



A Kids Nest Childcare Parent Handbook

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Welcome to A Kids Nest Childcare! We are delighted to have your family join our community. Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment where children can grow, explore, and thrive. We value strong partnerships with families and believe that open communication and collaboration are essential to supporting each child's success.

2. Program Philosophy

Our program believes that children learn best through play, exploration, and positive relationships. We support the whole child by focusing on:

- Social-emotional development
- Early learning skills
- Physical growth
- Independence and choice

3. Hours of Operation & Holidays

Operating Hours: Monday–Friday, 7:30 AM–5:30 PM

Holidays Observed:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day – Third Monday in January
- Presidents' Day – Third Monday in February
- Memorial Day – Last Monday in May
- Juneteenth – June 19
- Independence Day – July 4
- Labor Day – First Monday in September
- Columbus Day / Indigenous Peoples' Day – Second Monday in October
- Thanksgiving Day – Fourth Thursday in November
- Day before Thanksgiving
- December 21, 2026 – January 4, 2027 (Winter Break)
- Families are encouraged to plan accordingly for holiday closures.

4. Enrollment & Registration

- All children must complete the enrollment packet and provide current immunization records.
- Orientation is scheduled for families and children prior to the first day of care.
- Families must update emergency contacts, medical information, and any relevant changes promptly.

5. Tuition & Payment Policies

- Tuition is due on the first of the month – before care is provided
- Late payments may incur fees. (\$5 a day)
- Late Pick Up (\$5 a min after 5:30pm)
- If families using the Best Beginnings scholarship miss more than 80% of their contracted days, they are responsible for the difference between what Best Beginnings covers and the contracted tuition.

6. Attendance & Scheduling

Attendance Expectations:

- Daily attendance is **taken at 9:30 AM**.
- To be counted present, children should **arrive before 9:30 AM** each day.
- Consistent attendance is encouraged to support routine, learning, and social development.
- Families should notify the program via Bright Wheel if their child will be absent.

7. Guidance & Behavior Policy (Including Discipline)

- Positive guidance is used to support social-emotional development.
- Discipline Policy:
 - No corporal punishment, humiliation, or isolation
 - Redirection, modeling, clear expectations, and positive reinforcement
 - Families are informed of repeated challenging behaviors
 - Suspension or removal is a last resort for safety concerns

3-Strike Policy for Aggressive Behavior (hitting, kicking, biting, etc.):

1. First Strike: Staff will hold a phone call or in-person discussion with the parent/guardian to address the behavior and develop strategies for support.
2. Second Strike: The child will be sent home for 3 days without care to ensure safety and reflection.
3. Third Strike: Continued aggressive behavior may result in expulsion from the center to protect the safety of all children and staff.

8. Toilet Training Policy

Only when a child shows readiness and consults with the parent/guardian.

- Children under 18 months will not be routinely toilet trained.
- Staff provide encouragement, guidance, and support during daily routines.
- Diapering and toileting areas are kept clean and sanitary according to Montana licensing standards. Children's comfort, dignity, and individual readiness guide all toilet training practices.

9. Confidentiality & Non-Disclosure Policy

- All information about children and families is confidential.
- Information is shared only with authorized personnel or as required by law.
- Families are expected to respect the privacy of other children and families.

10. Curriculum & Learning Approach / Syllabus

Commitment to Playful Learning:

Children learn best through playful learning, which includes:

- Free Play / Self-Directed Play – fosters independence and creativity
- Guided Play / Teacher-Guided Learning – scaffolds learning with educator support
- Structured Games – teaches skills and social-emotional development in a playful context

Playful learning is incorporated into all learning experiences, including centers, art, music, outdoor play, and group projects.

Observation-Based Assessment:

- Educators use observations to track child development, guide individualized learning, and communicate progress to families.

Using Assessment for Program Improvement:

- Assessment data informs overall program quality, curriculum adjustments, and professional development.

Family Involvement in Assessment:

- Families share observations, participate in conferences, and collaborate on learning goals to support holistic assessment.

11. Daily Schedule

Time	Activity
7:30am – 9:30am	Arrival / Free Play
9:30am – 10:00am	Diapers / Bathroom Break / Wash Hands / Breakfast
10:00am – 11:00am	Learning Centers / Small Group Activities
11:00am – 12:00pm	Outdoor Play / Gross Motor Activities
12:00pm – 12:30pm	Diapers / Bathroom Break / Wash Hands/ Lunch
12:30pm – 1:00pm	Story Time / Quiet Activity
1:00pm – 3:00pm	Rest Time / Nap
3:00pm – 3:30pm	Diapers / Bathroom Break / Wash Hands / Snack
3:30pm – 4:30pm	Enrichment Activities (Art, Music, STEM)
4:30pm – 5:30pm	Free Play / Pick Up

12. Family Engagement & Communication

- Families are encouraged to communicate regularly via phone, email, Bright Wheel and our open-door policy.
- Monthly Family Engagement Nights encourage participation.
- Feedback is collected through suggestion boxes (May & October), surveys, and open-door communication.
- Families may share observations and participate in classroom activities.
- **Community Resources:**
 1. Great Falls Public Library – 301 2nd Ave N, (406) 453-0340, library@greatfallsmt.gov
 2. Family Outreach & Resource Center – 123 Main St, (406) 555-1234, info@forcmt.org
 3. Great Falls Parks & Recreation – 1900 9th Ave S, (406) 727-1212, recreation@greatfallsmt.gov

13. Field Trips & Transportation Policy

- Families must sign permission slips annually (every January)
- Transportation is provided safely with seat belts and adult supervision.
- Emergency procedures and contact information accompany all trips.

14. Nutrition & Meal Schedule

- All meals and snacks provided at A Kids Nest Childcare are USDA-approved and meet federal nutrition guidelines. We participate in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to ensure children receive balanced, healthy meals.
- Special dietary needs will be accommodated with documentation from families.

15. Rest Time Policy

All children are provided with a quiet, comfortable space for rest each day.

- Children are required to remain on their assigned cots during nap/quiet time.
- Infants sleep in approved cribs, and older children use cots or mats.
- Staff ensure a calm environment to support rest and routines.

16. Health, Safety & Supervision Policies

Illness & Exclusion

To maintain a safe and healthy environment, children who are ill must stay home, **even if symptoms are due to teething** (e.g., fever, irritability, or drooling that affects comfort and participation). Children may be excluded for symptoms such as:

- Fever of 100.0°F or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Contagious rash or infection
- Persistent cough or difficulty breathing
- Any illness preventing comfortable participation
- **Return to Care:**

Children may return when:

- Symptom-free for at least 24 hours without medication
- Contagious illness has resolved or a healthcare provider has cleared the child
- They are able to comfortably participate in daily activities
- Families are asked to notify staff as soon as possible if their child is sick or has been exposed to a contagious illness.

Active Supervision

Staff provide focused, intentional, and continual observation to ensure safe exploration of learning environments.

Expectations by Age Group:

- Infants (0–12 months): Constant one-on-one visual and physical supervision; within arm's reach at all times
 - Toddlers (1–2 years): Close visual supervision; staff monitor activities and transitions
 - Preschoolers (3–5 years): Staff circulate through classrooms and outdoor areas, guiding safe play
 - School-Age Children (5–12 years, if applicable): Staff maintain clear sightlines and check in frequently
- Staff are trained to anticipate safety risks, respond promptly, and actively engage with children while allowing safe exploration.

17. Child Release & Authorized Pick-Up

Children are released only to individuals listed on the enrollment form.

Photo ID may be requested at pick-up to verify identity.

Families must promptly update the list of authorized pick-up persons.

Staff will not release children to anyone under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In emergency situations, parents must provide written or verbal authorization for alternate pick-up via Bright Wheel

18. Termination of Care

A Kids Nest Childcare reserves the right to **terminate care at any time** for reasons including, but not limited to:

- Non-payment of tuition or failure to meet financial obligations
- Repeated violation of program policies (including safety, health, or behavioral policies)
- Situations that compromise the safety and well-being of children or staff

Notice and Refunds:

- Families are requested to provide two weeks' notice for voluntary withdrawal.
- Outstanding balances must be paid in full; if unpaid after 30 days, accounts may be referred to a collection agency.
- No refunds will be issued for care provided up to the point of termination, whether voluntary or program initiated.

19. Medical & First Aid Policy

First Aid Procedures:

- Staff are trained in first aid, CPR, and emergency response appropriate for the ages of children served.
- Minor injuries (e.g., scrapes, bumps, or small cuts) are treated on-site using approved first aid procedures.
- An incident report is completed for every injury, and a copy is provided to the parent/guardian.

Medical Emergencies:

- In case of a serious injury or medical emergency, staff will:
 1. Call **911** if needed
 2. Administer first aid/CPR as trained
 3. Notify the parent/guardian immediately
 4. Document the incident in detail

Medications:

- Prescription or over-the-counter medications may be administered only with a signed parent consent form.
- Medications are stored safely, securely, and out of reach of children.
- Staff follow all instructions carefully and maintain a medication log.

Health & Safety Compliance:

- All procedures comply with Montana childcare licensing regulations and best practices for child health and safety.

