



Parent & Guardian Handbook

**Sprouting Minds Early Learning
Center**

Effective Date: 06/08/2026
Last Revision Date: 08/06/2026

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Sprouting Minds Parent & Guardian Handbook

Introduction and Welcome

Welcome to Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center!

We are thrilled to have your family as part of our community. At Sprouting Minds, we provide a nurturing, safe, and stimulating environment where children can thrive socially, emotionally, and intellectually. Our dedicated educators are committed to supporting each child's individual needs while fostering respect, creativity, and a love of learning. We value strong partnerships with parents and encourage open communication to ensure a successful childcare experience.

This handbook will provide you with the information needed to understand the Sprouting Mind's operating policies and procedures, daily activities, and state standards that govern childcare in Ohio. It is impossible to outline every specific scenario or outcome, but we are providing a blueprint of expectations for our families, children, volunteers, interns, and staff. All decisions are deferred to our Administrator, and they are final.

All information is dated to clarify the effective date for all policies. We hope you will work with us and understand that although the policy information may appear somewhat restrictive, the overall outcome provides for the needs of all our families, the center, and its employees. Please acknowledge these needs by reading this handbook in its entirety and abiding by the policies set forth. Your support will enable the center to maintain safe standards and allow us to continue to provide high-quality child-care services. In addition to reading this Parent Handbook, we request that each family sign the Parent Handbook Agreement enclosed in this packet. The agreement verifies your understanding and acknowledgement of center expectations. Our ultimate goal is to foster a parent/center partnership. Please feel free to contact a center representative should you have any questions and/or concerns regarding the enclosed information.

Please Note: Throughout this handbook, all references to parent(s) should be understood to include legal guardians as well. While we acknowledge that some families may have more than one child attending our center, most references in this handbook denote a single child per family. Thank you for entrusting Sprouting Minds with the childcare needs of your family.

Mission

At Sprouting Minds, our mission is to cultivate a nurturing and inclusive early childhood learning environment where every child is inspired to grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually. We are dedicated to providing a developmentally appropriate, play based curriculum that encourages curiosity, fosters creativity, and supports a strong foundation for lifelong learning, while also incorporating age-appropriate biblical literacy and principles that promote character, integrity, kindness, and respect.

We believe that early education is not only preparation for school, but preparation for life. Our program is guided by core values of respect, empathy, collaboration, integrity, and faith. We strive to recognize and support the unique potential of every child by providing opportunities that honor individual learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and developmental readiness, while introducing foundational biblical teachings in a way that is meaningful and accessible to young learners.

Our passionate team of educators partner closely with families to build trusting relationships and to ensure every child feels seen, safe, supported, and valued. Through intentional teaching practices, enriched environments, and a focus on the whole child, we create joyful experiences that integrate learning, growth, and spiritual development.

Sprouting Minds is committed to continuous improvement and active engagement with our community. Together with our families, we seek to nurture kind, confident, and resilient children who are empowered to thrive both inside and outside the classroom, grounded in strong character and a growing understanding of faith.

Vision/Philosophy on Education

At Sprouting Minds, our vision is to nurture the next generation of learners, leaders, and compassionate individuals by fostering a love for discovery, creativity, personal growth, and faith in every child. We strive to provide a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment where children feel empowered to reach their full potential while developing a strong foundation rooted in biblical principles.

Our philosophy is grounded in the belief that children learn best through play, exploration, and engagement. We view each child as capable and naturally curious, and we support their growth through hands-on, child centered learning experiences that also incorporate age-appropriate biblical literacy, encouraging character, integrity, kindness, and respect.

We are committed to nurturing the whole child socially, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually. Through a developmentally appropriate and research-based curriculum, we integrate academic learning, social emotional development, and faith-based principles into daily activities. Our teachers create enriching experiences that build on each child's interests and developmental level while promoting positive character and a love for learning.

Through ongoing observation and partnership with families, we support each child's unique journey, working together to develop confident, resilient children who are prepared to thrive both academically and in their faith.

Student/Parent and Family Definition

In the Sprouting Minds Family Handbook and all related forms and correspondence, the terms "student" or "students" refer to the child or children enrolled in our program. The term "parent" or "parents" refers to the adult or adults who are legally responsible for the child. This may include a biological, step, adoptive, or foster parent, as well as a legal guardian appointed by the court.

Parents determine who is included when referring to their “family.” This may include individuals such as siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as close friends or neighbors who play a significant role in the child’s life.

Certain rights and responsibilities are reserved solely for parents. These include, but are not limited to, enrolling the child in the program, attending intake appointments, granting permission for participation in field trips, maintaining responsibility for all fees, and communicating with staff regarding their child’s needs and development. Parents are also responsible for identifying authorized individuals permitted to pick up their child and for designating appropriate emergency contacts.

Enrollment Procedure and Waitlist

Sprouting Minds is committed to providing an organized and supportive enrollment experience for all families. Our enrollment and waitlist process is structured to promote transparency, ensure fairness, and accommodate the needs of prospective families as our program grows.

Enrollment Roadmap for Success (5 Steps)

1. Schedule A Tour

Interested families schedule a tour, where they'll receive a program overview, see the learning environments, and meet staff.

2. Complete Enrollment Application

Families ready to move forward submit the completed Enrollment Application along with the non-refundable registration fee, securing their child's position in the enrollment process.

3. Enrollment Review Call

Upon application review, the director or enrollment coordinator follows up with families by phone to discuss the child's unique needs, confirm readiness for group care, and review policies and expectations.

4. Enrollment Packet & Orientation

Accepted families complete the full enrollment packet and attend orientation together — combining paperwork with handbook review and Q&A in one visit.

A brief transition period may be scheduled for younger children to gradually acclimate.

5. Confirmation & Welcome

Once all forms, fees, and orientation requirements are complete, a confirmed start date is issued. Weekly tuition begins per the center's regular payment schedule.

Waitlist Policy:

Due to limited class sizes and high demand, Sprouting Minds maintains a structured waiting list.

1. Waitlist Application: Families who wish to join the waitlist must complete a Waitlist Application and submit a non-refundable waitlist fee. This does not guarantee enrollment but secures the family's place in line.

2. Priority Placement Considerations: While placements are primarily offered on a first-come, first-served basis, the following groups may receive priority consideration:

- Siblings of currently enrolled children
- Children of Sprouting Minds staff members
- Alumni families returning

3. Notification of Availability: When an opening becomes available, the family at the top of the list will be contacted by phone and email. Families will have 48–72 hours to respond and accept the spot. If declined, the spot will be offered to the next family on the list.

4. Annual Update: Waitlisted families are required to update their interest and contact information annually to remain active on the list. Inactive or unresponsive families may be removed.

5. Pre-Enrollment Requirements: Once offered a space, the same steps outlined in the enrollment procedure will apply, including the application packet, fee payment, and orientation session.

We encourage interested families to join the waitlist as early as possible and stay in regular contact with our office to express continued interest and updated needs (such as schedule or age group).

Operation Information

Sprouting Minds is committed to maintaining clear, consistent operations to ensure the safety, well-being, and educational success of every child in our care. Below is an overview of key operational procedures and expectations for families.

Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM. The center is closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and all major federal holidays.

Families may drop off their child as early as 6:00 AM, and all children must arrive no later than 9:45 AM each day unless prior arrangements have been approved by the center. This arrival deadline helps minimize classroom disruptions, supports consistent routines, and allows children to fully participate in planned learning activities.

Daily Schedule & Meals

To support a structured and nurturing environment, Sprouting Minds follows a daily schedule that includes meals, snacks, learning activities, and opportunities for play.

Breakfast:

- Breakfast is available until 8:50 AM for children who need breakfast upon arrival.
- Families who would like their child to participate in breakfast must ensure their child arrives during this timeframe.

Lunch:

- Lunch will be served at approximately 12:00 PM each day.

Afternoon Snack:

- A snack will be provided at approximately 2:30 PM.

Late Afternoon Snack:

- Children who remain in care through the late afternoon will receive an additional snack at approximately 5:00 PM.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up Expectations

Families are welcome to drop off their child beginning at 6:00 AM. All children must be signed in upon arrival using the center's designated sign-in system.

Children must be picked up no later than 6:00 PM each day. Families arriving after closing time may be subject to late pick-up fees.

Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that all authorized individuals picking up their child are listed with the center and are prepared to provide identification when requested.

Attendance & Communication

Families are required to communicate any absences, late arrivals, or schedule changes through Brightwheel or by contacting the front office. Advance notice helps our team maintain appropriate classroom planning and required supervision ratios.

Families are encouraged to provide notice as soon as possible regarding any changes that may impact their child's attendance schedule.

The center reserves the right to adjust hours of operation or close due to emergencies, severe weather, or unforeseen circumstances. Families will be notified as soon as possible should these situations occur.

Communication Channels

Sprouting Minds prioritizes consistent and open communication with families. Updates and important information may be shared through:

- Brightwheel messaging and updates
- Email communications
- Parent newsletters
- Bulletin board postings

- Scheduled parent-teacher conferences

Urgent communications may be shared through phone calls, text messages, email, or Brightwheel notifications as needed.

We value our partnership with families and believe consistent communication is essential in creating a positive, safe, and enriching experience for every child at Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center.

Holiday Closures

Our center will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

- New Year's Eve + Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Presidents Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Eve + Day
- Christmas Eve + Day

Our program observes an Annual Renewal and Professional Development Period, which is a dedicated one-week timeframe set aside for staff to refresh and reorganize classrooms, complete deep cleaning of designated spaces, and participate in training and development opportunities to better support the children and families we serve.

Parental Involvement

Sprouting Minds believes in building a strong community through active parental involvement. We view parents as essential partners in their child's early education and development. By fostering open communication, shared goals, and mutual respect, we strive to create a nurturing and collaborative environment that benefits all children and families.

Here are the ways parents can be involved in our program:

1. **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** Held biannually, these conferences allow for individualized discussions about your child's development, progress, strengths, and any areas for support.
2. **Volunteering Opportunities:** Parents are encouraged to volunteer during classroom activities, special events, field trips, and enrichment sessions. Your participation enriches our programming and strengthens the connection between home and the center.

3. **Family Events and Celebrations:** We host regular family-centered events such as holiday programs, literacy nights, and cultural celebrations where families can participate and contribute.
4. **Classroom Contributions:** We welcome parents to share skills, read to the class, or lead a project related to their work or cultural background.
5. **Daily Communication:** Parents receive regular updates through daily sheets, communication apps such as Brightwheel, and bulletin boards. Teachers are always available for quick check-ins or scheduled meetings.
6. **Surveys and Feedback:** Parents will periodically receive surveys or feedback forms to ensure the quality of care and education continues to meet the needs of families.
7. **At-Home Learning Support:** We provide take-home activities, reading logs, and developmental resources to help parents extend learning into the home environment.

We recognize and respect each family's availability and capacity to be involved, and we appreciate all efforts, big or small. Together, we can create a strong foundation for your child's future success.

Tuition and Payment Policy

Tuition payments are due in advance and must be paid in full by the end of the day each Friday for the upcoming week of care. Failure to submit payment by the stated deadline may result in late fees, disruption of services, or additional action as determined by the Center.

To continue providing high quality care and to meet rising operational costs, the Center may implement an annual tuition adjustment. Families will receive a minimum of 30 days advance written notice of any changes. We remain committed to supporting families through any adjustments with care, transparency, and understanding.

Late Pickup Policy

Students must be picked up by their scheduled pick-up time. A late pickup fee of \$1 per minute will be automatically assessed to the student's account for any time beyond the scheduled pickup.

All outstanding late pickup fees must be paid in full or have an approved written payment arrangement in place with administration prior to the next scheduled drop off.

Returned Payment Policy

If a tuition payment is returned due to insufficient funds, declined transaction, closed account, or any other reason, a returned payment fee of \$20 will be assessed to the student's account.

The original tuition amount plus the returned payment fee must be paid in full within 48 hours of notification. Payments must be made using an approved guaranteed form of payment, such as cash, money order, or another method approved by the Center.

If payment is not resolved within the required timeframe, services may be suspended until the account is brought current. Continued enrollment is contingent upon maintaining a current account balance.

Grouping Children

Class ratio sizes are listed below:

AGE	STAFF/CHILD RATIO
Infants (6 weeks – 12 months) Seedlings	1 to 5
Waddlers (12 months and under 18 months) Little Sprouts	1 to 6
Toddlers (18 months and under 2 ½ years) Busy Bees	1 to 7
Preschool Readiness (2 ½ years and under 3 years) Little Blossoms	1 to 8
Preschool (3 years and under 4 years) Little Explorers	1 to 12

Kindergarten Readiness (4 years and under 5 years) Sprouting Sunshine's	1 to 14
Kindergarten/School Age (5 years and under 10 years) Rooting Rangers	1 to 18
Older School Agers (10 years to 12) Trailblazers	1 to 20

Classroom Transitions

We do understand that transitioning classrooms is a major milestone in your child's life. It is exciting, but at the same time it can be a nervous experience for the parents.

Our goal is to make your child's transition as smooth as possible. When it is nearing the time for your child to graduate to the next classroom, here is the procedure that we will follow:

- Parents will be notified when your child is ready to take this exciting step to the next classroom.
- You will receive your child's new classroom assignment, a welcome packet, and a transition letter. The letter will include the expected transition date, and any important information needed from you, the parent.
- You will be required to sign the letter and return it to the Administrator before your child graduates to the next class. If you have any questions or concerns, you may schedule an appointment with the Administrator.

Sample Classroom Schedule

While individual classroom schedules may vary slightly based on age group, developmental needs, and classroom routines, the following represents a typical daily structure at Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center. Our schedule is intentionally designed to provide a balance of faith-based learning, academic enrichment, physical activity, structured guidance, rest, and child-led exploration.

Time	Activity	Details
6:00 AM – 8:50 AM	Arrival + Morning Free Play + Breakfast	Students may begin arriving at 6:00 AM. Children participate in supervised classroom activities, learning centers, and/or free play as they arrive. Breakfast will be served until 8:50 AM

8:50 AM – 9:45 AM	Morning Arrival & Classroom Activities	Final arrivals, classroom exploration, quiet centers, and preparation for the day. All children must arrive by 9:45 AM unless prior arrangements have been approved.
9:45 AM – 10:10 AM	Morning Assembly & Community Gathering	Students gather for prayer, morning devotion, Bible verse of the day, announcements, and daily expectations.
10:10 AM – 10:20 AM	Transition & Bathroom Break	Bathroom routines, handwashing, and transition into classroom activities.
10:20 AM – 10:50 AM	Worship & Biblical Teaching	Worship, Bible stories, character development, and faith-based lessons.
10:50 AM – 11:45 AM	Educational Enrichment	Developmentally appropriate learning activities including literacy, math, science/STEM exploration, arts and crafts, creative learning, and small-group instruction.
11:45 AM – 12:00 PM	Transition to Lunch	Bathroom routines, handwashing, classroom clean-up, and transition to assigned lunch areas.
12:00 PM – 12:30 PM	Lunch	Lunch is served daily at approximately 12:00 PM. Students practice appropriate mealtime routines and social skills.
12:30 PM – 12:45 PM	Lunch Clean-Up & Transition	Students assist with clean-up, complete hygiene routines, and prepare for afternoon activities.
12:45 PM – 2:15 PM	Rest, Quiet Learning & Classroom Activities	Students participate in rest time, independent reading, quiet centers, calming activities, educational activities, or age-appropriate relaxation time.
2:15 PM – 2:30 PM	Life Skills & Daily Reflection	Students participate in practical life skills, classroom discussions, review of daily learning, and reflection activities.
2:30 PM – 3:00 PM	Afternoon Snack & Clean-Up	Afternoon snack is provided at approximately 2:30 PM, followed by clean-up and transition.
3:00 PM – 3:15 PM	Bathroom Break & Transition	Hygiene routines, gathering belongings, and preparation for afternoon activities.
3:15 PM – 4:30 PM	Enrichment, Movement & Choice Activities	Students participate in enrichment activities, gym time, outdoor play (weather permitting), creative activities, learning centers, and supervised play.
4:30 PM – 5:00 PM	Classroom Wind-Down & Continued Learning	Children participate in quieter activities, classroom centers, and teacher-guided activities while preparing for pick-up.
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Late Afternoon Snack & Parent Pick-Up	Children remaining in care receive an additional snack at approximately 5:00 PM. Students participate in supervised activities while families complete pick-up.

Daily Schedule Notes

- All children must arrive by 9:45 AM to ensure they can fully participate in classroom routines and planned activities.
- Meal and snack times may vary slightly based on classroom needs, age group, and developmental considerations.

- Classroom schedules may be adjusted to best support the needs of each age group while maintaining required supervision and learning standards.
- Sprouting Minds incorporates intentional opportunities throughout the day for children to grow academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Each classroom will post its specific daily schedule and adjust it as needed to reflect the needs and rhythms of the children. Families are encouraged to review classroom schedules regularly and communicate with teachers about any questions or concerns.

To support a smooth transition into the day and meet the unique developmental needs of each age group, drop-off procedures will vary by classroom.

- **Infants, Waddlers, and Toddlers:** Children enrolled in infant, waddler, and toddler classrooms will be dropped off directly in their assigned classroom. This allows for a more personalized transition, ensures proper handoff between families and classroom teachers, and allows caregivers to receive important information regarding the child's morning routine, meals, sleep schedule, medications, or any other needs.
- **Preschool-Aged Children and Up:** Preschool-aged children will follow the center's designated arrival procedures as communicated by Sprouting Minds. Families are expected to complete the sign-in process upon arrival and ensure their child is safely transitioned into the care of center staff.

All families are required to complete the daily sign-in process upon arrival. Parents and guardians are encouraged to communicate any important updates with their child's teacher during drop-off to support a safe and successful day.

For the safety and supervision of all children, families should not leave their child until they have completed the handoff with an authorized Sprouting Minds.

Sample Daily Menu

Sprouting Minds participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and follows USDA guidelines to ensure children receive nutritious and well-balanced meals throughout the day. Below is a sample daily menu featuring breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. Menus rotate weekly and accommodate dietary restrictions and allergies when appropriate.

Example:

Breakfast:

- Whole grain toast with sunflower butter
- Banana slices
- 1% Milk

Lunch:

- Baked chicken tenders
- Brown rice
- Steamed green beans
- Apple slices
- 1% Milk

Afternoon Snack:

- Yogurt with granola
- Orange wedges
- Water

Weekly menus are available upon request. We encourage families to inform staff of any food allergies, religious restrictions, or specific dietary needs to ensure every child receives appropriate meals.

Supplies Needed

Parents are expected to provide the following items, clearly labeled with their child's full name:

- Two (2) complete changes of weather-appropriate clothing, including:
 - Two (2) tops
 - Two (2) bottoms or dresses
 - Two (2) pairs of underwear (if applicable)
 - Two (2) pairs of socks
 - *Infants may have onesies, sleepers, or other age-appropriate clothing in place of traditional outfits.*
- Diapers and wipes (if applicable)
- Labeled bottles, formula, breast milk, or a sippy cup, as appropriate for the child's age
- A blanket for nap/rest time (brought on Monday and taken home each Friday for laundering)
- Any required medications accompanied by the appropriate authorization forms
- Seasonal outerwear, such as coats, hats, gloves, boots, or other weather-appropriate items
- Families are responsible for replenishing clothing and supplies as needed throughout the year to ensure their child is prepared for daily activities and unexpected accidents.

Children's Clothing & Footwear

To ensure the safety, comfort, and full participation of every child, families are expected to send their child to Sprouting Minds dressed appropriately for each day's activities and weather conditions.

- Children should arrive each day dressed in comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing suitable for active play, learning, and exploration.

- Children participate in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Families should ensure their child is dressed appropriately for the day's forecast, including seasonal outerwear when necessary.
- Closed-toe, closed-heel shoes are required every day. Sandals, flip-flops, Crocs without a secure sport strap, high heels, or other unsafe footwear are not permitted, as they present a safety risk during indoor and outdoor activities.
- Clothing should allow children to comfortably participate in art, sensory exploration, outdoor play, physical movement, and other hands-on learning experiences. Families should expect clothing to become gently soiled during normal daily activities.
- Children should arrive with the required extra clothing listed in the Supplies Needed section. These extra clothing items should remain at the center and be replaced promptly after use.
- Jewelry, valuable accessories, and clothing displaying inappropriate language, graphics, or images should not be worn to the center. Sprouting Minds is not responsible for lost, damaged, or misplaced personal belongings.
- For safety reasons, children should not wear clothing with long drawstrings, excessively loose-fitting garments, or other attire that may present a tripping, entanglement, or strangulation hazard.

Sprouting Minds reserves the right to require a change of clothing or footwear if an item is determined to pose a safety risk or interferes with a child's ability to safely participate in daily activities.

Personal Student Items Protocol

To maintain a safe, focused, and equitable learning environment for all children, Sprouting Minds asks families to follow the guidelines below regarding items brought from home, including personal belongings, outside food, and electronic devices.

Outside Toys and Personal Items

Children should not bring toys, games, collectible items, or other personal belongings from home unless specific permission has been granted in advance by a classroom teacher or the Administrator (such as for a designated show-and-tell day or classroom activity).

- Outside toys often become a source of lost items, damaged items, or disputes between children, and may distract from planned classroom activities and learning objectives.
- Comfort items for infants and toddlers (such as a labeled pacifier, small blanket, or single soft comfort object for naptime) are permitted and encouraged, and are not considered a "toy" under this policy.
- Any approved personal item must be labeled with the child's full name. Sprouting Minds is not responsible for lost, damaged, or misplaced personal belongings, including approved items.
- Staff reserve the right to have a child return an unapproved item to their bag or vehicle at drop-off, or to hold the item safely until pick-up.

- Sprouting Minds is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen items brought to the center.

Outside Snacks and Meals

Sprouting Minds participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and provides all meals and snacks throughout the day. Outside food and snacks brought from home are not permitted unless specific permission has been granted in advance by the Administrator.

- This policy protects children with food allergies or sensitivities, supports consistency with our CACFP nutrition requirements, and helps staff manage classroom food safety.
- Exceptions may be made for documented medical, dietary, or religious needs (such as infant formula, breast milk, or a medically necessary specialized diet). Families requiring an exception must complete the appropriate authorization form with the Administrator prior to bringing any outside food.
- Any approved outside food item must be clearly labeled with the child's full name and, when applicable, kept separate from center-provided meals.

Cell Phones, Tablets, and Other Electronic Devices

Children's personal electronic devices — including but not limited to cell phones, tablets, smart watches, handheld gaming devices, and similar items — must remain powered off or silenced and stored away (in a bag, cubby, or designated storage area) for the entire duration of the school day.

- Devices may only be used with specific permission from a classroom teacher or the Administrator, such as for an approved educational activity.
- This policy helps minimize classroom distraction, supports child-to-child and child-to-teacher engagement, and protects the privacy of all children and families, since photos or recordings taken by unauthorized devices are not permitted on the premises.
- Sprouting Minds is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen electronic devices brought to the center.

Addressing Repeated Violations

This policy applies to all items covered above — personal belongings, outside food, and electronic devices. Occasional oversights are understandable, and staff will handle first-time instances informally at drop-off or pick-up. If a family or child does not consistently follow this policy, the following steps will be taken:

- Staff will document the occurrence and notify the parent or guardian the same day.
- The classroom teacher or Administrator will discuss the policy with the family to identify barriers and confirm understanding.
- Continued disregard for this policy after notification may result in a written notice from the Administrator outlining expectations going forward.

- Persistent non-compliance may be treated as a violation of center policy under the Termination of Services section of this handbook and could result in further administrative action.

Families are asked to review this policy with their child so that expectations are clear and consistent from day one. Staff are happy to answer any questions about specific items, exceptions, or approved uses.

Arrivals/Departures/Center Visitation

For the safety and well-being of all children, parents or legal guardians are required to accompany their child into and out of the building each day. Individuals under the age of 18 are not permitted to drop off or pick up any child.

To ensure the security and confidentiality of all enrolled children and staff, access to the center is limited to legal guardians, enrolling parents, authorized pick-up contacts, and approved staff members from partnering childcare programs involved in dual care arrangements. Only these authorized individuals may enter the facility to inquire about or check on a child's status.

Access to classrooms and other areas of Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center for non-parent visitors is limited to essential purposes only, in order to maintain a safe, secure, and minimally disruptive environment. This does not limit a parent or guardian's right, described below, to access the center to see or check on their own enrolled child.

Parents and guardians of enrolled children have the right to access the center during operating hours in accordance with Ohio licensing requirements. All access must follow established sign-in procedures, security protocols, and staff direction while on site.

Any additional visits beyond routine drop-off and pick-up, such as delivering items including milk, formula, or clothing, must be coordinated with and approved by the center in advance.

The center reserves the right to guide, limit, or reschedule non-essential visitor access as needed to support classroom operations, supervision requirements, and the safety of children and staff. This does not apply to a parent or guardian's right to access the center to see or check on their own enrolled child, as described in the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) section of this handbook.

Reporting Late Arrivals, Absences, and Vacations

Consistent attendance is essential to your child's development and to maintaining a stable classroom environment. At Sprouting Minds, we ask parents to notify us promptly of any changes in their child's schedule, including late arrivals, absences, and planned vacations.

Late Arrivals:

The centers cut-off time to arrive is promptly at 9:45 AM. No child will be allowed to arrive after 9:45 AM without approval from administration, doctor's/hospital note, or

previously approved appointment note (by administration). Advance notice allows us to adjust staffing, meal planning, and classroom routines. Excessive or frequent late arrivals may disrupt your child's transition into the day and interfere with planned learning activities.

Absences:

Parents or guardians are asked to report any child absences by 9:15 AM on the day of the absence. Please include the reason for the absence, particularly if it is related to an illness or communicable condition. This information helps us maintain a healthy environment and fulfills certain state licensing and food program reporting requirements.

To ensure appropriate staffing, classroom ratios, and meal planning, families are encouraged to notify the center of any known absences as early as possible. Last-minute absences or same-day cancellations during a scheduled week of care will be charged the full tuition amount, as staffing and resources have already been allocated for your child's enrollment. Tuition reserves your child's space and is not based on daily attendance.

Vacations:

Each family will be allowed 2 weeks (10 days) of vacation in a calendar year. Tuition will NOT be due in these instances. For extended absences, outside the allotted 2-weeks, tuition is still due, unless otherwise outlined in your enrollment agreement.

Maintaining communication about travel plans helps ensure continuity of care and supports transitions back into the program. We ask that you make us aware of all vacations with a minimum of 1-weeks notice. Administration does have the right to waive the 1-week notice in extraordinary circumstances.

We appreciate your partnership in helping us maintain a well-organized and responsive learning environment for all children.

Pickup Authorization

Only individuals listed on your child's Authorized Pickup Form may pick up your child. All authorized individuals must present photo identification.

To make changes to the list, the parent/guardian must provide written notice or update their records in person. For your child's safety, phone authorizations are only accepted in emergencies and will require identity verification.

Safe Sleep Policy and Procedure

Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center follows all safe sleep requirements in accordance with the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) and the Ohio Administrative Code. These practices are designed to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and ensure a safe sleep environment for all infants in care.

This policy applies to all children under 12 months of age and to any child over 12 months who continues to sleep in a crib. All infants will be placed on their backs to sleep

unless there is a completed and signed medical statement from a licensed physician specifying an alternate sleep position. Infants who are able to roll independently will be placed on their backs initially and may remain in a position they assume on their own.

Infants will sleep only in a safety approved crib that meets current federal standards. Each crib will have a firm mattress with a tight fitting sheet and will be free of all loose items. Blankets, pillows, bumper pads, stuffed animals, positioning devices, and any other soft objects are not permitted. Only 1 infant will be placed in a crib at a time.

Infants will be actively supervised at all times during sleep. Staff will conduct and document visual checks of each sleeping infant, at least, every 15 minutes to ensure the child is breathing comfortably and is not in distress. Infants will remain within sight and sound of staff and will never be left unattended in a sleep area.

Infants will not be placed to sleep in swings, car seats, bouncy seats, or any other non approved equipment. If an infant falls asleep in a car seat or similar device, the child will be moved to a crib immediately. Swaddling is not permitted unless a written and signed request is provided by the parent and allowed under state guidelines. Room temperature will be maintained at a comfortable level, and infants will be dressed appropriately to prevent overheating. Hats and head coverings are not permitted while sleeping.

Parents are required to complete and sign a safe sleep acknowledgment prior to enrollment. Any medical exemptions must be on file and will be followed as written. Safe sleep practices will be reviewed with families during the enrollment process to ensure understanding and consistency.

All staff working with infants will complete required safe sleep training prior to assignment and will receive ongoing supervision to ensure compliance. Any unsafe sleep situation will be corrected immediately, documented, and addressed with appropriate follow up, including parent notification when necessary. Failure to follow this policy may result in corrective or disciplinary action.

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure continued compliance with state regulations and best practices for infant safety.

Diaper Changing Policy

Diapering is conducted in a clean, designated area, separate from food preparation areas. Staff follow these procedures:

- Hands are washed before and after each diaper change.
- Gloves are worn during all diaper changes.
- The changing surface is sanitized after every use.
- Soiled diapers are disposed of immediately in a sealed container.
- Diaper changes are logged and available for parent review.

Parents are responsible for supplying diapers, wipes, and any required ointments.

Illness / Sick Policy

To ensure a healthy environment, children must stay home if they exhibit any of the following. Full exclusion criteria, including specific temperature thresholds and condition-specific readmission timelines, are detailed in the Illness Exclusions section below:

- Fever meeting the threshold defined in the Illness Exclusions section below
- Vomiting or diarrhea meeting the criteria defined in the Illness Exclusions section below
- Severe cold or flu-like symptoms
- Rash of unknown origin
- Any contagious condition requiring exclusion as defined in the Illness Exclusions section below

Unless a different readmission timeframe is specified for a particular condition in the Illness Exclusions section below, children must be symptom-free without medication for 24 hours or provide a doctor's note before returning.

Illness Exclusions

Please do not bring your child to the center if they are experiencing any of the following symptoms or conditions. If you are unsure whether your child should attend, please contact the center for guidance.

A child will be excluded from care if any of the following apply:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in daily activities, as determined by staff
- The illness results in a need for care that exceeds what staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children
- The child has any of the following symptoms or conditions, unless a healthcare professional determines that exclusion is not necessary:
 - Appears severely ill, including symptoms such as lethargy, lack of responsiveness, unusual irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or a rapidly spreading rash
 - Fever defined as:
 - Oral temperature of 101°F or higher
 - Axillary (under the arm) temperature of 100°F or higher
 - Accompanied by behavior changes or other signs of illness
 - Uncontrolled diarrhea, defined as increased frequency of loose or watery stools not associated with dietary changes
 - Diapered children must be excluded if stool is not contained in the diaper
 - Toilet trained children must be excluded if diarrhea results in accidents
 - Children may return when stools are contained and accidents no longer occur
 - Diarrhea associated with specific infections:

- Escherichia coli (E. coli) O157:H7 or Shigella, until diarrhea resolves and 2 stool cultures are negative
- Salmonella serotype Typhi, until diarrhea resolves and:
 - Children under 5 years require 3 negative stool cultures
 - Clearance must be provided by a healthcare professional or health department
- Blood or mucus in the stool not explained by diet, medication, or constipation
- Vomiting 2 or more times within the previous 24 hours, unless determined to be from a non-communicable condition and the child is not at risk of dehydration
- Persistent abdominal pain lasting more than 2 hours, or intermittent abdominal pain accompanied by fever or other symptoms
- Mouth sores with drooling, unless a healthcare provider or health department confirms the child is not infectious
- Rash accompanied by fever or decreased activity, until evaluated and cleared by a healthcare provider
- Tuberculosis, until a healthcare provider or health department confirms the child is receiving appropriate treatment and may return
- Impetigo, until at least 24 hours after treatment has started
- Streptococcal infections, including strep throat, until at least 24 hours after treatment has started
- Head lice (pediculosis), until after the first treatment has been completed
- Scabies, until after treatment has been completed
- Varicella (chickenpox), until all lesions have dried and crusted, typically about 6 days
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears
- Pertussis (whooping cough), until 5 days after appropriate antibiotic treatment has begun
- Mumps, until 5 days after the onset of parotid gland swelling
- Measles, until 4 days after the rash appears
- Hepatitis A, until 1 week after onset of illness or jaundice, or as directed by the local health department

Illnesses That Do Not Require Exclusion

- Common colds, including runny nose regardless of the color or consistency of nasal discharge, and mild coughs
- Watery eye discharge without fever, eye pain, or redness of the eyelid
- Yellow or white eye drainage that is not associated with pink or red conjunctiva (the whites of the eyes)
- Fever without additional signs or symptoms of illness in children older than 4 months
 - For the purposes of this policy, fever is defined as a temperature above 101°F orally or 100°F under the arm
 - Fever is a response of the body and is not an illness itself

- Body temperature may be elevated due to factors such as overdressing, a warm environment, medication reactions, or infection
 - If the child is behaving normally, they may remain in care and be monitored
- Rash without fever or changes in behavior
- Head lice or nits (treatment may be required, but exclusion may be delayed until the end of the day)
- Ringworm (treatment is required, but exclusion may be delayed until the end of the day)
- Thrush (white spots or patches in the mouth)
- Fifth disease (also known as slapped cheek disease or parvovirus B19)
- Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) without an active infection or illness that would otherwise require exclusion
 - Children who are carriers or colonized do not need to be excluded
- Pinkeye (bacterial conjunctivitis)
 - Symptoms may include pink or red conjunctiva, white or yellow eye discharge, matted eyelids after sleep, and mild eye discomfort
 - Exclusion is not required for this condition
 - Treatment with antibiotic drops may vary based on the recommendation of the child's healthcare provider
 - Most cases improve within 5 to 6 days without antibiotics
- Cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection
- Chronic hepatitis B infection
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection
- Exclusion decisions should be made on a case by case basis by a healthcare professional if the child's immune system places them at higher risk
- Presence of infectious organisms in stool or urine without symptoms of illness
- Exceptions include certain serious infections such as *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 or *Shigella*, which require exclusion until 2 negative stool cultures and clearance by the local health department
- *Salmonella Typhi* requires exclusion until 3 negative stool cultures and clearance by a healthcare professional or local health department

Medication on Premises

If your child requires medication, we encourage families, when possible, to coordinate medication schedules outside of center hours. However, if medication does need to be administered during the day, it may be given by designated staff or the Director under the following circumstances:

1. Prescribed medication or non-prescription drugs must be under doctor's orders.
2. A medical release and permission slip must be completed and signed by the parent or legal guardian.
3. The original container and label must bear the child's name, directions for administration, date, and doctor's name.

Allergies to medication must be kept on file for emergency situations. Under no circumstances will any child be allowed to hold medications.

Child Abuse and Neglect

If a Sprouting Minds staff member suspects a child in his/her care has been the victim of child abuse or neglect, we are required by law to report our suspicions. All child development educators are state mandated reporters. Additionally, no physical punishment is permitted on our premises under any circumstances, consistent with the Discipline and Guidance Policy below. Any physical punishment or suspected physical punishment of a child, whether occurring at the center or reported by a child or family, will be reported to the proper authorities as required by law.

Please be advised that children will not be released to any individual who appears to be impaired or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, including THC, if staff have reason to believe the individual may not be able to safely transport or care for the child(ren). In such situations, an authorized emergency contact will be notified for pick up. The incident may be documented and reported to the appropriate authorities when necessary.

Discipline and Guidance Policy

At Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center, our approach to discipline is rooted in guidance, redirection, and teaching rather than punishment. We are committed to creating a safe, nurturing environment where children learn self-control, respect for others, and appropriate ways to express their emotions. Our staff uses positive behavior support strategies to guide children toward healthy social and emotional development.

Our Discipline Philosophy

We believe that behavior is a form of communication. Children are still learning how to manage emotions, solve problems, and interact appropriately with others. Our role is to teach, model, and support these skills in a developmentally appropriate way.

Acceptable Guidance Techniques

Staff will use the following methods to guide behavior:

- Positive reinforcement and encouragement of appropriate behavior
- Redirection to a different activity or area
- Modeling appropriate behavior and language
- Offering choices to promote independence and decision making
- Setting clear and consistent expectations
- Teaching problem solving and conflict resolution skills
- Providing a quiet space for a child to calm down when needed
- Using age-appropriate discussions to help children understand their actions

Prohibited Discipline Practices

The following actions are strictly prohibited at all times:

- Corporal punishment of any kind
- Yelling, shaming, humiliating, or threatening a child
- Withholding food, rest, or bathroom access
- Physical restraint, except when necessary to prevent immediate harm
- Any form of emotional or physical abuse

Behavior Support and Intervention

If a child demonstrates ongoing challenging behaviors, the following steps will be taken:

- Staff will document behaviors and identify possible triggers
- Teachers will implement individualized strategies within the classroom
- Parents will be notified and involved in developing a consistent plan
- A behavior support plan may be created to address specific needs
- Outside resources or referrals may be recommended if appropriate

Our goal is to work in partnership with families to support each child's success.

Safety and Removal

If a child's behavior presents a consistent risk to themselves, other children, or staff, and all reasonable interventions have been exhausted, the center reserves the right to determine whether the program can continue to meet the child's needs. This may include temporary suspension or removal from the program. These decisions are made carefully, with the safety and well-being of all children as the top priority.

Biting Policy

We understand that biting is a developmental behavior, especially among toddlers. When biting occurs:

- Children are separated immediately and safety is ensured
- First aid is administered as needed
- Parents of both children are notified the same day
- An incident report is completed and maintained on file
- Staff will observe patterns and develop strategies to prevent recurrence

If biting becomes persistent

- Staff will implement a targeted behavior plan
- Increased supervision and redirection will be provided
- Parents will be involved in ongoing communication and planning

Persistent or severe biting that poses a safety concern may result in further action, including possible removal from the program if the behavior cannot be safely managed.

Incident Reporting Policy

An incident is defined as any event that results in injury, illness, or unusual occurrence involving a child while in care. This includes, but is not limited to, accidents, injuries, medical concerns, behavioral incidents, or any situation that may impact the health or safety of a child.

When an incident occurs, staff will first ensure the immediate safety and well-being of all children involved. Appropriate first aid will be administered, and emergency services will be contacted when necessary. Staff will remain with the child and provide care until the situation is stabilized.

After the child has been properly cared for, the incident will be documented on an official incident report form on the same day the event occurs. Documentation will include the date and time of the incident, a description of what occurred, the care provided, the names of staff involved, and any witnesses present. Reports will be completed in a clear and objective manner without assigning blame.

The parent or guardian will be notified of the incident on the same day. For minor incidents, notification may occur at pick up; for more serious incidents, parents will be contacted immediately by phone. Upon notification, the parent or guardian will be asked to review and sign the incident report to acknowledge that they have been informed. A copy of the signed report will be provided to the parent, if requested, and the original will be maintained in the child's file in accordance with record retention requirements.

Certain incidents that meet state defined criteria, including serious injuries, communicable diseases, or other reportable events, will be reported to the appropriate authorities as required by Ohio regulations within the designated timeframes. All incident reports will be reviewed by administration to identify patterns, address safety concerns, and implement corrective actions when necessary. Staff may receive additional training or guidance to prevent future occurrences.

Failure to follow proper incident reporting procedures may result in corrective or disciplinary action. This policy will be followed consistently to ensure transparency, accountability, and the continued safety of all children in our care.

Emergency Procedures Policy

Sprouting Minds has comprehensive emergency procedures in place to handle fires, natural disasters, medical emergencies, and lockdown situations:

- Monthly fire and evacuation drills are conducted.
- Emergency contact numbers are kept up to date and accessible.
- Staff are trained in CPR, first aid, and emergency response.
- In an actual emergency, parents will be notified as soon as possible.

A full Emergency Preparedness Plan is available upon request.

Inclement Weather Policy

Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center will make every effort to remain open during inclement weather. However, the center may delay opening or close when necessary to ensure the safety of children, families, and staff.

During heavy snowfall, severe storms, or other emergencies, families will be notified by 5:00 AM regarding any changes to the center's schedule for that day, including delays or closures.

Notifications will be communicated through the following methods:

- Text or phone alert
- Email
- Posted updates on official social media or designated communication platforms

In the event of unexpected or rapidly developing conditions during the day, families will be notified as soon as possible if early closure becomes necessary.

Closures or delays due to inclement weather or emergencies do not affect tuition, as operational expenses remain unchanged.

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

All personal, medical, and educational information regarding children and families at Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center is strictly confidential. Staff are trained to handle all records securely and will not discuss any child or family outside of a professional setting or with unauthorized individuals.

Photos and videos of children will not be used in marketing materials, on social media, or shared publicly without prior written parental consent.

Parents and authorized guardians may receive photos, videos, and classroom updates of their own child through the secure Brightwheel parent communication platform, which is accessible only to the child's parent(s) and other authorized individuals designated by the family. These updates are intended to keep families informed about their child's daily activities, learning experiences, meals, naps, milestones, and special moments throughout the day.

From time to time, classroom or group photos may be shared through Brightwheel with the families of children who participated in the activity. Because these images capture classroom experiences, other enrolled families may be able to view photos that include multiple children. Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center will make every reasonable effort to protect the privacy of all children and will never identify a child by full name or use or share photos publicly without prior written parental consent.

Record Keeping Policy

Sprouting Minds maintains complete and up-to-date records for every enrolled child. This includes, but not limited to:

- Enrollment and emergency forms
- Immunization records
- Medical authorizations
- Incident reports

Parents must promptly notify the center of any changes to address, phone numbers, authorized pickups, or health updates.

Withdrawal Policy

Families are requested to provide at least two (2) weeks' written notice prior to withdrawing their child from Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center. Providing advance notice helps ensure a smooth transition for the child, family, and program.

Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center reserves the right to discontinue services due to non-payment, safety concerns, or violations of the Center's policies and procedures.

Termination of Services

It is not the goal of Sprouting Minds to terminate childcare services; however, we reserve the right to terminate our childcare services immediately for any of these following reasons (but not solely limited to):

- Failure to adhere to the policy and procedures of Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center
- Non-Payment of childcare fees or late and/or recurring late payment of fees
- Failure to show up for 5 days in a row, without any communication
- Failure to complete required forms
- Inability to meet the child's needs without additional staff
- Blatant disrespect towards provider or any employee
- If parents knowingly bring their child ill
- Conflict between parent / provider
- Excessive absences beyond the annual vacation allowance described in the Reporting Late Arrivals, Absences, and Vacations section
- Destructive or hurtful behavior of child that persists even with parent cooperation in stopping the behavior

Handbook and Policy Changes

To provide you with updated information and/or changes in policies, we will be providing handbook addendums and memos from time to time. All handbook and policy changes will be provided in writing to all our families. Please keep this Parent Handbook and refer to it when needed. Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to stop by our office, email, or telephone us at your convenience.

It is the sole responsibility of each parent to be knowledgeable regarding the contents of the Parent Handbook, memos, and requirements of the center. It is also the parent's responsibility to request a meeting with the Administrator should there be any questions and/or concerns regarding standing policies. Families are required to remain informed of and comply with current handbook policies, and failure to do so may lead to termination of child-care services as outlined in the Termination of Services section.

Emergency Medical Services

The following situations require immediate medical attention. Emergency medical services will be contacted when necessary:

- Any condition in which a child requires immediate medical assessment or treatment that cannot wait for parent transport
- Fever accompanied by concerning symptoms such as abnormal appearance, difficulty breathing, or signs of circulation issues, including pale, bluish, or unusually flushed skin
- Multiple children experiencing injury or serious illness at the same time
- A child who is acting unusually, significantly less alert, or more withdrawn than normal
- Seizure activity, including rhythmic jerking of the arms and legs and loss of responsiveness
 - Exception: A child with a known seizure disorder who has an approved care plan in place
- Vomiting blood
- Severe stiff neck with headache and fever, especially if the child cannot bring their chin to their chest
- Signs of severe dehydration, including sunken eyes, lethargy, absence of tears, and little or no urination
- A rapidly spreading purple or red rash
- A large amount of blood in the stool
- Heat or cold related illness or injury, such as heat exhaustion or frostbite

Urgent Medical Situations Requiring Prompt Attention

The following conditions require prompt medical evaluation. These situations may not require emergency transport if a parent or guardian can be notified and the child can receive medical care within a reasonable timeframe:

- Fever in a child of any age who appears more than mildly ill
- A child who appears or behaves very ill
- Severe vomiting or diarrhea
- Injuries that may require medical treatment, such as a cut that does not remain closed after cleaning
- Any animal bite that breaks the skin
- Venomous bites or stings with increasing redness, swelling, or signs of a systemic reaction
- Any condition identified in the child's individual care plan that requires medical attention

Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY)

Center Parent Information Required by Ohio Administrative Code

- This center is licensed by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) to operate in compliance with state childcare regulations. The license is posted in a visible location within the facility for review
- A toll-free telephone number is listed on the facility's license and may be used to report suspected violations of childcare licensing laws or administrative rules.

Copies of the applicable laws and rules are available for review at the center upon request

- In accordance with Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code, all administrators and employees are mandated reporters and are required to report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate local public children's services agency
- Parents, custodians, or guardians of enrolled children are permitted unlimited access to the center during all hours of operation for the purpose of contacting their child, evaluating care, or reviewing the premises. Upon arrival, individuals must notify administrative staff of their presence
- A roster of parent or guardian contact information for enrolled children is available upon request. Any parent or guardian may request that their contact information be excluded from this list
- The center maintains and posts the most recent licensing inspection report and any substantiated complaint investigation reports from the past 2 years in a visible location for review
- The center's full licensing record, including inspection reports, complaint investigations, and evaluations from building and fire authorities, is available upon written request from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY)
- The center does not discriminate in the enrollment of children on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Handbook Acknowledgement and Signature

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center Parent and Guardian Handbook. I agree to comply with all policies and procedures outlined within, including but not limited to enrollment policies, attendance requirements, discipline practices, health and safety guidelines, and parent responsibilities, as a condition of my child's enrollment.

I understand that the policies and procedures in this handbook may be updated at the discretion of the center to remain compliant with applicable laws and regulations and to support the safe and effective operation of the program. I agree to abide by all updates and understand that continued enrollment constitutes acceptance of any revisions.

I understand that it is my responsibility to remain informed of any updates and to direct any questions or concerns to center administration.

I acknowledge that this handbook is not a contract, express or implied, and does not create any contractual obligations between myself and Sprouting Minds Early Learning Center.

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Child(ren) Name (First, Last):

A signed copy of this page will be kept in the child(ren)s file at Sprouting Minds.