



# Parent Handbook

# Table of Contents

## About the Facility

- **Mission Statement & Program Goals**
- **Hours of Operation**
- **Little Minds Childcare & Preschool Calendar**

## Enrollment, Tuition, & Fees

- **Enrollment**
- **Tuition**
- **Fees**

## Policies & Procedures

- **Enrollment Policy**
- **Supplies & Belongings**
- **Diapering & Potty Training**
- **Breast Feeding Policy**
- **Drop Off Cut Off**
- **Nap/Rest Time**
- **Holiday/Birthday Celebrations**
- **Substitute Teachers**
- **Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**
- **Security Cameras**
- **Item Replacement**
- **Termination**
- **Withdrawal**
- **Suspension**
- **Notice of Probation Period**

## Table of Contents Continued

### Curriculum

- Curriculum Explained
- Daily Schedule
- Screen Time
- Assessments
- Discipline
- Field Trips

### The Food Program

- Food Program Explained

### Parents/Guardians in the Program

- Parent Conduct
- Parent Communication
- Drop Off Procedures
- Pick Up Procedures

### Health & Safety Overview

- Medication Administration
- Health & Illness Policy

# About the Facility

## Mission Statement & Program Goals

- At Little Minds Childcare & Preschool our mission is to create a safe, healthy, and inclusive early learning environment. We strive to create the optimal learning environment by ensuring all classroom areas are prepared and all materials are developmentally appropriate. We also focus on forming lasting relationships with families, enabling us to help guide their child towards success.
- Program Goals -
  - Create an environment that focuses on each individual child's growth and learning, supporting them in all areas of health and development.
  - Create an environment that is inviting, safe, and full of joyful learning opportunities.
  - Build connections that fill a child full of confidence and a love for learning.

## Hours of Operation

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool is open  
Monday - Friday 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM

## Little Minds Childcare & Preschool Calendar

- During the calendar year Little Minds Childcare & Preschool closes for the following paid holidays. No refund or credit will be issued when a paid holiday falls on their child(rens) regular attendance day. A school closure calendar will be sent out yearly with specific dates in which Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will be closed. If these dates should need to change the Director will notify as soon as possible.
  - January - New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
  - February - President's Day
  - April - Easter Monday
  - May - Memorial Day
  - June - Juneteenth
  - July - Independence Day
  - September - Labor Day
  - October - Indigenous Peoples Day/Columbus Day

- November - Wednesday, Thursday, Friday surrounding Thanksgiving
- December- Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Day after Christmas, New Year's Eve
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will also close for up to an additional 14 days per year. Tuition rates may or may not be reduced for these dates. Any changes made to tuition will be on the school closure calendar and/or announced by the Director.
- After 6 months of attendance your child(ren) will be allotted up to 5 days tuition free per year which may be used for vacation or sick days. If using as a sick day a 24 hours' notice is required and the tuition amount will be credited on the following months tuition statement. If using as a vacation day a 30 day notice is required. Any unused days may not be used towards a withdrawal notice.
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool is licensed through the State of Montana Department of Health and Human Services. We carry a group license which allows child:adult ratio of 15:2.

## **Enrollment, Tuition, & Fees**

### **Enrollment**

- Enrollment is open to children ages 8 weeks - 6 years old. Parent/Guardians can request enrollment after a tour of the facility, and an overview of the policies outlined in the parent handbook. Enrollment in the program is successful after fully completing the enrollment packet and payment of the registration fee.
- In order to maintain a consistent routine for all children in the program part time enrollment is not offered at this time. Part of the enrollment packet is a Contract for Care, this is where the parent/guardian will mark their child's expected attendance days. This is done to ensure we maintain proper child to teacher ratios.

### **Tuition**

- Tuition is due regardless of attendance. However, attendance of 3-5 days weekly is required in order to maintain a consistent routine, exceptions to this may include absence due to illness or vacation time.

- Tuition payment is due by the last day of each month by 5:30pm. Payment is for care for the following month. Tuition may be paid through Brightwheel, cash, or check.
- If Best Beginnings Scholarship is being applied to tuition parent/guardians will be responsible for any tuition amount not fully covered by the scholarship.
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will reevaluate tuition rates yearly, parents/guardians will be notified a minimum 30 days in advance if a tuition raise will take effect.

### Fees

- A registration fee of \$75 is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is used to purchase necessary materials for new children in the program.
- Late fee- If tuition is not paid there will be a \$15 fee for everyday it is not paid. If tuition is still not paid by the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the month the child will not be permitted to attend until all tuition and fees are paid.
- Late fee - If a child(ren) is not picked up by 5:30pm a \$1 per minute charge will be applied and added onto the monthly tuition bill. Example: Child picked up at 5:42pm a \$12 late fee will be added.
- Returned Check Fee \$30
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will make every attempt to schedule field trips with no cost or low cost. Parents/Guardians will be responsible for any extra cost associated with the field trip.
- If a parent/guardian wishes to hold an open enrollment spot without attendance for an extended period of time they will have the option to set up a payment plan with the Director.

## **Policies & Procedures**

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool reserves the right to amend, replace, or take out any policies within this handbook. Parents/Guardians will be notified of any changes before they take place.

## **Enrollment Policy**

- Parents/Guardians are required to fill out all forms within the enrollment packet and submit all healthcare information, as this is essential to providing safe and quality care. A child will not be enrolled or permitted to attend if all forms are not completed, or healthcare information is not submitted.

## **Supplies & Belongings**

- Parents/Guardians are required to supply all materials for their child. Including but not limited to, weather appropriate clothing, diapers, wipes, infant formula or breast milk, infant food, water bottles, and infant bottles.
- If a child runs out of any materials needed for the daily routine the parent/guardian will be called and required to drop off the needed item or pick up their child for the day.
- Infants & Toddlers (0-2) need to have two extra sets of weather appropriate outfits kept at the facility, Older toddlers & preschoolers need to have one extra outfit. Outfits include shirt, pants, and socks. In the winter months a warm coat, hat, gloves, snow boots, and snow pants will be required for all ages. Potty training children need to have three pairs of underwear, pants, socks in the case of an accident.
- In addition to ensuring your child wears weather appropriate clothing, all children should wear clothing that is appropriate for all kinds of play. This includes but is not limited to sensorial, natural (dirt & water), and artistic (paint) play.
- Children will be taught and encouraged to independently dress and undress themselves. Easy to manipulate clothing items will assist your child in doing so.
- Toys from home are not permitted in the facility unless otherwise asked (ie show & tell). Little Minds Childcare & Preschool is not responsible for lost or broken items brought into the facility.
- All items & belongings need to be labeled with the child's initials.

## **Diapering & Potty Training**

- Diapers will be checked a minimum of every two hours and changed more often if necessary, in the case of bowel movement or diaper rash.

- The decision of when to begin potty training your child is a personal one and should be made based on your child's individual signs of emotional and physical readiness. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will be more than happy to assist in this process but will not be the ones to take charge or initiate the process. We will help with the training while attending care by building upon their natural interest. Parents/Guardians must discuss readiness and routine with the staff at Little Minds Childcare & Preschool at the beginning of potty training. Children may use underwear while attending care only after they have had 3-5 successful accident free days at home. We like to remind parents/guardians that while it may have happened quickly at home, children in a group care environment may take a little longer to "listen" to their bodies signals when presented with many more distractions.

### **Breast Feeding Policy**

We welcome parents into the facility to breast feed their child, a private space can be provided. We ask that the nap time frame of 12:30 - 2:30pm be avoided if possible as to not disrupt the routine of other children.

### **Drop Off Cut Off**

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool sets a drop off cut off time at 9:00AM. This means that all children must be in attendance for the day at or before 9:00AM. Exceptions to this for appointments will be considered on a case by case basis when discussed a minimum of 24 hours in advance.
- If a child leaves for an afternoon appointment on or after 3:30pm they are not permitted to return after.

### **Nap/Rest Time**

- All children will have a period of rest time. They are NOT required to nap but they will need to be able to use alternative quiet time activities. Once a child has fallen asleep the teachers at Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will NOT wake a child unless there is a medical reason in which a note signed by a health care provider will need to be provided.
- Children 12 months of age or younger will follow individual nap schedules and will be provided with a pack 'n play for sleep. All pack 'n plays will follow requirements for a safe sleep environment. The only item allowed in a pack 'n play is a tight fitting sheet. Pillows, blankets of any kind, bumper pads, toys



of any kind, or stuffed animals will not be allowed in any pack 'n play. All infants will be placed to sleep on their back to reduce the risk of Sudden Death Syndrome. The only exception to this is a medical reason in which a note signed by a healthcare provider will need to be provided. Infants will not be allowed to sleep in a car seat, swing, or table seat. If they fall asleep they will be moved to their pack 'n play. All bedding will be taken home weekly to be washed.

- Children 13 months of age or older will be provided with a cot for sleep. All cots will follow requirements for a safe sleep environment. Children that use a cot for sleep may use a small pillow, sheet, and a blanket provided by the parent/guardian. All bedding will be taken home weekly to be washed.

### **Holiday/Birthday Celebrations**

- We encourage families to share their holiday or birthday celebration traditions within our group. If there are items you would like to bring in to share let the teacher know ahead of time to allow them to plan for it. Please ask the Director for approval of any food being brought in beforehand.

### **Substitute Teachers**

- All substitute teachers will be trained in all Little Minds Childcare & Preschool policies and be knowledgeable in our routines and children's needs. Parents/Guardians will be notified if a substitute teacher will be there that day.
- While Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will make every attempt to ensure a substitute teacher can provide care in the lead teachers absence; parents/guardians are responsible for providing their own back up care & planning for closures due to illness, emergencies, holidays, or vacations.

### **Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

- All staff members of Little Minds Childcare & Preschool are mandatory reporters. A mandatory reporter must report suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment or suspicious behaviors and/or marks observed. Staff of Little Minds Childcare & Preschool are not required to notify parents/guardians that a report has been or will be made.

### **Security Cameras**

- For the protection of all children, families, and staff Little Minds Childcare & Preschool uses security cameras located in three main rooms of the facility. These are not regularly accessible to parents/guardians. The activity from all cameras is stored for a period of two weeks.

### **Item Replacement**

- It is expected and understood that children may occasionally & accidentally break classroom items. However, if it appears a child purposefully and/or maliciously broke an indoor or outdoor classroom item and that item is determined to be worth a monetary amount of \$50 or more the parent/guardian will be responsible for paying for a replacement or providing a replacement item.

### **Termination**

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool reserves the right to refuse care at any time for any reason. Every attempt will be made to give the parent/guardian a 30 day termination notice. However, if it is determined it puts the child, other children in care, or staff members in an unsafe situation the termination may be immediate.
- Any remaining tuition or fee balance must be paid within 30 days of the termination notice. Refusal to pay tuition or fees may result in a case in Small Claims Court. Copies of any screenings or observations will be available by request for families to provide information to the new childcare facility. The Director will assist the parent/guardian in gathering of all the child's belongings on their last scheduled day of attendance. Any belongings or items left at Little Minds Childcare & Preschool 30 days after the child's last scheduled day of attendance will be donated.

### **Withdrawal**

- If the parent/guardian chooses to withdraw from Little Minds Childcare & Preschool for any reason a 30 day written notice is required. Full tuition is due during the withdrawal notice period. Unused vacation/sick days may not be used in place of a withdrawal notice. The Director will assist the

parent/guardian in gathering of all the child's belongings on their last scheduled day of attendance. Any belongings or items left at Little Minds Childcare & Preschool 30 days after the child's last scheduled day of attendance will be donated.

### **Suspension**

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool may suspend a child from attending for a minimum of 1 day to a maximum of 3 days due to unsafe behavior from the child and/or parent/guardian. Other reasons for suspension may occur in which case it will be discussed between the Director, Teacher, and Parent/Guardian. This is intended to give the child, parent/guardian, and teacher the ability to take a break and regroup. If not already in place a Conscious Discipline Behavior Plan will be created before the child returns.

### **Notice of Probation Period**

- If problems reoccur where Little Minds Childcare & Preschool and the parent/guardian are repeatedly unable to come to a solution the parent/guardian will be given a Notice of Probation Period. This can be given at any time for varying reasons. This is intended to be a last resort before termination.

## **Curriculum**

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool uses an emergent curriculum which can best be described as a curriculum philosophy rooted in the premise that children are most successful at learning when curriculum experiences account for the individual interests, strengths, needs, abilities, and cultural realities. Emergent curriculum is:

To prepare quality and comprehensive learning opportunities the teachers follow three steps. Step 1, Observe where the child's needs, interests, and abilities are presently at. Step 2, Align those observations with the Montana Early Learning Standards and STEAM principles. Step 3, Create skill building learning opportunities.

Through our emergent curriculum we create skill building learning opportunities that cover all areas of development for all ages. Skills that can range from

hand/eye coordination, how to express varying emotions, to counting syllables. Skill building learning opportunities can be seen in the way furniture is arranged in the classroom all the way to group table time activities.

An essential part of emergent curriculum is the prepared indoor and outdoor classroom. Loris Malaguzzi (Founder of Reggio Emilia Approach) described that vital third teacher in the classroom is the environment. It is inviting, flexible, and responsive to the needs of the children and teachers in it. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool strives to create an early learning environment where all children can be successful.

Lesson plan learning objectives and goals will be posted on the parent board.

### Daily Schedule

- Children 12 months of age or younger will follow individual feeding and nap schedules
- Group Schedule
  - Arrival
  - Center Choice
  - AM Snack 9:20AM - 9:50 AM
  - Center Choice
  - Group Table Time
  - Outdoor Play
  - Lunch 12:00PM - 12:30PM
  - Rest Period
  - PM Snack 3:00PM - 3:30PM
  - Outdoor Play
  - Center Choice
- Meal times may vary slightly.
- During the warmer months, center choice may be moved outside. On the contrary during colder months outdoor play may be limited, the goal is a minimum 60 minutes outside daily.

## **Screen Time**

- Occasionally Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will have screen time in the form of age-appropriate short videos and/or movies. We recognize the recommended screen time for children under the age of 6 is less than 60 minutes per day. Most commonly our screen time will be short videos to enhance what we are learning upon or to use during movement games. Movies days may be planned during holiday parties. It is not mandatory that a child participates in screen time, they may be offered an alternate activity.

## **Assessments**

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool uses a screening tool called Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ). This developmental screening tool is used to identify strengths and any areas in need of improvement. ASQ has been specifically designed to pinpoint developmental progress and catch any delays that may need further assessments. This is completed twice a year and will be discussed during parent teacher conferences.

## **Discipline**

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool practices Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline creates a compassionate culture and facilitates an intentional shift in adult understanding of behavior via the Conscious Discipline Brain State Model. It then provides specific brain-friendly, research-backed strategies for responding to each child's individual needs with wisdom. This highly effective approach is proven to increase self-regulation, sense of safety, connection, empathy, and intrinsic motivation in both children and adults.
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool prohibits corporal punishment of any kind, cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse.
- If negative behavior consistently presents itself Little Minds Childcare & Preschool and parental guardians will work together to remedy the behavior using the Conscious Discipline Behavior Plan. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool reserves the right to terminate or refuse care at any time.

## **Field Trips**

- Field Trips around our community enhance our learning opportunities. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will provide transportation for all field trips. If

your child uses a car or booster seat you will be required to leave one at the facility the day of the field trip.

- Notification of a field trip will be sent through Brightwheel. Children will not be permitted to attend the field trip if the Transportation Authorization Form has not been signed. If a child is in attendance on a field trip day but the Transportation Authorization Form is not signed that child will be sent home for the day.
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool does NOT offer transportation to or from any other school, facility, or other location on a daily basis.

## The Food Program

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool follows the national Child and Adult Care Food Program guidelines, providing healthy and delicious meals.

- For children 12 months of age or younger parent/guardians will provide all meal items. For children 13 months-6years all meals are provided by Little Minds Childcare & Preschool.
- All meals are served family style.
- We recommend that children eat breakfast at home before attending care, if a child arrives after mealtime they will need to eat before arriving at care.
- Outside food is prohibited unless approved by the Director, any food not approved dropped off with the child will be given back to the parent/guardian or placed in their cubby to take home at the end of the day.
- A weekly food menu will be posted on the parent board.

## Parents/Guardians in the Program

### Parent Conduct

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool expects and requires all parents/guardians to behave regularly with decency, courtesy, and respect while in the facility and towards all Little Minds Childcare & Preschool staff and families. This includes but is not limited to refraining from

swearing/cursing at any staff member or in front of other children, and refraining from the use of drugs, alcohol, or smoking while at the facility.

- It is understood that parents/guardians may not always agree with the staff of Little Minds Childcare & Preschool but it is expected and required that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner.
- Unwillingness to follow a respectful parent conduct will be grounds for termination.

### **Parent Communication**

- Communication will be through Brightwheel, phone 406-422-0104, or email [littlemindsc@gmail.com](mailto:littlemindsc@gmail.com). During care hours teachers will be busy with the children, if you need to reach us with a question or concern please message in Brightwheel first. If it is an emergency please call.
- After business hours Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will make reasonable attempts to respond to messages or emails. However, you may not receive a response until the next business day.
- If your child(ren) will be gone for any reason on their regularly scheduled attendance day parents/guardians will need to notify Little Minds Childcare & Preschool by 9:00AM the day of.
- Every child will have a daily report done through Brightwheel that lists meals, toilet/diaper times, and rest times. Photo observations will also be sent through Brightwheel.
- A Parent/Teacher Conference will be offered at the time of enrollment to discuss any past experiences or any concerns. Otherwise, conferences will be offered twice a year in March & October. Notices will be posted to Brightwheel and on the parent board so we can schedule a day that works best for everyone.

### **Drop Off Procedures**

- Parents/Guardians will park along Walnut Street in front of the facility. Please do not park in the driveway, it does not belong to Little Minds Childcare & Preschool.
- Upon entrance to the facility parents/guardians will assist their child in putting away belongings into their cubbies and coat hooks. Next, children need to put on their inside shoes and wash hands, parents/guardians will assist with this if needed.

- Parents/Guardians are also required to sign in their child(ren) on the Brightwheel app. Failure to sign in their child(ren) will result in a \$5 fee each time it is not filled out added onto to the next months tuition bill.

### **Pick Up Procedures**

- Parents/Guardians will park along Walnut Street in front of the facility. Please do not park in the driveway, it does not belong to Little Minds Childcare & Preschool.
- If someone else other than the parent/guardian will be picking up a child they must be listed on the emergency contact sheet, bring their drivers license in the first time they pick up, and be over the age of 18. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will NOT release children to anyone under the age of 18 or to anyone who refuses to show identification.
- Parents/Guardians are required to sign out their children(ren) on the Brightwheel app. Failure to sing out their child(ren) will result in a \$5 fee each time it is not filled out added onto the next months tuition bill.
- Once a child has been checked out on Brightwheel the parent/guardian or authorized alternative will be responsible for supervising the child(ren) on facility premises. It is the parent/guardians responsibility to inform authorized alternatives of the pick up procedures.

## **Health & Safety Overview**

As part of the enrollment packed an immunization record is required. The immunization record will need to be kept up to date, and any new record will need to be given to Little Minds Childcare & Preschool in a timely manner.

### **Medication Administration**

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will not provide any medication, over the counter or otherwise. All medications administered must be provided by the parent/guardian.
- Medication will only be dispensed if it is brought in its original container. Over the counter medication should have the childs name written on it and dosage directions, name of medication, and expiration date should be legible. Prescription medication labels need to include child's name, name of the



medication, name of the health care provider, medication expiration date, administration and storage instructions. Medication may not be shared between family members.

- Parents/Guardians are responsible for all medications being properly labeled, replacing prior to expiration if necessary, and disposing of properly.
- Parent/Guardian will need to fill and sign the medication administration form for each medication. If this form is not filled out and signed medication will NOT be administered. Medication will only be administered at times when the parent/guardians schedules prevent them from giving it.
- For children 24 months and younger written permission from a health care provider is required for any and all medication over the counter or prescription.
- For children 25 months and older parental written permission is required for over the counter medications. Written permission from a health care provider is required for prescription medications.
- All notes for medications from a health care provider need to include dosage, administration instructions, and the reason for medication.
- All medications will be stored properly according to the instructions on the medication. Medication is only administered by a trained staff member.
- A medication log containing the date, time, medication, and dosage will be kept in each child's file. It will also be logged in Brightwheel. Copies of the medication log may be made available upon request.
- Parents/Guardians will be notified if their child shows any side effects from medication, or if a medication error or incident occurs. A medication error/incident report will be completed by the staff member administering medication. In the event of a serious reaction staff will call 911 if the child is in distress. A parent/guardian may be contacted to pick up due to non emergency illness reaction. Refer to the Health & Illness policy or ask the Director if you have any questions regarding picking up ill children.

### **Health & Illness Policy**

- At Little Minds Childcare & Preschool part of our duty is to keep all children and staff as healthy as possible. Please see the Health and Illness policy for a list of health reasons a child may not be permitted into care or sent home. If a parent/guardian has been called to pick up they will have 30 minutes to make arrangements and be on their way. A child needs to be symptom and

medication free for a minimum 24 hours in order to return to care. Some illnesses will require longer periods of time out of care, time out of care is subject to Director discretion. Furthermore, some illnesses will require a note signed by a healthcare provider in order for the child to return to care.

Please keep this handbook for your records. Refer to it or ask the Director if you have any questions.