



Family Handbook

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About the Facility

Introduction to the Handbook

Welcome to the Little Minds Childcare & Preschool Family Handbook! This handbook is intended to provide information about our program for current and future Little Minds families. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool reevaluates this handbook on a yearly basis to ensure all policies and procedures align with early learning best practices, state and federal law, and Little Minds specific philosophy and program goals. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool reserves the right to amend, replace, or take out any policies or procedures within this handbook. If you have any questions about any of the information listed in this handbook, please do not hesitate to ask.

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:

- o Create an environment that focuses on each individual child's growth and learning, supporting them in all areas of health and development.
- o Create an environment that is inviting, safe, and full of joyful learning opportunities.
- o Build connections that fill a child full of confidence and a love for learning.

Hours of Operation

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool is open 7:45 AM - 5:00 PM Monday - Thursday & Friday 7:00 AM - 3:45 PM. Any changes made to operation hours such as school closures or early release times will be posted on the school calendar and/or announced by Mrs Katlyn.

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool Calendar

- During the calendar year Little Minds Childcare & Preschool closes for the following paid holidays.
 - o January - New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 - o February - President's Day
 - o April - Easter Monday
 - o May - Memorial Day
 - o June - Juneteenth
 - o July - Independence Day
 - o September - Labor Day
 - o October - Indigenous' Peoples Day/Columbus Day
 - o November - Veterans Day, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday surrounding Thanksgiving
 - o December- Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Day after Christmas, New Year's Eve
- No refund or credit will be issued when a paid holiday falls on their child's 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 the dates on the school calendar should need to change Mrs Katlyn will notify families as soon as possible.
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will have additional closure days listed on the school calendar due to vacation, training, or extended holiday time. 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 Mrs Katlyn.
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will only operate when it is safe to do so. Emergencies such as a loss of power, water, heat, or medical crisis will require a facility closure. Should any of these situations arise all Little Minds families will be notified as soon as possible with temporary closure information & a plan to safely reopen. Tuition will not be reduced or credited for these emergency closings.
- In the event Little Minds Childcare & Preschool needs to temporarily close due to staff reasons such as a death of a family member, minor staff illness, or other non emergent scenarios Little Minds families will be notified as soon as possible with temporary closure information and a plan to safely reopen. For these instances where a temporary closure impacts our facility between

1-3 days tuition will not be credited, reduced, or otherwise altered. If the temporary closure impacts our facility for more than 3 days tuition will be reduced to 50% beginning on day 4 until reopening. As tuition is due on the last day of the previous month you will see an altered tuition statement in Brightwheel that impacts the month after the non emergent closure.

- In the event Little Minds Childcare & Preschool needs to open late or close early due to appointments, safety concerns, early release dates, or otherwise not listed tuition will not be reduced, credited or otherwise altered.
- After 6 months of attendance each child will be allotted up to 5 days tuition free per year which may be used for vacation days. If a family chooses to use a tuition free vacation day a 30 day written notice is required. A child will not be permitted to attend on a tuition free day. 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 family license which allows a child:adult ratio of 8:1. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool license will always be posted near the family information board & specific licensure information can be found on the MT DPHHS website. This license also goes through a yearly renewal process.

Enrollment, Tuition, & Fees

Enrollment

- Enrollment is open to children ages 8 weeks - 6 years old. Parent/Guardians may request enrollment after a tour of the facility, and all parent/guardians have thoroughly understood the policies outlined in the Family Handbook. Enrollment in the program is approved after the parent/guardian has fully completed the enrollment packet and finalized the registration fee payment.
- In order to maintain a consistent routine for all children in the classroom an Enrollment Contract is required as part of the enrollment process. This is where the parent/guardian will mark their child's expected attendance days and time. This is done to ensure we maintain proper child to teacher ratios, and are able to properly prepare our classroom.
- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability,

marital status, or sexual orientation in any of its activities or operations. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all current and future Little Minds students, families and staff members.

Tuition

- Tuition is due regardless of attendance. Children are expected to attend on their approved days as listed in the Enrollment Contract. This is done in order to maintain a consistent routine in our classroom. Exceptions to this may include absence due to illness, appointments, vacation time, or school closures.
- Tuition payment is due by the last day of each month by 5:30 PM. Tuition payments apply to 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 nonrefundable one time 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 2nd of the month the child will not be permitted to attend until all tuition and fees are paid.
- Late fee - If your child is not picked up by 5:00 PM Monday - Thursday, 3:45 PM Friday, or at a specified early release time a \$1 per minute charge will be applied and added onto the monthly tuition statement. Example: Child picked up at 5:27 PM on Monday would have a \$27 late fee applied.
- 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 nonrefundable payment plan with Mrs Katlyn.

Policies & Procedures

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool reserves the right to amend, replace, or take out any policies within this handbook. Every reasonable attempt will be made to provide Little Minds families with a 30 day notice before changes take effect. If a policy or procedure change is required for safety the change may be immediate. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will reevaluate all policies & procedures in this handbook yearly.

Enrollment Policy

- Parents/Guardians are required to fill out all forms within the enrollment packet, submit all healthcare information, and provide an updated copy of their child's immunization records as this is essential to providing a safe and quality early learning environment. A child will not be enrolled or permitted to attend if all forms are not completed, or healthcare information is not submitted.

Enrollment Renewal

- Each year Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will send out enrollment renewal information. This is a time when we update all child and family paperwork, and notify families of any program or policy changes.
- Below is a list of paperwork that a parent/guardian will be required to submit as a part of enrollment renewal process each year.
 - Enrollment Contract
 - Emergency Contact Form
 - Medication Authorization Form
 - Immunization Record
 - Photo & Video Policy Form
 - Transportation Authorization Form
 - Food Program Enrollment Form

Additional forms may be sent out as part of this renewal process.

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. Parent/Guardians will see a supply list attached to their enrollment packet.
- 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 a shirt, pants, and socks. In the winter months a warm coat, hat, gloves, snow boots, and snow pants will be required for all ages. Toilet learning 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. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing.
- 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 & Toilet Learning

- 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 in attendance 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 their child's toilet learning journey. Children may use underwear while in attendance 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 environment may take a little longer to "listen" to their bodies' signals when presented with many more distractions.

Common Little Minds Childcare & Preschool toilet learning practices:

- Encourage interest in how to use the toilet if a child initiates this interest.
- If a child is interested in learning how to use the toilet but still utilizing diapers/pullups, diapering changes may happen with the child standing if they are physically able to do so.
- Mini "potty treats" such as a sticker or M&M may be used at the beginning of the toilet learning journey to encourage use of the toilet.
- Pullups may be worn during rest time at the beginning of a child's toilet learning journey.
- When children first begin toilet learning they will be encouraged to use the toilet during transition times, before/after field trips, and before rest.

Each child will complete their toilet learning journey in a unique way, the above common practices are not requirements. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will assist each child's toilet learning journey in a way that best supports them & their family.

Breast Feeding Policy

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool welcomes families into the facility to breastfeed their child, a private space can be provided if requested ahead of time. Families are welcome to breastfeed at any time during our day, however we ask that families minimize interruptions with other children or staff as to not disrupt the routine of our program.

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 on their enrolled days at or before 9:00 AM. Exceptions to this for appointments will be considered on a case by case basis when discussed with Mrs Katlyn a minimum of 24 hours in advance.
- If a child leaves for an appointment on or after 12:00 PM 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 staff 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 between the age 13 months - 24 months will transition to sleeping on a cot. The age in which a child transitions to sleeping on a cot will vary dependent upon the child's needs & ability to follow directions during rest. Children older than 24 months will be provided with a cot for rest. 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.
- All children will be encouraged to rest even if they do not fall asleep during rest time. The decision of when a child should stop sleeping during rest time will be decided between Little Minds Childcare & Preschool and the child's family. Children often begin showing us they do not need to sleep during rest time when/if:
 - They are independently able to rest quietly without falling asleep.
 - Their behavior is not negatively impacted by not sleeping.
- During nap/rest time there will always be at minimum one Little Minds Childcare & Preschool staff member present in the classroom. The staff member present will likely be cleaning, prepping classroom materials, or

teaching other students. However, all children are monitored during this time & each child will be individually observed every 15 minutes.

Holiday/Birthday Celebrations

- We encourage families to share their holiday or birthday celebration traditions with our group. If there are items you would like to bring in to share let Little Minds Childcare & Preschool know ahead of time to allow them to plan for it. Please ask Mrs Katlyn 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 is available to step in during the lead teachers absence, it is the responsibility of the parents/guardian to plan for closures due to illness, emergencies, holidays, or vacations.

Volunteers in the Classroom

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool welcomes UMW education students into our classroom as volunteers. All UMW education students have completed & passed a State & Federal background check. They will NOT be left in the classroom alone without a Little Minds staff member present.
- Occasionally Little Minds may invite community members into the classroom to share information about their job or culture. There will always be a Little Minds staff member present when a volunteer/community member is visiting. Little Minds parents/guardians are welcome to join us during these visits.

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.

- In the event Little Minds Childcare & Preschool discovers alcohol, legal or nonlegal drug paraphernalia in a child's belongings or in the child's possession the appropriate parties will be notified. This may be cause for suspension or termination.

Security Cameras

- For the protection of all children, families, and staff Little Minds Childcare & Preschool uses security cameras located in the two 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 enrollment or end enrollment 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 present, 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. Mrs Katlyn or another Little Minds staff member 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 may not be used in place of a withdrawal notice. Mrs Katlyn or another Little Minds staff member 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 Mrs Katlyn and the 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.

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool is not religiously affiliated.

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

Daily Schedule

Children 12 months of age or younger will follow individual feeding and nap schedules.

Group Schedule:

- Arrival
- Quiet Play
- Center/Free Choice
- AM Snack 9:00 - 9:30 AM
- Center/Free Choice
- Group Table Time
- Outdoor Play
- Lunch 11:30 AM - 12:00 PM
- Rest Period
- PM Snack 3:00 - 3:30 PM
- Center/Free Choice
- Outdoor Play

Dismissal

- Meal times may vary slightly.
- During the warmer months meal times, free choice, and table time may be moved outside. On the contrary during colder months outdoor play may be limited, the goal is a minimum 60 minutes outside daily.

Outdoor Play

At Little Minds Childcare & Preschool we pride ourselves on the use of our outdoor environment & the benefits outdoor play provides to the children in our program. Through outdoor play children can learn & build upon a variety of skills.

- Outdoor play invites children to practice familiar concepts in a different way
- Outdoor play provides the opportunity for children to take risk in a safe environment
- Outdoor play invites children to be apart of their community
- Outdoor play provides the opportunity for freedom of movement
- Outdoor play engages children with natural materials supporting S.T.E.A.M. concepts
- And so much more! Outdoor play is essential in our learning process!

In our program it is very important for children to wear weather & play appropriate clothing. This ensures the children are prepared on a daily basis to explore in our learning environment. Weather & play appropriate clothing can vary depending on the season. If you have any questions on weather & play appropriate clothing please ask Mrs Katlyn or another Little Minds staff member.

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool strives to make outdoor play apart of our daily learning routine. However, there may be some occasions where this is not safely possible such as:

- Feels like temperature above 90 degrees Fahrenheit or below 10 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Air quality index has reached an unhealthy level
- Or another unanticipated safety concern arises

If outdoor play is not available due to a safety concern Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will provide children with extra indoor gross motor play.

Kindergarten Readiness

It is important to know all children learn in different ways & all children learn at a different pace. Most importantly, at Little Minds Childcare & Preschool we value & believe in each child's unique educational journey.

Kindergarten readiness can be a heavily discussed topic typically beginning when a child turns three. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool recognizes the worry many families have regarding kindergarten readiness & hope to alleviate some of that worry by outlining some of our specific curriculum procedures.

Social/Emotional skills Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will teach & focus on first:

- Ability to safely & independently follow directions
- Ability to express needs & wants safely
- Ability to express a variety of large and fine motor skills
- Ability to express a variety of feelings & emotions safely

If your child has the ability to do all of the above, Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will move forward with age appropriate early learning academic skills such as:

- Identifying uppercase & lowercase letters
- Corresponding letter name & sound
- Identifying numbers
- Identifying shapes
- Counting with a 1:1 correspondence
- Writing first name
- Completing & creating patterns
- Clapping & counting syllables
- And more

There is no timeline at Little Minds Childcare & Preschool in which children should have mastered all of the above early learning academic skills. Our goal is to provide children with a strong foundation & a love for learning to take with them to kindergarten and beyond.

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will update this procedure as often as necessary to best support all children in the classroom.

At this time Little Minds Childcare & Preschool does not offer preschool graduation. As we are a year round program, we celebrate learning everyday!

Screen Time

- Rarely 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. Movie 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. Parent/Guardians will also be sent a blank copy of an ASQ that they may choose to complete & bring to discuss at parent/teacher conferences. If possible, Little Minds may also arrange to have developmental screenings completed by a MT Early Intervention Specialist. All Little Minds families will be notified before these screenings occur.

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 will not force any child to "say sorry". Our focus in behavioral situations that involve multiple children is to teach the child to become aware of their actions & the effect they may have on the people around them. We encourage the child to check in on their peer after a situation has occurred.
- When redirecting or assisting children Little Minds Childcare & Preschool staff will use positive language focusing on what the child can do in that moment.
- 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 enrollment or make changes to a child's attendance plan at any time.

Biting

In an early learning group environment there is a chance your child may bite or be a child that was bitten. Biting has the potential to bring up a lot of emotions for both children involved & their families. Biting is developmental & can occur for many reasons. Common reasons a child may bite include but are not limited to:

- Tooth pain
- Exploring cause and effect
- Communicating a need or feeling
- Responding to a peer's actions

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will make every age appropriate attempt to prevent biting from occurring. However, if a biting situation occurs Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will do the following:

- First, attend to the child who was bitten. The child may be emotional and may need a hug or a quiet space in the classroom. If necessary first aid will be applied to the bitten area.
- Next, communicate with the child who did the biting. If age appropriate also encourage the child who was bitten to express their feelings to the child who did the biting.

- Notify the family of the child who was bitten via Brightwheel.
 - Notify the family of the child who did the biting via Brightwheel if biting appears to be an ongoing occurrence
- . Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will maintain privacy & confidentiality when discussing biting situations with families.

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will also offer a variety of resources to the child who is biting & this will vary greatly depending on the child's age. Biting resources for the child could range from an appropriate teething tool to physical or visual communication tools.

Research has proven that when a child is biting in a group environment, they will best learn how NOT to bite in that same group environment following consistent rules and expectations. In extreme cases a child will be excluded from attending temporarily or permanently due to biting. This will be determined on a case by case basis & only if it is in the best interest of both the child doing the biting & the other children in the classroom.

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool is diligent on staying up to date on early childhood development biting research & is happy to provide additional biting resources for parent/guardians if they request. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool also reserves the right to alter the biting procedure at any time in the best interest of all children in the classroom.

Classroom Rules & Expectations

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool practices three main rules & expectations:

- Be Safe.
- Be Kind.
- Be Helpful.

These three main rules & expectations will be used to encourage positive behavior & redirect negative behavior. In addition to our three main rules & expectations we also practice the following specific rules & expectations:

- Gun or shooting games are not allowed in our program. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will redirect the child or children should they choose to play these games.
- Rough and tumble play such as wrestling and chase is allowed if the participating children have communicated and consented clearly to each

other. A child may change their mind at any time and communicate this to a peer or teacher. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will intervene if safety becomes a concern.

- All Little Minds Childcare & Preschool students are expected to talk to both peers & teachers kindly. With any behavior or expectation Little Minds Childcare & Preschool models this for all children by using & encouraging calm voices, saying please and thank you, or other situational specific verbiage that may be needed to communicate a want or need.
- All Little Minds Childcare & Preschool students will be taught and encouraged to treat indoor and outdoor equipment & materials safely and respectfully. Caring for our classroom is apart of our daily routine.

Rules and expectations specifications may change dependent upon the ages or abilities of children currently in the classroom. If a parent/guardian has any questions or concerns regarding classrooms rules & expectations please ask Mrs Katlyn or another Little Minds staff member.

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. Children under 24 months old will not participate in field trips that require them to be transported in a vehicle.
- 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.
- Parent/Guardians are welcome to join their child on their field trip by meeting our class at the field trip location.
- 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, parents/guardians will provide all meal items. For children 13 months-6 years old all meals are provided by Little Minds Childcare & Preschool.
- All meals are served family style. Family style dining encourages healthy eating choices & independence as well as the opportunity to practice communication and fine motor skills. Meals may be served inside or outside dependent upon weather.
- Whenever possible Little Minds Childcare & Preschool staff will model healthy eating & table expectations with the children during meal times. There may be occasions where children are being safely monitored during meal times without an adult directly at the table.
- If a child arrives after a mealtime due to an appointment it is recommended they eat before arriving.
- Outside food is prohibited unless approved by Little Minds Childcare & Preschool. 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.
- Little Minds staff may request additional documentation from the parent/guardian or health care provider if a child has a food allergy.

Parents/Guardians in the Program

Family 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 in or around the facility.

- We ask that all Little Minds families follow the same safe, kind, and helpful classroom rules & expectations when dropping off, picking up, or attending school events.
- It is understood that parents/guardians or other family members 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 family conduct will be grounds for termination.

Family Communication

- Parents/Guardians can contact Little Minds Childcare & Preschool through Brightwheel, phone 406-596-2830, or email katlyn@littlemindsmt.com. During business hours teachers will be busy with the children in the classroom, if you need to reach us with a question or concern please message in Brightwheel first. Parents/Guardians are welcome to call anytime. However, a phone call will be returned as time allows which may take 1-2 business days or more if it is a weekend or holiday.
- If a parent/guardian needs to communicate with Little Minds Childcare & Preschool with a private/sensitive question or concern please communicate this through Brightwheel or request a parent/teacher conference. This ensures other families or children are not privy to confidential information.
- 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 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.
- If 2+ days have passed with no communication either through Brightwheel, phone, or email and the child has not been in attendance during their scheduled days; Little Minds Childcare & Preschool may call emergency services for a wellness check.
- 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 family board so we can schedule a day that works best for everyone.

- If there is a legal custody arrangement or parenting plan in place we may request a copy of it during enrollment or once the agreement/plan is in place. This is to ensure we are following the agreement/plan regarding who is allowed to drop off/pick up the child, who can have access to the child's records, or any other details pertaining to the health & safety of the child at Little Minds Childcare & Preschool.

Drop Off Procedures

- Parking is available directly in front of the building or along N Washington St. Please be aware that Little Minds shares a parking lot with another business and at times the parking lot may be busy.
- 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 month's tuition statement.
- The parent/guardian may be asked to wake a child upon arrival so the Little Minds staff member can verify child wellness.

Pick Up Procedures

- Parking is available directly in front of the building or along N Washington St. Please be aware that Little Minds shares a parking lot with another business and at times the parking lot may be busy.
- 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 driver's 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, to anyone who refuses to show identification, or to anyone not listed on the child's emergency contact sheet.

- Parents/Guardians are required to sign out their children(ren) on the Brightwheel app. If another authorized adult is picking up the child, they are required to follow the same procedure. Failure to sign 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.
- Please arrive at pickup with enough time to assist your child in leaving for the day & time to communicate with the teacher if needed. Late fees begin promptly at 5:00 PM M-Th & 3:45 PM F, or at another specified early release time.

Family Involvement in the Classroom

Little Minds Childcare & Preschool recognizes families as their child's first teacher & value the relationships we create with both the children in our classrooms & their families. One of the ways we will support our students & their families is by offering a variety of classroom events that families are invited to participate in. Little Minds Childcare & Preschool may alter the events offered at any time to best support the students and families in our program. Currently Little Minds Childcare & Preschool offers the following events that families are invited to participate in:

- Easter Egg Hunt
- End of Summer Family BBQ
- Pumpkin Decorating Contest
- Cookie Decorating Party

Little Minds families are also welcome to join our classroom to read or interact with students during our regular school routine. If Little Minds families would like to share or present information about their job or family culture please let Little Minds Childcare & Preschool know ahead of time so we can prepare for it.

Health & Safety Overview

As part of the enrollment process 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 child's 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.
- A 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 Mrs Katlyn 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 to attend or sent home.

- If a parent/guardian has been called to pick up they will have 30 minutes to make arrangements for their child to be picked up and be on their way. **If a child is sent home, they will need to be symptom AND medication free for 24 hours in order to return.** This includes but is not limited to Tylenol, Ibuprofen, or a prescribed antibiotic. If a child needs medication to alleviate illness symptoms this is a clear indicator the child needs to stay home. If a child has been sent home due to illness under no circumstances will the child be permitted back into the facility the same day.
- Exclusion from attending is based on symptoms present NOT the cause of the symptom. The time in which a child needs to be absent due to illness is subject to staff discretion and will be discussed with the parent/guardian. Some illnesses will require a longer absence period.
- Some illnesses may require a signed medical provider's note in order for the child to be permitted to attend. However, a signed medical note does NOT override this policy or permit a child to attend without approval from Mrs Katlyn.

Please refer to Little Minds Health & Illness policy for more information.

Oral Hygiene

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will provide all children with the opportunity to brush their teeth once per day with or without assistance. Providing the opportunity to do this in the classroom has been linked to a lifetime of healthy habits & lessens the likelihood children will have dental health pain or fear.

The exact time and routine will vary dependent upon classroom need & child's age. It is recommended all children brush their teeth twice a day at home with or without assistance.

- Little Minds Childcare & Preschool will provide the necessary age appropriate toothbrushes & toothpaste and will replace these items as necessary. If your child has an allergy to toothpaste or a sensitivity to toothpaste ingredients please let Little Minds Childcare & Preschool know.

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