Welcome to Oak Valley Kids!
A Quality Child Care in the East Valley Oaks Community

Philosophy and Goals

My philosophy of childcare very simple.  Children will be happy and engaged when they feel safe and valued. They thrive in a warm, inviting environment with clear, consistent expectations.

Learning Time and Activities

Large group time is kept to a minimum with the bulk of our learning and activities in smaller, more personal settings geared to an individual child or several children who are on similar developmental levels.  This schedule allows children free time to pursue individual interest and self-selected activities.  Goals are different for each child or small group depending on development and ability.
A large component of our learning is done through self-paced activities and free play. The day has large, unstructured blocks where children can freely choose the activities they wish to explore without the pressure of "Clean up!  It's time for the next activity!"  Many a preschool Picasso has had a masterpiece cut short with those words!
This is a wonderful time in every child's life when they live to explore and try new things.  I want to expose the children to new ideas and experiences.  I would love for them to see and hear new things: art, music, people, food, dance, sciences, anything from the world around us that sparks their interest.

*Children will be encouraged to enjoy process-- making the block tower, drawing the picture, reading the books. Children will be encouraged to learn by doing-- experiment, build, explore, take apart.  Children will be encouraged to think-- set a goal, come up with a plan, carry out the plan and see what happens next.  Children will be encouraged to try- be willing to fail, be strong enough to try again, be proud of success. Children will be encouraged to play-- be imaginative, creative, and spontaneous.*
Each and every Oak Valley Kid is unique and special. We celebrate those differences by giving the children ample time to explore their own interests with a variety of mediums, whether that is in outdoor play, technology-based activities, art, manipulatives and construction, dramatic play or whatever else may interest him or her.
We want them to not just observe, but do.  Self-esteem and confidence are critical elements of active learners. Our goal is to help nurture self-assured and inquisitive children.  I strive to inspire active participants with lots of questions for me and you, their parents.

Ages

For all types care, Oak Valley Kids accepts newborns at 4 weeks of age up to children 5 years of age.  A child already in care with Oak Valley Kids may remain until he or she begins Kindergarten.  Children of any age who were previously enrolled with OVK, are welcome to return for drop-in days or as-needed care.

Hours

For standard, Monday-Friday care, Oak Valley Kids has two schedules for care- 7:00AM-5:00PM. Half day attendance is 7:15-12:45PM.  We will be available to answer the day care phone line from 6:00AM-9:00PM (or later, if OVK is open for evening care).  However, parents may text at any time and I will try to answer as quickly as possible.
Children may not be dropped off for care after 10:00AM.  Please schedule appointments accordingly.

Registration & Enrollment
A non-refundable payment of a $25 per child initial registration fee and one week's tuition are due at signing for Full-Time or Part-Time care.  This holds an open space for three weeks. After the three-week period, attendance must begin or the space and the deposit are forfeited. Other arrangements may be made for families that have an uncertain time frame such as those that are expecting, adopting or relocating to the area. These particulars are negotiated on an individual basis depending on the family needs and our ability to meet those needs.
Tuition for the first month or week (depending on payment option) is due on or before the first day of attendance.  Families beginning care mid-month will pay the weekly rate until the first full month begins, then they may opt for the monthly plan.
All enrollment and medical forms must be completed and returned to Oak Valley Kids before attendance begins.  Care cannot, under any circumstances, begin until all forms have been submitted.

Forms and Documents

Two days before beginning any type of care, the following forms and documents must be entirely completed and on file with Oak Valley Kids:

\* Oak Valley Kids Enrollment Agreement signed and dated by parent
\* Permission to Share Information signed and dated by parent
\* Emergency Form completed, signed and dated by parent and physician
\* Heath Inventory completed, signed and dated by parent and physician
\* “Get to Know Me” completed, signed and dated by parent
\* Crib Permission (for children 4wks-2.5 years), signed and dated
\*Topical Treatment Permission (for children who require diaper creams, sunblock and/or lip balm), signed and dated

Let me know at the time of enrollment if your family has custodial and/or visitation issues.  I need to have appropriate court paperwork on file.

Children are required to keep up with the Immunization Schedule mandated by the Maryland Department of Education.

Full-Time Care (4-5 days)

Every Full-Time child begins with a 2-week trial period.  At any time during this period, either party can terminate with 48 hour’s notice.  Any unused trial period tuition will be fully refunded within 45 business dates.

After this period is over, four week’s notice is required for termination of services by the family.  The fees paid at enrollment (minus the initial registration fee) will be applied to the final week.  After this trial period, fees will not be pro-rated, nor will the deposit be returned, for families that end care with less than four week’s notice.
Contracts are for your child's space in the Oak Valley Kids program, not the hours used.  Use it as little or as much as you need.

Part-Time Care (part day and/or 2-3 days)

Part-Time care is available on a limited basis and requires the same enrollment process and fees as Full-Time care.  The same two-week trial period and termination of care policies apply to Part-Time care.

Drop-In Care

Drop-In care is available for previously enrolled or currently enrolled Part-Time Oak Valley Kids or their siblings.

Medical Insurance

All children must have adequate medical insurance through their parent or guardian. We do not provide any medical insurance coverage or reimbursement for medical costs in case of illness or injury suffered while the child is in attendance. By enrolling their child, parents acknowledge and agree that, should their child become ill or suffer injury requiring medical treatment while in the custody of Oak Valley Kids, that their child will be covered by their own adequate medical insurance policy and any medical insurance claims arising from illness or injury suffered while in the custody of Oak Valley Kids will be not be reimbursed.

Special Needs

Oak Valley Kids accepts children of all abilities.  Children with an IEP or IFSP should include it with their Health Inventory at enrollment.  We do not and will not discriminate.  Consultations will be held with parents and other specialists to investigate how OVK can meet the child(ren)'s needs.

Open Door Policy and Communication

Our door is always opened for parents!!  Well, the door will not actually be open and unlocked: the children’s safety is just too important.  Just knock and parents will be welcomed in!
If you need to contact me, we are available by phone, text or e-mail.  At times, we may be too busy with the children to immediately answer so, please, leave a message.  We will get back to you as soon as possible.  If we need to speak in person or have a more in depth conversation, please call and set aside some time before or after operating hours.  We want to make sure everyone gets the attention they need and deserve.  We cannot give you our full attention if we are with the children and the children require undivided attention.

Assessments and Conferences

MSDE, the Maryland State Department of Education, has provided Oak Valley Kids with the [ASQ-3, the Ages & Stages Questionnaires](http://agesandstages.com/products-services/asq3/).  This is an easy to use assessment, done by the parents, which is a starting point for conversations about how their child is progressing through milestones.  The assessment is done twice a year, January and June.  If, after the assessment, parents have questions or concerns about the scoring, we come up with a convenient conference time for everyone!

Curriculum

Oak Valley Kids is guided by the philosophy of [Emergent Curriculum](http://www.sentinelsource.com/parent_express/little_kids/emergent-curriculum-in-a-preschool-setting/article_b12616d5-a4a6-5e35-91b7-6cbd9bbd9256.html).  The day is not rigidly scheduled or planned.  The thoughts, interests and questions the children pose are what leads our learning.  Investigating and discovering take us from the table to the floor to the computer for more research and back out doors to put a theory to the test.  In all of this we are thinking critically, being physically active, indoors & out, and beginning to explore concepts like letters, colors, numbers... gathering the information we need for our journey of discovery for that day because tomorrow may lead us on an entirely different journey. We use several commercially available curriculums to meet te changing needs and likes of the children enrolled.

Summer Care for Educators

During the Summer months, 50% tuition will maintain a the child's space for the coming school year.  Children are encouraged to attend for 1-2 days each week to maintain consistency. More days, if the family would like or need more, may be available at $40/day.

Late Pick-Up Fees

If a child is still in the day care after 5:03PM, families will be charged a $25.00 per child late fee. At 5:15PM, a $4.00 per minute fee will be applied. At 5:45, a $100 per child fee will be applied. The $4.00/minute fees will continue to accrue until the chlld(ren) are picked up. No child may not return to the day care until this fee is paid in full.  After 3 late pick-ups, care may be terminated.
With timely notice and OVK approval, a later end time or an early start time can be extended at $10.00 per hour for one child and $4.00 per hour for each additional child.

\*\*If extenuating circumstances warrant a reduced or waived fee, Oak Valley Kids may waive or adjust the Late Pick-Up fee.  This is solely at my discretion.

Fees & Payment

Fees are due on the 25th of the previous month for monthly pay families and on Friday before care begins for weekly pay families.  A late payment fee of $40.00 a day will be added the day after fees are due.
Families pay for their space in the childcare, not the hours they have used or intend to use.
There will be no refunds or adjustments made for days missed due to illness, holidays, or days off. A place has been reserved for each child that cannot be filled on a short-term basis.

Payment Options

Payment may be made electronically or by check, money order or in cash.

Receipts and Statements

Parents can request a year-end total of childcare fees paid in the previous calendar year along with Tax ID information.  Monthly or weekly receipts can be requested, as needed.

Referrals

Referrals are the highest compliment a childcare provider can receive.  After a referral has completed a month of care, the referring family will receive a $50.00 credit on the next invoice.

End of Care or Termination

Four week written notice is necessary if, for any reason, a family wishes to terminate care.  This time allows me to fill you vacated spot with another child.  The deposit paid at enrollment (minus the registration fee) will be applied to the final weeks.  Final billing is not prorated for families leaving without a full four weeks’ notice.  Individual situations and circumstances may allow me to be flexible.

Oak Valley Kids reserves the right to terminate for, but not limited to, the following reasons:

\* Failure to pay
\* Lack of compliance with policy
\* Lack of parental or guardian cooperation
\* Failure of child to adjust to the daycare after a reasonable period of time
\* Verbal or physical abuse of any person or property by a child or anyone in the daycare due to the child’s attendance or enrollment
\* My inability to meet the child’s needs
\* Serious illness of provider or provider’s family member(s)
\* False information given by parent or guardian either verbally or in writing
\*Changes in Oak Valley Kids policies or programming

 I will give a minimum one-week written notice of termination. Full tuition is due whether or not your child is in attendance. I reserve the right to give written notice of immediate termination when there are extreme circumstances that affect the wellbeing of staff, members of the household or other children in the day care.
If there is an outstanding balance at the end of a child's time in care, we will do everything possible to settle the dispute amicably and collect all fees owed to Oak Valley Kids. In cases of non-payment, legal actions will take place and the parents will pay any and all legal fees incurred.

Holidays, Sick Days & Vacations

Oak Valley Kids close for the following paid holidays days:

Good Friday and Easter Monday
Memorial Day
Fourth of July
1:00PM Wednesday before Thanksgiving , Thanksgiving Day & the following Friday
HCPS Winter Break
All Federal, State and/or County Primary and General Election Days

See your most current contract for exact dates

We reserve the right to close fore five paid floating days. Families will receive a minimum of 30 days notice as well as regular and multiple reminders before the scheduled dates. Back up care will be required on these dates and no care will be available through the daycare.
In the unusual circumstance that care unavailable due to an emergency or illness in the home, we will give you as much advance warning as possible. After using floating days, time for unexpected closings due to family's illness or emergency will be deducted from the next fees due.

Per calendar year, each family will have one week’s worth of unpaid vacation days (per child) to apply to use as needed.  Four weeks’ notice is needed to apply vacation day and children may not attend care on the days where the credit is applied. Families using the modified summer enrollment do not qualify for Vacation Days.

Severe Weather and Late Openings

INCLEMENT WEATHER
The following outlines policies and procedures in the event of inclement weather.
• In the event Harford County Government is closed, daycare is closed.
• In the event of a MD State of Emergency, daycare is closed.
• In the event Harford County Government is on liberal leave or delayed and/or HCPS is delayed, daycare will also delay opening until 8:30 a.m. This allows time for us to shovel and treat the sidewalk and path into the daycare to ensure it is safe. It also allows time to
assess the weather conditions and communicate any further delay or closure.
• In the event of delay, please notify us of your estimated arrival time or absence so we will be prepared for our daily activities.
• While it is likely that we will send a group text notifying everyone of delay or closure as soon as possible, it is your responsibility to monitor local closings and delays.
• In the event inclement weather hits during the day when your child has arrived, it is possible Oak Valley Kids will close early.
• Safety is paramount. We will clear and salt walkways as best we can; however, please use extra care when walking into daycare on inclement weather days.
• While these policies are in place to protect everyone in our care, we will always use best judgment and reserve the right to delay or close despite the decision of local agencies. In addition, we reserve the right to use our best judgment and open on time despite the decision of local agencies. It is best to follow the local agency decision first and wait for a group text to confirm or change that decision.
• Please note that refund/payment credit is not given for inclement weather days or power outage closure/delays.

If there is no power, water and/or landline phone service in the day care at 6:15 AM, the day care cannot not open, per state regulations.  If you are at all unsure, call the 443.616.7921.  If service resumes by 10:00 AM, I will open late.  If there is still no service by then, the day care will be closed for the day.
If we lose landline phone, water and/or power during the day, we must immediately notify families.  If service does not resume in a half hour, again, we will have to close for the remainder of the day per state regulations.  Fees will still apply for these closures due to “Acts of God” and beyond our control.

Back-Up Care

Back-Up Care is solely the responsibility of the parent. Unavoidable emergencies and illness do come up, so to ensure care for your child, we strongly suggest you have a back-up caregiver. This person should be someone who is able to care for your child on a short notice or if your child is ill.  If you are having difficulty finding back-up care, check the Family Daycare Association of Harford County website, [www.fdahc.com](http://www.fdahc.com/) .  These are local, licensed family care providers and most provide drop-in care.

Late Arrival, Early Pick-Ups or Missed Days

If your child will be late (arriving after 9:00 AM) or will not be in for the day, please notify the day care before 8:30 AM.  If a child is ill, or for any other reason the child will not be here for the day, please call in the morning. If a child needs to leave early, please let me know at drop off.  Children may not arrive after 10:00AM.  Please be aware and schedule appointments accordingly.

If children are to be picked up early, please let me know ahead of time.  We will make sure that the child is ready with minimal disruption to the rest of the group, particularly from 12:30PM-2:30PM, while the children are napping.

Illness

On occasion, a little one is simply too sick to participate in our daily activities.  All children need to be able to participate fully in the activities of the day.  A child will be asked to remain home when he or she shows signs of being unwell.  Signs and symptoms may be, but are not limited to:

\* Fever of 99 degrees under the arm or 100 degrees orally, in the ear or temporal scan
\* A single episode of vomiting other than typical infant spit-up
\* Two consecutive loose stools at diapering or toileting or a single bowel movement that is extremely uncharacteristic for the child
\* Excessive nasal discharge that is cloudy or discolored
\* Persistent complaints of pain
\* Suspicious or undiagnosed rash, other than typical diaper rash
\* Redness or eye discharge consistent with conjunctivitis
\* Signs of head lice
\* Uncharacteristic sleepiness or lethargy
\* Unusual loss of appetite

If your child exhibits any of these symptoms at home, please do not bring them into the day care until they have been a day without symptoms, without medication.   On arrival, we will note if your child is exhibiting any of the signs or symptoms listed above.  If one or more are present at that time, your child will not be admitted to care.  If your child is sent home from care due to illness, he or she must remain home the next full day.  (For example, if your child has a fever while in care on Monday, she may return fever free on Wednesday.) When parents are called to pick up a sick child, the child must be picked up within 90 minutes of notification.
With a temperature (oral equivalent) of 100° or higher, the child must stay home until the temperature has returned normal (without medication) for 24 hours. If a child is sent home with a fever, he/she must also stay home for the next full day. This, hopefully, guarantees that they have been fever free for 24 hours. If the temperature is due to a non-contagious condition such as teething or ear infection, we must have a note from the child's physician stating that is the case. We will not administer fever-reducing medication so that a child can remain in care.
Please DO NOT bring a sick child in to Oak Valley Kids for care.  We understand the hectic lifestyle and constraints that work schedules create.  However, our goal is to provide a safe environment and engaging experience for all children.  A sick child cannot actively participate and he or she could potentially make me and/or the other children ill.
If there are extenuating circumstances or other non-contagious reasons that the child exhibited any of the listed symptoms (or any other signs of illness), they may return to the day care with a release from their pediatrician signed and dated within the previous 3 days with specific explanations outlining why these symptoms were present in a well child and why he or she should be readmitted to care.  These cases will be handled on an individual and confidential basis and we and we are the final judge on whether or not the child can return to care, even when a doctor’s note is present.

If staff or a household member contract a serious contagious illness, day care parents will be notified and the day care may close so as not to infect the day care children.  Were this type of closure occur, the appropriate credits will be applied to the next invoice.

Serious Injury

In the event of a serious personal injury to a child, we will attempt to notify the parents immediately.  If the parent is unavailable, the physician named on the enrollment forms will be contacted and EMS will be called to transport the child to the nearest medical facility.
Were a child to need EMS transportation, his or her complete personal file will travel with the child in the ambulance.  Please make sure that in kept up to date on any changes in contact information or medical condition.

Medication

At no time can medications of any kind remain in a child’s bag or diaper bag.  All medication must be given directly to us to be stored in a safe place.

Nonprescription Medication

Pain is a sign that a child needs attention.  MSDE Office of Child Care requires that a medical professional (doctor, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, or any other authorized prescriber) sign off on any request to administer medication.  A parent request enough is not approved authorization. Nonprescription medication can only be administered with written instructions from a doctor.

Prescription Medication

All prescription medications (oral or topical) must be brought to Oak Valley Kids in the original container and/or packaging with the pharmacy label and will be administered to the exact specifications outlined on the label.  All prescription medications must be accompanied by droppers or dosing spoons that are appropriate for your child’s age and development.
If your child requires prescription emergency treatments (epi-pens or inhalers, for example), please make sure that we have all medications in original pharmacy packaging with original pharmacy labels. If the prescriptions are to be stored in the day care, please monitor the expiration dates on your child's medication.  In the event that a child would require injectable, inhaled or other specialty medications, please discuss the particulars individually.

Diapers and Essentials

Oak Valley Kids provides TARGET disposable diapers, pull-ups and Huggies wipes for all children.  For infants under 12 months, we supply Gerber Oatmeal Cereal and TARGET's milk-based formula with iron.  Lots of comparisons and research went into deciding which products to use so we could provide these items AND keep parent costs down.  If parents choose to use an alternative for any of these items, an adequate amount must be provided for OVK's use. There are no discounts for supplying supplemental or alternative foods and supplies.

Shoes and Clothing

For outdoor play, sneakers or other closed to shoes are required.  Children must be able to safely run, jump, climb and play.  We ask that one extra pair of water resistant shoes or boots remain in the day care for daily use during wet weather.  I also recommend purchasing a set of wet weather gear from Rainy Dayz of Oregon (slip over coat and pullover pants in a size that will comfortably cover a winter coat and pants from [www.rainydayzoforegon.com](http://www.rainydayzoforegon.com)) or a Tuffo Muddy Buddy available on www.amazon.com
Each child should come dressed for play in clothing that can be dirtied without a problem.  Being a child is messy, dirty work and laundry will probably come home daily. Toileting maybe a challenge, lunch could land in your lap or the paint cup could get knocked over while creating a masterpiece. For all of these reasons and the myriad of accidents I can’t predict, try to bring in at least two sets (including socks and underwear!) of seasonally appropriate clothing.  All clothing should be labeled with the child's name to guarantee property is returned to the correct family.
Children of all ages (including infants!!) should be dressed appropriately for the weather.   I will have as much outdoors time as possible.  Make sure children will be comfortable throughout the day.  Parents should leave a labeled sweaters or sweatshirts for children.
Each child needs a standard mop bucket for keeping belongings together in their cubby.

Infant Clothing

Infants will need at least three sets of weather appropriate clothing and gear for outdoor time.  Please update sizes as your child grows!

Drop off & Pick Up Time

Children need to feel safe and secure.  This will be greatly influenced by you.  Drop off a new or hesitant child confidently.  Show him or her that you know they are safe and will have a great day here at Oak Valley Kids.  Stay and say goodbye for a moment or two and leave showing that same confidence. Don't dawdle at drop off and leave a child with the hopeful expectation that you are remaining for the day. Say goodbye once. Never sneak out when your child is distracted. They need the closure of saying “Good-bye.”  I will stay with your child and help them through the adjustment time after you have left.  If you feel your child will need a longer time to adjust and become familiar with the child care, please schedule one or two times BEFORE the first day of care to come in and visit for a playdate.
Pick up your child with that same confidence.  Many children are so relieved to see family that they are overwhelmed and cry.  This is normal, yet disconcerting to parents.  Ask what they did.  Ask to see a favorite toy or new project.  Be active, interested and involved in their activities.

Please turn off your cell phone before you enter the childcare.  The children will need your full attention during drop off and pick up and taking calls will only distract you.

I am always available to meet with parents.  However, the beginning and end of the day are hectic with children coming and going.  If you feel a conference is warranted, please call and we can schedule a time with few distractions and minimal interactions.

Children should not be picked up between the hours of 12:30PM and 2:30PM. Quiet time pick-ups need to be kept to a minimum.  If your child needs to leave during this time, advance notice is required so that we can prepare the child for a quick pick-up that will minimize disturbances for the other resting children.

Field Trips and Visitors

Field trips pose more risks than we are willing to take with preschool-age children.  There are too many uncontrollable variables and we simply cannot guarantee their absolute safety.  If families participate, we will schedule family trips where Oak Valley Kids bring an adult family member and siblings and we all attend an event or trip with the family providing their own transportation.
To keep in line with the goal of experiential learning and hands-on activities, we will have a variety of in-house events and visitors to reinforce our themes and bring to life the concepts we are learning about in day care.  This may include Library Story Time, Animal & Insect Displays, Visiting Artists and Musicians.  We want the children to openly participate with our visitors and feel free to ask questions and engage in conversation with these new people.  They will feel most comfortable doing this in their own environment where they know they are safe and valued.
Many of these programs, although worthwhile, are extremely costly.  On rare occasions, w will require a programming fee to defray the cost of some visitor fees.

Television, Computers and the Internet

If used judiciously and sparingly, TV, computers and the Internet can bring a wonderful component to learning. TV programs, VHS tapes and DVD’s will add to and enhance themes and concepts we are exploring in the childcare. Except for special occasions or events, Passive Television Viewing (described by MSDE as non-interactive television, videos, and streaming media) will not be allowed at Oak Valley Kids.

Well-chosen computer software and programs reinforces skills and themes in a self-directed manner.  All programs and software will be prescreened.  Safeguards and filters will be in place on any computer in the childcare.  Children will always be supervised on the computer.

Physical Fitness & Activity

Oak Valley Kids encourages all children to be active to the best of their abilities and comfort.  From the tiniest of infants to the growing preschooler, children will be given every opportunity of move their bodies and be active, but we will not push a child.  They will be free to move or not move, to run or be as physically quiet as he or she chooses.

Meals

If your child has any documented or suspected food allergies, let us know at enrollment.  The menu is flexible enough that it can accommodate other changes.  If your child has specific dietary needs (vegetarian, vegan, nondairy, Kosher, Halal, gluten free, etc), please let me know at enrollment and we will see what can be realistically adjusted in our menus.  However, we cannot place an undue burden on meal preparation and necessary substitutions may need to be brought from home. Please do not bring any outside food into the childcare without first discussing it with me.
Meals times are not flexible; the children’s bodies and daily routines depend on these regular events.  If your schedule conflicts with the designated meal times, please make sure your child is adequately fed before coming to day care. Do not bring outside food in to serve to your child in the day care.  Programming and activity schedule do not allow us to step away and serve another meal. It is inappropriate for one child to be set aside eating while the rest of the group is engaged in daily activities.
Oak Valley Kids supplies whole milk for children 1-2 years old and skim cow's milk for at meals for children 2 years and older.  100% apple and orange juice are occasionally available for breakfast and afternoon snack.  Soy milk is available by request.

Infants

All infants are fed on demand.  If a feeding schedule is used, we will adhere to it as much as possible.  However, infants will be fed if they are hungry, regardless of timing or schedules.  Bottles will never be propped up for an infant to feed.  All babies will be held while bottle-feeding until they can competently and consistently hold the bottle on their own.  We have a freezer in the day care where we can store expressed, frozen breast milk for breastfed infants.  Please make sure there is 16-24 ounces of reserve.  We provide Target’s Up & Up brand Iron fortified milk based formula.  We also provide all foods for growing infants!!    As they develop, mill the foods served to the preschoolers for the infants and/or supply prepared purees.  Once an infant or toddler begins table food, he or she will be able to eat the meals served to the rest of the children.

Exclusively breastfed children are very welcome at Oak Valley Kids!  Please make sure that OVK has at least 16-24 ounces of frozen breastmilk in reserve.  We cannot and will not supplement with OVK supplied formula.

Preschoolers

We serve two meals and two snacks a day.  All meals & snacks meet, but typically exceed, the USDA dietary guidelines set forth in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.  Children will be expected to try the prepared meals.  They will not go hungry if they refuse the meal, but they will be expected to sit with the group and then they will be served a quick alternative.  (Many children will eat the offered meal when others are eating.)

Cups and Bottles

Please provide a water bottle that closes to cover the straw/spout for your child.  Your child must be able to open the bottle independently. This way, water is always available.

Infants need at least three bottles in the style and brand your child prefers.  Please label the bottle and the rim.  Bottles may also stay in the day care where they will be washed and held for your child.

Candy

Candy and gum are not allowed in the day care.  They pose a choking hazard and are not part of the nutritional program we present.

Naps

 All children will be given ample opportunities to rest.  Older children will have a designated rest time during the afternoon.  If a preschool age child is tired enough to show signs of sleepiness or ask for rest outside of nap time, regardless of the programming or time of day, a nap will be offered and the parent will be notified.

Infants will sleep whenever they want.  All infants are placed on their back to sleep in accordance with best practices to reduce the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).  When a child can competently roll from front to back and back to front, they will be put to sleep on their backs and not moved.  Infants who fall asleep in a chair, swing or other type seat will be left until they are deeply asleep, then he or she will be moved to a crib unless a pediatrician or physician has directed me to keep the child elevated to sleep.
Each child under 2 will have his or her own playpen or cot (as appropriate) for napping.  Once a child is 12 months, parents and I will discuss when we, together, feel that the child is able to transfer to a cot.  I will encourage them to nap on a cot and on schedule with the older children, but they will still be able to maintain a fairly flexible sleeping schedule.
Preschoolers will have rest time from approximately 1:00 until 3:00.  I supply the cot and bedding.  I do not insist that children sleep but they must respect others.  Quiet is mandatory.  Books and other quiet activities are acceptable, but at no time can they disturb other children. A small soft toy and or a cot sized blanket may be brought from home and kept for rest time only.

Diapering and Toilet Training

Infants and Toddlers

We welcome cloth-diapered children!  Children need to use Velcro or snap closure diaper covers—diaper pins are not allowed.  Parents must provide an adequately sized waterproof wet bag for dirty diapers and it must leave daily and return empty and laundered every day.  They will need a more than adequate supply of diapers and diaper covers.  If we get to two clean diapers and/or one clean cover, we will call to let the parents know that disposable diapers may be used at the next change and the diaper reserve fee of $2.00 per diaper will be charged.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

There is no timetable on toilet training.  If the child is ready and shows interest, we will do my best to mimic the approach that has been successfully used at home.  I can Charts, stickers or any other types of incentive you would like to bring in to the day care to make toilet training consistent with the approach used at home.
We are comfortable with pull-up style disposable training pants or cloth trainers.   Please make sure there is an ample supply of clothing and training pants in whichever style you choose.  Families that use cloth trainers need to follow the same guidelines as those who use cloth diapers.  The family must have a waterproof wet bag for wet or soiled clothing.  The bag must go home every day and return the next day clean and laundered.

Holidays and Celebrations

Oak Valley Kids does not follow, teach or subscribe to any religious practices or curriculum.  However, we are happy to share a variety of family and cultural celebrations with the children!  Let us know in advance and we would absolutely love to have families host an activity or snack that shares your traditions.
That being said, there are holiday themes and activities that celebrate seasonal milestones.  For example, we’ll decorate Easter Eggs and Christmas Trees.  We have have Halloween treats.  We'll explore the budding flowers, changing leaves and the falling snow.  There will possibly be mention of the Easter Bunny in Spring, Black Cats at Halloween or Santa Claus at Christmastime.  This will be limited to how these characters play into the seasonal changes and not the underpinnings of the associated religious holidays.
If a family chooses to celebrate a birthday here at the day care, please feel free!  (But please be aware of any potential allergies!)

Hitting or Biting

Infants, toddlers and preschoolers often use their bodies, particularly their hands, feet and mouths, to communicate extreme emotions.  A preschooler who is excited by a suspenseful story may smack his seatmate repeatedly on the back to get his attention.  An uncomfortable infant will squirm and scream to get a diaper change.  A toddler who is feeling tense and closed in may bite the person next to her.  Rarely is there any malice or ill intent.
These are natural, yet highly undesirable reactions.  We do all we can to help children learn positive ways to express these feelings.  Please remember that this is a learning process for all of the children.   There will be times when the children struggle to act without screaming, hitting or biting.  We do everything we can to prevent children from hitting or being hit, biting or being bitten.  We will not always be successful.
The child who lashes out will be immediately removed from the situation while we attend to the injured child.  Once the injured child is helped and settled, the other child will be addressed in an age appropriate manner.

Behavior Management

*We may not do anything that will hurt ourselves, our friends or things in the day care.*

This is our motto and it sums up the behavior expected of everyone: children, caregivers and parents included.   Free play, outside play, circle time; any time can be governed by this one simple rule.  We believe that it means we consider others bodies and feelings when we act.  We won’t do anything that would injure ourselves or anyone else.  We apologize when someone or their feelings are hurt.  We clean up the messes we make.  We will not place ourselves in danger.  We replace materials or toys that are damaged with intent.  These ideals are reinforced over and over in a variety of settings and scenarios, each in an age and developmentally appropriate manner. Children need opportunities to learn to accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions. We use positive re-enforcers that promote self-esteem, encourage self-control and self-direction.  Children help make decisions for themselves and for the group by agreeing what is appropriate in our child care environment. We expect parents to reinforce our day care rules and remind their children to abide by these rules while at the day care, inside or out.
Please know that good discipline is not a “one size fits all” practice and every child is different.  What one child responds to may not work for another one.  Each child develops at a different rate and what may be appropriate for one may be too harsh or too vague for another child of the same age.  Limits and rules will be consistent but tactics and strategies may vary a bit among the children. We will expect the same appropriate behavior from all children, but the methods of achieving good discipline or directing behavior may differ slightly from child to child. Oak Valley Kids respects and treasures the differences in all children.
use a variety of methods to bring out the best behavior in all children.  First and foremost, children need to feel safe and have consistent limits.  Free Play and an opportunity to choose your own activities are the mainstay of the OVK philosophy.  If the children have problems with maintaining appropriate behavior in this environment, I will employ age appropriate strategies to reduce undesirable behaviors and reinforce acceptable behavior. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, please feel free to talk to me!

\*\*\*Never at ANY TIME is discipline connected with rest, food, or toilet training.\*\*\*

Extreme Behaviors

Occasionally a child’s struggles with behavior go beyond what we can effectively manage within the group.  Parents may be individually called on to assist in reinforcing what is expected while in care.  We will do everything we possibly can to help the struggling child without disrupting overall care of the group.  Together, we can try to find a solution that will benefit your child and the group.
If a child’s behavior begins to affect the quality of care all children receive, the family may be asked to find another care provider.  If this unfortunate situation arises, we will be more than happy to furnish copies of any and all files necessary for enrollment in a more appropriate program.
We will usually allow as much time as realistically possible so that the family has time to secure another source of care.  If a child displays overly aggressive or destructive behavior, parents will be asked to pick up the child immediately and care will be terminate at that time.  In this situation, we cannot and will not refund any fees paid to Oak Valley Kids.

Child Welfare and Well-Being

Day Care Emergencies

We practice Fire Drills monthly.  We also practice "shelter in place" drills.  Were a true emergency to occur, all parents will be contacted as quickly as possible with all relevant information.

Release of Child

We will only release children to parents or, if notified, another adult from the child’s Emergency Form. If an alternate person from the emergency card is picking up your child, they must present a government issued photo ID card.  However, I cannot refuse to release a child to either a parent or legal guardian without the appropriate court documentation in the child’s file.

In the extreme circumstance that a child is still in care two hours after the closing time and there has been no contact from the parent, Child Protective Services will be notified.

If a parent or emergency contact arrives for pick-up and appears to be in any way impaired, possibly from the recent use of drugs or alcohol, we will encourage the parent to allow an emergency contact to pick the child.  If an impaired parent or emergency contact does leave Oak Valley Kids and attempt to drive, with or without a child, we to notify the proper authorities as soon as the child leaves.

Discipline, Neglect and Abuse

We understand that different families employ a variety of parenting techniques and discipline strategies.  If you feel the need to correct your child’s behavior, we strongly suggest that parents use tactics that are consistent with good parenting and discipline similar to the philosophy of Oak Valley Kids.  Any forms of discipline that appears questionable would compel us, as mandated reporters, to notify the proper authorities.
Maryland Law requires that we report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child.  Oak Valley Kids does not need any solid proof, simply the suspicion that a child may be or have been abused or neglected.
If you suspect a child, in or out of Oak Valley Kids care, is the victim of abuse or neglect you may contact Harford County Child Protective Services at (410) 836-4713 or, after hours, contact the Sheriff’s Office at 410-838-6600.
If law enforcement or Child Protective Services approaches us in regard to a child in care, Oak Valley Kids is compelled by law to allow them access to the child, child and/or family information or to release the child into their custody.

Touch

Physical expressions of affection, nurturing and support are essential and critical to the healthy wellbeing and growth of all children. It is our belief and practice that children need nurturing, adult physical contact for their care and healthy development. This contact can be described in three ways:

\* Nurturing: This includes hugs and non-intimate kisses, handholding, caring and cuddling. This type of contact is never made against the expressed or inferred wishes of the children.
\* Safety and Guidance: This includes restraining children from harmful situations, separating physically conflicting children, directing children by gently leading or guiding them and administering first aid to injuries.
\* Hygienic: This includes face and hand washing, assisting with bathroom duties (as appropriate to the age of the child), diaper changes, examining rashes or unusual marks, nose blowing and assisting with clothing changes.

It is also our belief that it is normal and healthy for children to express affection with their peers. This includes hugs and non-intimate kisses and handholding. This type of contact is never made against the expressed or inferred wishes of the children and we will immediately intervene if a child shows or indicates any discomfort or stress.

Privacy Policy

The families of Oak Valley Kids are the heart of the day care.  Your privacy and security are highly safeguarded.  We do everything possible to keep all of your information and your child's information private and confidential, unlesswI have expressed written permission from you to reveal or release specific information.  Requests for information from police or other authorities are the exception.
As you will be in our home regularly, we ask that you respect the privacy of my family by not sharing any information you have learned about our family without my written permission.

Plants and Animals

All plants are non-toxic.  With few exceptions, the plants outdoors and even the flowers are edible and non-toxic.  Our entire lot and yard is organically maitained/treated, with the exception of a quarterly exterminator's inspection and treatment.
Any and all animals we choose would be small and fully contained in aquariums or other solid habitats.  More than likely, the children will have no direct contact with any animals.  Classroom pets encourage caring and empathy for another creature as well as teaching responsibility.

Personal and Child Care Property

Oak Valley Kids assumes no responsibility for lost, damaged or stolen toys and belongings from home.  We insist that children limit these toys to one soft «lovey» to be used during rest.
When the children are here, they are expected to adhere to our rule.  Child care property that is destroyed or damaged maliciously will need to be replaced by parents either by replacing the damaged or destroyed item with a new, identical item of the same brand and model or manufacturer's equivalent or reimbursing the day care's purchase of the exact same item (brand and model or equivalent), at the current purchase price.  Depreciated value will not be accepted as we cannot safely replace day care items with «used goods.»
All items brought in to the day care for your child's safety, comfort and care (extra clothing, bedding and infant needs) should be clearly labeled.

Parent Responsibilities

We want to be able to work together to give your child every opportunity to reach his or her full potential.  We will communicate frequently, both verbally and written, about your child's social, emotional, physical and intellectual development.  Please keep me up-to-date on any changes in his or her behavior, routine or home environment.  We will keep you informed of any changes in the childcare that may affect you or your child.

Day Care Rules

\* At no time can any child be left unattended in an automobile.
\* There is absolutely NO SMOKING anywhere on the property.
\* Parents are responsible for their children and must maintain control of their child while in the day care or when entering and leaving day care.   Take them by the hand if necessary.
\* SAFETY and RESPECT are paramount!  “We may not do anything that will hurt ourselves, our friends or things in the day care.”  This includes feelings as well as bodies.

We look forward to standing with you to watch your little one grow and learn about the world around us and we are so happy that you’ve chosen Oak Valley Kids for your family!