



Family Handbook of policy and procedures

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Welcome to Donna's Kids Sunflower Academy

Dear Parents and Guardians,

 Thank you for choosing Donna's Kids Sunflower Academy to care for and educate your child. We understand that selecting a childcare program is one of the most important decisions a family can make, and we are honored by the trust you have placed in us.

My name is Bernique McDowell, and I have over 10 years of experience working with children in childcare and educational settings. Throughout my career, I have completed extensive training and professional development focused on, positive guidance, and creating nurturing learning environments for young children.

 At DKSA , we believe every child is like a sunflower seed—filled with unique potential and capable of blooming when provided with love, guidance, and opportunities to learn. Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment where children can grow emotionally, socially, physically, and academically.

 In accordance with the standards established by the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR), the safety and well-being of every child in our care is our highest priority. All staff members are required to meet applicable licensing requirements, including criminal history background checks, child abuse and neglect clearances, and current CPR and First Aid certifications as required by DHR regulations. To ensure the highest quality of care, all staff members participate in orientation and ongoing training in areas that include:

- Child Growth and Development
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Positive Guidance and Behavior Management
- Safe and Healthy Learning Environments
- Family Engagement and Communication
- Cultural Awareness and Individual Diversity
- Professionalism and Ethical Responsibilities

Just as sunflowers grow stronger with proper care and attention, we are committed to helping every child develop confidence, independence, curiosity, and a lifelong love of learning. Through meaningful experiences, positive relationships, and a structured environment, we strive to help each child bloom and grow to their fullest potential.

 DKSA will have a substitute if the main teachers cannot be present. Our substitutes have the same requirements as our main teachers.

We look forward to partnering with your family and supporting your child's journey as they learn, grow, and shine.

Warmly,
Bernique McDowell
Owner/Director
Donna's Kids Sunflower Academy 

"Where every child is nurtured, encouraged, and given the opportunity to bloom and grow."

Programming Information

Ages Served

DKSA provides care for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years old. We offer a nurturing, developmentally appropriate environment where children can learn, grow, and bloom at every stage of development.

Hours of Operation

Our center is open:

Monday – Friday

6:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

All children must be inside by 8:30am and 11:00 with a doctors note

Late Pickup Policy

DKSA closes promptly at 5:30 p.m. each day.

If you anticipate being late, you must contact the Director or Assistant Director as soon as possible to inform them of the delay.

A late pickup fee will be assessed as follows:

- At 5:31 p.m., a \$10.00 late fee will be charged.
- An additional \$5.00 fee will be charged for every 10-minute increment thereafter until the child is picked up.

Examples:

- 5:31 p.m. – \$10.00
- 5:40 p.m. – \$15.00
- 5:50 p.m. – \$20.00
- 6:00 p.m. – \$25.00
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Late pickup fees are due upon the child's next scheduled attendance day and may result in suspension of services if not paid promptly.

Enrollment Requirements

To ensure compliance with licensing regulations and to provide the safest possible environment for all children, the following documents must be completed and submitted before a child may begin attendance at DKSA:

Required Enrollment Documents

- ☐ Completed Enrollment Application
- ☐ Copy of Child's Birth Certificate
- ☐ Current Immunization Records (or approved exemption documentation as permitted by state regulations)
- ☐ Emergency Contact Information Form
- ☐ Medical Information Form
- ☐ Authorized Pick-Up List ☐ Signed Parent Handbook Acknowledgment Form

Enrollment Policy

All enrollment paperwork must be completed in full before a child can be admitted into the program. Parents or guardians are responsible for notifying the center immediately of any changes to emergency contacts, medical information, authorized pickup individuals, or other enrollment information.

Registration Fee and Tuition Deposit

A non-refundable registration fee of \$75.00 per child is required at the time of enrollment to reserve your child's space at DKSA.

In addition to the registration fee, families are required to pay both the first week's tuition and the last week's tuition before their child may begin attending the program. The last week's tuition will be held on the family's account and applied to the child's final week of care, provided proper notice of withdrawal is given according to the center's policies.

The registration fee, first week's tuition, and last week's tuition must be paid in full before services are rendered and are required to secure your child's enrollment space.

Because childcare spaces are limited, enrollment will not be considered complete until all required enrollment fees and tuition deposits have been received.

Weekly Tuition Rates

Full-Time Child Care

- Infants (6 weeks–12 months): \$275.00 per week
- Ages 1–2 years: \$255.00 per week
- 3-Year-Olds, Pre-K, and Kindergarten (Not Potty Trained): \$255.00 per week
- 3-Year-Olds, Pre-K, and Kindergarten (Potty Trained): \$235.00 per week
- 4-Year-Olds: \$235.00 per week

Drop-In Care

Drop-in care is available based on space availability.

- Drop-In Rate: \$60.00 per day

Advance notice is preferred; however, enrollment priority will always be given to currently enrolled families.

School-Age Care

Before School Care (Ages 5 and Up)

- \$85.00 per week

After School Care (Ages 5 and Up)

- \$80.00 per week

DKSA does not provide transportation to or from school at this time. Parents are responsible for arranging all transportation needs.

Summer Program Rates

Ages 3–5 Years

- \$225.00 per week

Ages 6–12 Years

- \$200.00 per week
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Tuition Payment Policy

DKSA processes all tuition and fee payments through Bright wheel.

Payments are due every Thursday for the upcoming week of care. Tuition must be paid in advance before services are rendered.

If payment is not received by 6:00 p.m. on Friday, a late payment fee will be assessed beginning at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday.

Late Payment Fees

- A \$15.00 late fee will be added beginning Saturday at 8:00 a.m.
- An additional \$15.00 late fee will be added daily until the account balance is paid in full.

Children with outstanding balances will not be permitted to attend childcare services beginning the following scheduled attendance day until all fees and tuition are paid in full.

DKSA does not carry balances or extend credit. Accounts that remain unpaid for more than one week may result in immediate termination of childcare services and forfeiture of the child's enrollment space.

Monthly Payment Option

Monthly payment arrangements may be available for teachers and certain government employees who receive monthly pay schedules.

Families approved for monthly payments must pay tuition in advance before the month of care begins. Failure to make the required monthly payment by the due date may result in suspension of services until the account is brought current.

Payment Methods

All payments must be submitted through Brightwheel. No exceptions.

Parents are responsible for always maintaining a valid payment method on file through Brightwheel.

Infant Care Policy

At DKSA, we are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment for all infants in our care.

Bottles and Feeding

Parents or guardians are required to provide all infant bottles pre-made and ready for use each day.

- All bottles must be placed in a sealed zip-top bag.
- Each bottle must be clearly labeled with the child's full name and the date.
- Any unused formula or breast milk will be returned home at the end of the day.
- DKSA provides whole milk for children who have transitioned from formula and have parental approval.
- Parents must provide any special formula, breast milk, or dietary items required for their child.

For the safety of all children, food, formula, breast milk, and baby food provided for one child will not be shared with any other child.

Diapers and Wipes

Parents are responsible for providing diapers and wipes for their child.

Families may:

- Provide a bulk supply of diapers and wipes to be stored at the center, or
- Send a minimum of eight diapers per day.

Diapers will be checked at least every two hours and changed as needed to ensure the health, comfort, and well-being of each child.

Clothing

Parents must provide at least two complete changes of clothing for infants in case of diaper leaks, spit-up, food spills, or other accidents.

All clothing should be clearly labeled with the child's name.

Pacifiers

If an infant uses a pacifier, it must be clearly labeled with the child's initials or name.

Whenever possible, pacifiers should be attached to the child's clothing using a safe pacifier clip.

Pacifiers will not be permitted after a child reaches one year of age unless otherwise approved by the Director due to special circumstances.

Safe Sleep Practices

DKSA follows all safe sleep guidelines and licensing requirements.

- Infants will always be placed on their backs to sleep.
- Alternative sleep positions will only be permitted with written instructions from a licensed physician.
- Infants will sleep in an approved crib or play yard that meets current safety standards.

- No items will be placed inside an infant's crib during sleep unless a physician's written statement authorizing their use for a specific infant is provided and maintained on file
Toddler Care

Diapering and Potty Training Policy

Parents are responsible for providing diapers, pull-ups, and wipes for their child.

During potty training:

Children will be encouraged to use the toilet throughout the day.

Staff will provide positive reinforcement and encouragement.

Children will be taken to the restroom regularly to establish healthy bathroom routines.

Once a child demonstrates consistent success using the toilet, parents may begin transitioning the child from pull-ups to underwear.

Parents must provide at least two complete changes of clothing during the potty-training process in case of accidents.

Nap Time Policy

Nap and rest time is scheduled daily from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for children ages 1 through 5 years old.

DKSA provides each child with an individual cot or sleeping mat for rest time.

Please bring blanket

Attendance, Arrival, and Departure Policy

To ensure the safety and accountability of all children, DKSA requires all parents and guardians to follow the attendance and sign-in procedures outlined below.

Sign-In and Sign-Out Procedures

Parents or authorized guardians must sign their child in and out each day using Brightwheel.

If a parent forgets to sign their child in or out on Brightwheel three (3) times, the family may be required to use the DHR attendance sign-in sheet until consistent compliance is demonstrated.

When using the DHR sign-in sheet:

Parents must sign using their full legal name.

The child's full name must be written on the form.

Initials are not accepted.

For the protection of all children, only individuals listed on the Authorized Pick-Up Form may pick up a child unless prior arrangements have been approved by the Director.

Late Arrival Policy

To minimize disruptions to the daily schedule, learning activities, meals, and rest periods, children should arrive at the center no later than 11:00 a.m.

Children arriving after 11:00 a.m. will only be admitted with a valid written excuse, including but not limited to:

Doctor's appointments

Sick visits

Therapy appointments

Specialist appointments

Court-ordered appointments

Other approved medical or professional appointments

Pick-Up Procedures

To help ensure a smooth departure process, parents are encouraged to send a text message approximately five (5) minutes before arriving for pick-up.

If advance notice is not provided, parents may be asked to allow staff up to five (5) minutes to prepare their child's belongings.

All children remaining at the center at closing time will be prepared and ready for pick-up by 5:30 p.m.

Late Pick-Up Reminder

DKSA closes promptly at 5:30 p.m. Families are expected to adhere to the center's operating hours. Please refer to the Late Pick-Up Policy for applicable fees and procedures.

Animals

DKSA does not have any pets and parent will be notified if a pet is being considered.

Exclusion of Sick Children and Communicable Disease Policy

The health and safety of all children and staff at DKSA is a top priority. To help prevent the spread of illness, children who exhibit signs of illness may be excluded from care.

Illness Requiring Exclusion

Parents or guardians will be contacted and required to pick up their child if the child develops any of the following symptoms while attending the center:

- Temperature- 101 or higher. Child may return after being fever free without medication for 24 hours.
- Signs of Possible Severe Illness- Difficulty breathing, constant crying, and uncontrolled coughing.
- Diarrhea - Three or more loose or uncontrollable bowel movements.
- Vomiting - A child who vomits one time at the center will be sent home immediately and will not be readmitted until they are symptom free for 24 hours or a written statement from their doctor stating that they are not contagious. If we have a stomach virus that is going through the center the Owner/Director may override a doctor's note.
- Mouth Sores - Children with sores in their mouth will not be admitted into the center without a written statement from their doctor stating that the child is not contagious.
- Rash - If associated with a fever or any behavior change will require a written doctor's statement which states that the rash is not contagious.
- Conjunctivitis or Pink Eye - Any child with white or yellow discharge, matted eyes, or redness around the white part of the eye will be required to go home. Any child diagnosed with pink eye may not return to the center until they have used medication for 24 hours or have a written statement from their doctor stating that they are no longer contagious.
- Impetigo - Child must be under the care of a doctor and have a written statement from their doctor before returning to the center stating that the child is no longer contagious.
- Strep Throat - A child who has been diagnosed with strep throat may return to the center after taking medication for 24 hours and being fever free for 24 hours.
- Ringworm - Child must be under the care of a doctor and may return to the center after 24 hours of treatment. The ringworm must be covered with a bandage until the redness is gone or the doctor writes a statement that the child is no longer contagious.
- Chicken Pox - A child may not return until 6 days after the rash has appeared AND the lesions are all dried up and crusted.
- RSV - Children with a positive RSV test will not be admitted into the center until they are fever free for 24 hours and a statement from the doctor states that the child is no longer contagious.

○ Thrush - Child must be on medication for 24 hours before returning to the center. The Director reserves the right to determine when a child is too ill to remain at the center.

Return to Child Care

If a child is sent home due to illness, he or she may not return to the center until:

The child has been symptom-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication, and the child is able to participate comfortably in normal daily activities.

Children sent home with fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or other contagious symptoms must remain out of care for a minimum of 24 hours after symptoms have completely subsided.

Medication Policy

DKSA will not administer fever-reducing medication to mask symptoms and allow a child to remain at the center.

If parents wish for their child to receive medication for symptoms such as a cough or runny nose, medications must comply with the center's medication policy and must not be used to conceal an illness that would otherwise require exclusion from care.

Medication Administration Policy

DKSA will administer medication only when it is necessary and when proper authorization has been provided by the child's parent or legal guardian.

Medication requiring administration at other times must be approved by the Director and accompanied by written instructions from the child's healthcare provider when applicable.

Authorization Requirements

A Medication Authorization Form must be completed and signed by the child's parent or legal guardian before any medication can be administered.

Parents must provide written instructions regarding:

The name of the medication

Dosage amount

Administration instructions

Length of treatment

Any special instructions

Medication Storage and Labeling

All medications must:

Be in their original container

Be clearly labeled with the child's full name

Be handed directly to the Director, Assistant Director, or designated staff member upon arrival

Prescription medications will only be administered to the child whose name appears on the prescription label.

If medication is prescribed for more than one child within the same family, each child's name must be clearly listed on the prescription label or accompanied by written instructions from the prescribing physician.

Parents are required to take all medications home each evening unless otherwise approved by the Director.

Over-the-Counter Medications will not be given by DKSA staff

Nutrition and Food Policy

DKSA participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and provides nutritious meals and snacks that meet recommended nutritional guidelines for growing children.

Meals and Snacks Provided

The center provides the following for each day:

Breakfast
Morning Snack
Lunch
Afternoon Snack

Meals and snacks are served at scheduled times throughout the day.

Outside Food Policy

To help protect children with food allergies and to maintain compliance with food program requirements, outside food and drinks are not permitted unless approved by the Director.

Food Allergies and Special Dietary Needs

Parents or guardians must notify the center in writing of any:

Food allergies
Food sensitivities
Dietary restrictions
Medical dietary needs

Documentation from a physician may be required for certain dietary accommodations. The center will make reasonable accommodations for children with documented dietary needs whenever possible.

Birthday Celebrations and Special Events

Parents wishing to provide cupcakes, treats, or other approved items for birthday celebrations or special events must:

Notify the center in advance.

Deliver all items to the center before 11:00 a.m. on the day of the celebration.

All food items must be commercially prepared and unopened whenever possible to ensure food safety and allergy awareness.

Curriculum and Learning Philosophy

DKSA a play-based learning center that recognizes children learn best through hands-on experiences, exploration, creativity, and meaningful interactions with their environment. While play serves as the foundation of our program, we also utilize the Preschool Place curriculum to support age-appropriate learning and development in the areas of language and literacy, mathematics, science, social-emotional development, fine and gross motor skills, and creative expression.

Holiday Closings and Inclement Weather Policy

DKSA Academy follows the recommendations of the Huntsville City Schools regarding inclement weather and emergency closings.

Inclement Weather Closings

When Huntsville City Schools closes due to severe weather, hazardous road conditions, or other weather-related emergencies, DKSA will also be closed.

Families will be notified of weather-related closings through one or more of the following methods:

- * Brightwheel notification
- * Mass text message
- * Facebook page announcement
- * Center voicemail message

Holiday Closings

DKSA will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

- * New Year's Day
- * Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- * Good Friday
- * Memorial Day
- * Juneteenth
- * Independence Day (July 4th)
- * Labor Day
- * Thanksgiving Day
- * Day After Thanksgiving
- * Christmas Eve
- * Christmas Day
- * One week during the summer and one the week of Christmas.

If a holiday falls on a Saturday, the center may observe the holiday on the preceding Friday. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the center may observe the holiday on the following Monday.

Other Scheduled Closings

Should the center need to close for reasons other than holidays or emergency situations, families will receive a minimum of two weeks' notice whenever possible.

Examples may include:

- * Staff training and professional development
- * Facility maintenance or repairs
- * Family emergencies
- * Other operational needs

The center reserves the right to close without advance notice in the event of emergencies, utility outages, health concerns, or circumstances beyond our control.

Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Policy

The safety of children and staff is our highest priority. DKSA maintains emergency preparedness plans for fire, severe weather, medical emergencies, power outages, and other emergency situations.

Emergency drills will be conducted as required by licensing regulations.

In the event of an emergency evacuation, children will be safely relocated to a designated emergency location. Parents will be notified as soon as possible through Brightwheel, telephone, text message, or other available communication methods.

Emergency contact information must be kept current at all times.

Children will only be released to authorized individuals listed on the child's enrollment forms unless alternate arrangements have been approved by the parent or guardian.

Injury and Incident Reporting Policy

Minor injuries will be treated with basic first aid and documented by staff.

Parents will be notified of any injury requiring first aid beyond basic comfort measures. An Incident Report will be completed and provided to the parent or guardian.

In the event of a serious injury or medical emergency:

- Emergency medical services (911) will be contacted immediately.
- Parents or guardians will be notified as soon as possible.
- Staff will continue to supervise and care for the child until emergency personnel arrive.

All incident reports will be maintained in the child's file.

Authorized Pick-Up and Child Release Policy

Children will only be released to individuals listed on the Authorized Pick-Up Form.
Any person picking up a child may be required to provide a valid photo identification.
If a parent wishes for someone not listed on the enrollment paperwork to pick up their child, written authorization must be provided before release.
Children will not be released to any person who appears to be under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or any substance that may impair their ability to safely care for the child.
If staff believe a child may be in danger, appropriate authorities may be contacted.

Transportation Policy

DKSA does not provide transportation services at this time.
Parents and guardians are responsible for transporting their children to and from the center, school, appointments, and all other activities.

Field Trip Policy

Currently, Donna's Kids Sunflower Academy does not conduct off-site field trips.
Should field trips be added in the future, parents will receive advance notice and written permission forms will be required before participation.

Photo and Media Release Policy

Photographs and videos may be taken during daily activities, special events, and classroom projects for educational purposes, classroom displays, parent communication, and center publications.
A Photo and Media Release Form will be included in the enrollment packet.
Children whose parents do not grant permission will not be photographed for public use.
No identifying information will be shared publicly without parental consent.

Screen Time Policy

DKSA believes children learn best through active play, exploration, hands-on experiences, and social interaction.
Screen time is limited and used only for educational purposes, movement activities, special events, or age-appropriate learning experiences.
All screen content will be developmentally appropriate and supervised by staff.

Water Play Policy

Water play activities may be offered during warm weather months.
Parents will be notified in advance of scheduled water play days.
Children participating in water activities must have:

- Written parental permission
- Appropriate swimwear or extra clothing
- A towel
- Any necessary sun protection items

Children will be always supervised during water activities.
We do not have a pool on the premises.

Discipline Procedures

At Do, we believe discipline is a teaching tool that helps children learn self-control, responsibility, and appropriate social skills. Positive guidance will always be used.

When challenging behaviors occur, staff will:

Redirect the Child
Guide the child to a different activity or behavior.
Offer choices when appropriate.

Use Positive Reinforcement

Praise appropriate behavior.

Recognize positive choices and accomplishments.

Discuss Expectations

Explain classroom rules using age-appropriate language.

Help children understand the consequences of their actions.

Provide Cooling-Off Time

Allow the child to sit in a designated quiet area to calm down and regain self-control.

The child will remain supervised at all times.

Problem-Solving

Encourage children to express feelings with words.

Help children find solutions to conflicts with peers.

Parent Communication

Parents will be informed of ongoing behavioral concerns.

Staff and parents will work together to develop consistent strategies.

Behavior Support Plan

If behaviors continue, a written behavior support plan may be developed with parent input.

Prohibited Discipline Methods

The following are strictly prohibited:

Corporal punishment or spanking

Hitting, shaking, or rough handling

Yelling, shaming, or humiliating a child

Threats or intimidation

Withholding food, water, or restroom access

Physical restraint except in emergencies to prevent injury

Isolation without supervision

Serious Behaviors

For behaviors that pose a safety risk, including repeated aggression, biting, hitting, kicking, or behavior that endangers others, parents may be required to pick up their child. Continued serious behaviors may result in a conference to determine whether the program can safely meet the child's needs.

Death of a Child Procedure

In the event of the death of a child while in care, the provider will immediately call 911 and follow all instructions provided by emergency personnel. The child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) will be notified immediately. The provider will secure the area, maintain supervision of all other children, and cooperate fully with emergency responders, law enforcement, the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR), and any other appropriate authorities.

All required reports and notifications will be completed in accordance with Alabama DHR licensing regulations. The provider will maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of the child and family throughout the investigation and response process. Emotional support resources will be made available to staff, children, and families as appropriate.

The safety, well-being, and emotional needs of all children in care will remain a priority during and after the incident.

"The Director reserves the right to modify, revise, or update any policy, procedure, or guideline as needed. All policies are subject to change at the Director's discretion."

Parent Consent and Acknowledgment Forms

Childs name: _____

Swimming Pool Permission

I understand that Donna's Kids Sunflower Academy may provide supervised water activities, including swimming pool use, when permitted by Alabama DHR regulations and safety requirements. I give permission for my child to participate in swimming and water activities under appropriate supervision.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Photo and Internet Release

Photo and Internet Release Permission

I give permission for Donna's Kids Sunflower Academy to photograph and/or video my child for educational, promotional, social media, website, newsletter, and marketing purposes. I understand that no identifying personal information other than my child's first name will be used without additional written permission.

☐ Yes, I give permission.

☐ No, I do not give permission.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent Handbook Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Donna's Kids Sunflower Academy Parent Handbook, including all policies, procedures, tuition requirements, health and safety policies, discipline procedures, emergency plans, and program expectations. I agree to comply with all policies and understand that failure to do so may result in termination of childcare services.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Director Signature: _____

Date: _____



Donna's Kids Sunflower Academy

"Helping Each Child Bloom and Grow"

