Solution

If a child damages something or causes distress, they help remedy the situation.

#### 4. Natural Consequences

Children may experience the natural results of their actions (used only when there is no risk to health or safety).

#### 5. 'Take a Break' or 'Cozy Corner'

When a child becomes overwhelmed or exhibits unsafe behavior, they are directed to a quiet area to calm down. After the child is calm, staff discuss the behavior that led to the break.

If these strategies do not resolve persistent behavior concerns:

- Staff report the behavior and attempted strategies to the Director.
- The Director observes the child and meets with the Lead Teacher to develop a behavior management plan.
- The plan is discussed with the parents and implemented.
- The Director, teachers, and parents evaluate the plan and adjust as needed.
- The Center may partner with Tri-County Therapy, PEAR, or other organizations for additional support.
- As a last resort, if a child's behavior becomes threatening to themselves or others, they may be removed from the classroom and potentially from the program temporarily.

#### Useful Phrases for Guidance

Instead of 'No' or 'Don't' — say 'Please stop,' 'That's not okay,' or 'That is not a choice.'

Instead of 'That's not nice' — say 'Please use gentle touches' or 'That hurts [name].'

Instead of 'No running' — say 'Please use your walking feet inside.'

Instead of 'Stop crying' — say 'Please use your words to tell me what is wrong.'

Instead of asking a question when it is not a choice — say 'You may help me pick up the blocks or help with the puzzles.'

Instead of 'I said yes' when a child says 'no' — say 'No is not a choice. I need you to...'

#### Biting Policy

Biting most commonly occurs between ages one and three and is an age-appropriate but unacceptable behavior in a group care setting. Children may bite due to teething, sensory exploration, cause and effect, imitation, crowding, frustration, stress, or communication deficits. Biting is not blamed on children, their parents, or their teachers.

#### Immediate Response

- The biting child is stopped and told firmly, 'Biting hurts.' Staff remain calm and do not show anger or frustration.
- The biting child is removed from the situation. Little attention is given to the biting child to avoid reinforcing the behavior.
- First aid is provided to the child who was bitten — washing with soap and water, applying a cold compress, and a bandage if needed.
- If the skin is broken, both parents are notified, and the biting child is sent home for the day.

### Identifying and Addressing Triggers

- The teacher examines the context and patterns of biting: Was the space too crowded? Too few toys? Too little to do or too much waiting?
- The teacher modifies the environment, routines, or activities as needed.
- The teacher works with the biting child to find appropriate conflict resolution strategies.
- The teacher identifies children who may be at risk of being bitten and takes preventive measures.
- The teacher, parent, and Director meet regularly to assess the action plan and measure outcomes.
- If biting continues, additional resources and a shadow plan may be implemented.

All biting incidents are documented on an Accident/Incident Report, signed by the teacher and parent. All information is confidential — names of children involved are not shared between families.

## SECTION 20: EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

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### Fire, Emergency & Lockdown Drills

Brighter Futures conducts monthly fire, emergency evacuation, and lockdown drills. The dates and times of drills are not announced in advance, as unannounced drills best assess the effectiveness of emergency plans. During any drill or actual emergency, parents may not sign children in or out until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building. Parents may wait with the child's class in the designated safe zone.

### Emergency Medical / Dental Procedure

Parents must complete and keep current an Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form, which authorizes the Center to seek emergency medical or dental care in the event of serious injury.

- If a child becomes ill or injured, the Lead Teacher or Director will attempt to contact parents using all available phone numbers.
- If parents cannot be reached, emergency contacts and authorized pick-up persons will be called.
- Ill or seriously injured children will remain under Director supervision until a parent arrives.

If immediate medical attention is required:

- The staff member witnessing the emergency stays with the child and directs another staff member to call 911.
- If EMS must transport the child, a staff member accompanies EMS with the child's physical records, immunization records, and Emergency Contact & Parental Consent Form.
- The Director contacts the parents immediately.

### Fire, Tornado, Bomb Threat & Other Evacuations

Fire regulations and tornado warning procedures are posted near all classroom exits. In the event of a fire, bomb threat, or other evacuation emergency, children and teachers immediately vacate the building and meet on the sidewalk northeast of the building. Children and teachers will take shelter at Senior Helpers (located next door) during emergencies requiring extended off-site shelter. In a tornado, each classroom has a designated internal shelter area. Parents will be contacted as soon as safely possible.

For the safety of all children, please do not attempt to pick up your child during an active evacuation. Once all children are accounted for, they will be released to their parents.

### Severe Winter Weather / Blizzard

The Director monitors weather conditions and local news throughout the day. If early closure or next-day cancellation is necessary, the Director and Lead Teachers will contact all families. Regular classroom activities continue until parents arrive.

## **Missing or Abducted Child**

In the event of a missing child, the Lead Teacher immediately searches the area while another staff member notifies the Director. If the child is not located within a reasonable time, the Director contacts police, DSS, and the child's parents. In the event of an abduction, the Lead Teacher immediately contacts the Director, police, and the child's parents.

## **Dangerous Intruder**

A dangerous adult is defined as anyone displaying threatening behavior, carrying a weapon, or appearing intoxicated. This also includes individuals prohibited by court order from contacting an enrolled child.

Upon identifying a dangerous intruder:

- Staff position themselves between children and the intruder.
- A staff member attempts to redirect the individual to the hallway while another contacts the Director.
- The Director uses the 'All Page' intercom to alert all staff.
- All staff and children return to classrooms, lock doors, and sit away from doors and windows.
- The Director contacts local police and monitors the individual until police arrive or the individual leaves.
- An 'All Clear' is issued by the Director before normal activities resume.

## **Power Failure**

Staff and children remain in the classroom during a power failure and continue activities as possible. If power cannot be restored within a reasonable time, the Center closes. DSS and parents are notified. Lead Teachers contact parents for immediate pick-up. Activities continue until families arrive.

## **Weapons on Center Property**

Brighter Futures will not permit the possession, display, or use of weapons by any person on Center premises, vehicles, or at Center activities. This policy does not apply to law enforcement, security officers, or military personnel on official business. Violations will be reported to law enforcement. Weapons include, but are not limited to, all knives, guns, firearms, fireworks, explosives, and simulated or toy weapons used in a threatening manner.

Disciplinary guidelines for weapons violations:

- 3–5 day suspension for possession of a weapon.
- 5–10 day suspension for display of a weapon.
- Suspension with recommendation for expulsion for threatening display or for causing or threatening bodily harm.

## SECTION 21: HANDLING, STORAGE & DISPOSAL OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

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Brighter Futures is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all children, staff, and visitors.

### Storage & Use of Hazardous Materials

- All toxic substances (chemicals, cleaning products, disinfectants, insecticides, gasoline products) must be stored in a locked cabinet out of children's reach.
- Toxic substances may not be used while children are present.
- Flammable materials must be stored away from heat and ignition sources, in an area inaccessible to children.
- All toxic and hazardous materials must be stored away from food and medication.
- Poisonous plants are not permitted in the Center.
- Chemicals used to control odors (mothballs, air fresheners, essential oil diffusers, toilet deodorizer blocks) are not permitted.

### Handling & Disposal of Biological Contaminants

- Staff must follow universal precautions when handling bodily fluids, including use of disposable gloves.
- Materials contaminated with bodily fluids must be placed in a sealed plastic bag and disposed of in a designated covered waste bin.
- Contaminated surfaces must be immediately cleaned and disinfected with an approved disinfectant.
- Soiled clothing must be placed in a sealed plastic bag and returned to the parent at pick-up.
- Staff must thoroughly wash hands after removing gloves following bodily fluid contact.

### Compliance & Monitoring

All staff must adhere to this policy at all times. The Director is responsible for ensuring compliance through regular monitoring. Violations result in corrective action including retraining and possible disciplinary measures. This policy is reviewed annually.

## SECTION 22: ACCESS POLICY & AFFIDAVIT POLICY

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### Access Policy

Any person on Center premises who is not an owner, staff member, substitute, subcontracted staff, or background-cleared volunteer shall not have unrestricted access to children for whom they are not the parent, guardian, or custodian. Such persons must be under direct supervision of a paid staff member at all times and may not assume childcare responsibilities.

Center staff will approach any individual on the property whose purpose is unknown and will contact the Director for approval. If a situation becomes dangerous, the Dangerous Intruder procedure will be activated. Non-agency visitors (maintenance, repair personnel, etc.) will be monitored by a paid staff member and may not interact with children.

Per SC law and Center policy, any sex offender required to register with the South Carolina Sex Offender Registry who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer at the Center, and shall not be present on Center property at any time, regardless of their relationship to an enrolled child.

### Affidavit Policy

Due to the nature of the caregiver-child relationship, Brighter Futures Center staff members will not provide written statements, affidavits, or professional endorsements to families for use in legal proceedings. The Center's focus remains on providing the best possible care for children during what may be a difficult time at home.

## SECTION 23: QUESTIONS, CONCERNS & POLICY CHANGES

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### Resolving Questions & Concerns

If you have a question or concern, please take the following steps:

1. Address the concern first with the teacher most directly involved.
2. If unresolved, bring the concern to the Director: Dr. Sabrina Marshall (smarshall@bfcddc.com).
3. The Director is available to assist parents and staff in resolving all concerns.

The Director is available to assist parents and staff in resolving concerns. Concerns related to SC DSS licensing may also be directed to the SC DSS Child Care Licensing Regional Office serving Dorchester County.

### SC DSS Licensing Complaints

Parents who have concerns about the Center's compliance with SC DSS licensing standards may contact:

SC Child Care Licensing | 1535 Confederate Ave., Columbia, SC 29201 | (803) 898-2570

Low Country Regional Licensing Office: contact information available at [schildcare.org](http://schildcare.org).

### CACFP Concerns

Questions or concerns regarding the CACFP program or meal services may be directed to:

SC DSS Child and Adult Care Food Program | (888) 834-8096 | (803) 898-0959

### Policy Changes

The Center reserves the right to change any policy at its sole discretion through written communication with families. Email is the Center's primary form of communication. Parents are responsible for ensuring the Center has a current, valid email address on file at all times. Policy changes become effective upon written notice to families.

## SECTION 24: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT — PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN

### REQUIRED — ALL PAGES MUST BE RETURNED TO THE DIRECTOR

Please sign and return this page to the Director. You are welcome to keep the remainder of this handbook for your records. A printed copy is available upon request.

I/We acknowledge that I/We have received, read, and understand the Brighter Futures Child Development Center Parent Handbook (Updated February 2025). I/We understand that this handbook outlines the policies and procedures of the Center as required by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SC DSS), South Carolina 4K Program (First Steps/CERDEP), and the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

I/We understand that Brighter Futures reserves the right to update policies and that I/We will be notified in writing of material changes. I/We agree to comply with all policies contained herein as a condition of my/our child's enrollment.

Parent / Guardian Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Second Parent / Guardian Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom / Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Director Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_ Staff initials: \_\_\_\_\_ Enrollment file updated: YES / NO 4K eligibility verified: YES / NO / N/A CACFP income form on file: YES / NO / N/A