

SMART START LEARNING CENTER, LLC

Staff Handbook



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Smart Start Learning Center, LLC.
Acknowledgment of Receipt of Employee’s Handbook

I have received and read the Smart Start Learning Center, LLC—Employee Handbook.

I understand the policies and procedures given to me and agree to adhere to all center policies. Smart Start LLC. policies and procedures are subject to change to reflect the needs of the program, children, and families we serve.

We may also make changes or modifications in our policies if required by our licensing agencies. Smart Start Learning Center, LLC will inform staff of changes as they occur in a timely manner.

Staff Printed Name

Staff Signature

Date

Mission Statement

At Smart Start Learning Center, we are here to serve families and staff in our community by providing a loving, trusting, happy, and respectful program. Our children will receive the highest quality of care.

Welcome

We are honored that you have become a part of the Smart Start Learning Center family. Our goal is to impact our students' lives educationally, emotionally, and socially so they are provided with a strong foundation for their educational careers. We look forward to working as a family to help each child reach the goals set for them throughout their time at Smart Start Learning Center.

We strive to provide each student with a challenging academic program and a secure, personal environment of care. We hope to exceed all of our families' and employees' expectations, and we want to take this opportunity to welcome you to Smart Start Learning Center.

Vision

At Smart Start Learning Center, we aim to provide the highest quality education and care to tomorrow's leaders.

Philosophy

Smart Start Learning Center has a unique program that will allow children to develop their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities in a caring and friendly environment. We believe each child is exceptional and intelligent. We provide a developmentally appropriate education program that focuses on the process of learning. Based on the theory, children learn by doing while having fun, active involvement, and meaningful experimentation combined with warm, dedicated experiences and qualified education staff.

We respectfully agree that parents are their child's first teacher and nurturer. We encourage our parents to become involved with center events. We strive to provide quality early childhood educational services at the center and in the community.

Owner/Administrator

The owner/administrator is on-site; employees are welcome to speak with her.

Contact Information

350 Milford – Harrington Hwy, Milford, DE 19963

302- 265-2027 (office) 302-503-2237 (cell)

email: smartstartlc21@gmail.com

website: smartstartlearningedu.com

Goals

As educators, our goal is to motivate and foster a strong self-image in each student. Smart Start Learning Center provides quality education through resources necessary to achieve cognitive development, personal interactions, and the motivation to learn. By preparing our qualified educators through ongoing education, we aim to ensure the children of our community achieve success in their education.

Speak up! Share Any Concerns

We are each responsible for complying with our Code of Ethics and acting with integrity. As a result, we are equally responsible for speaking up and voicing any questions and concerns. If you believe anyone is violating our Code of Ethics, other policies, or the law, have a question or concern, or are unsure how to handle a situation, here is what to do:

- Talk with your immediate supervisor if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Alternatively, talk with the owner and administrator.

GENERAL CENTER INFORMATION

Hours of Operation

Smart Start Learning Center operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. (See Center Closings for when we are closed for holidays or professional development.)

Programs

There are 4 classrooms offered at Smart Start Learning Center. They are:

- Caterpillars: 6 weeks to 12 months, 8 children
- Toddler One: 12 months to 30 months, 6 children
- Toddler Two: 24 months to 48 months, 6 children
- Preschool: 3 years to 5 years, 18 children
- School Age: 5 years old, to 10 years old, 10 children

Ratio

SSLC shall ensure that supervision and direct observation of children are always provided. This supervision occurs through the assignment of qualified staff members who are physically present and working with children. SSLC shall maintain the minimum staff/child ratio, except as stated in the table below:

	Age of Child	Minimum Staff/Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Infant	Under 12 months	1:4	8
Young toddler (1 year old)	12 through 23 months	1:6	12
Older toddler (2-year-old)	24 through 35 months	1:8	16
Young preschool child (3-year-old)	36 through 47	1:10	20
Older preschool child (4-year-old)	48 months or older and not yet attending kindergarten of higher	1:12	24

SSLC shall maintain the staff/child ratio for infants at all times. A staff member shall be assigned to care for specific infants and toddlers within their group. For mixed age groups, the staff/child ratio and group size requirements are for the age of the youngest child present. The maximum group size does not have to be maintained when 12 or fewer children are present in the center. During nap times when children one year and older are sleeping, SSLC shall ensure that at least half of the required staff members are present and directly observing the children. **Ratio must always be maintained, including when emergency procedures are in effect.**

Visitation

Families are always welcome to visit the classrooms. Families who want to spend time in the classroom should discuss their request with the teacher. Additionally, children need to know about the change in routine. Children sometimes view surprise visits as unusual, and they may behave accordingly. Depending on their age, children may be disheartened when they cannot leave with a family member.

Visitors

All individuals visiting the center (i.e., someone who is not a parent, authorized pick-up person, or staff member) must sign in at the office before entering the center. The visitor is then required to sign out before leaving the center. Staff members should notify the Lead Teacher and/or Administrator if expecting a visitor.

Center Closings/Holidays

These dates will be noted on the Private and Purchase of Care Tuition and Fee Agreement. Staff will receive this information at orientation. Modification to the scheduled dates will be updated annually and as needed.

The Administrator will determine if it's a paid day, if the center is closed due to weather conditions, or unforeseen circumstances.

Additional days of closure are required; the Administrator will give staff proper notice.

Note: On days of inclement weather, please be alert for our ProCare system alerting you of any changes in hours of operation; please also check WBOC for updates.

Publicity Releases

Smart Start would like to post photos of your child during special events or activities. Examples include, but are not limited to, Smart Start Facebook, newspaper, or internal at the center. An agreement that indicates whether a parent grants permission for his or her child to be filmed or photographed must be signed.

Review of DELAWARE Regulations

Smart Start is licensed by the state of Delaware's Office of Child Care Licensing. To be licensed, a licensing specialist conducts an annual unannounced compliance review to verify that we are following DELAWARE: Regulations for Early Care and Education. A licensing specialist will also visit the center if the Office of Child Care Licensing receives a complaint. If you would like to review these regulations or our compliance reviews, please speak with our Administrator.

Emergency Closing and Inclement Weather Information

Staff/Parents will be notified of the closing by ProCare text or email during an Emergency Closing or Inclement Weather event. A message will also be posted on WBOC. During inclement weather, the center will close at the discretion of the Administrator. Should the center need to close in the middle of the day, parents will be notified by ProCare text and/or email. The persons listed on the emergency contact form will be called until pick-up arrangements can be made. Staff will inform the parents or the emergency contact person at the time of the call of the pick-up location if the children have been evacuated from the center. Parents or emergency contact persons should report directly to the alternate site if one is indicated.

HIRING PROCESS

Criminal History Checks

Smart Start Learning Center will ensure that all staff members are fingerprinted for a Delaware and out-of-state criminal history SBI and FBI check before they start employment.

Once the center receives the eligible letter from DSCYF, the applicant will be eligible to start work. A licensee shall ensure the results of all record checks are placed in the staff member's file.

Smart Start Learning Center will complete an adult abuse registry check for staff members through the Department of Health and Social Services website (<http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dltcr/Default.aspx>) before their start date. The results will be printed and placed in the staff member's file.

Employee Declaration

The applicant will be required to disclose whether they have any previous convictions, current indictments, or involvement in criminal activity involving violence against a person; child abuse or neglect; possession, sale, or distribution of illegal drugs; sexual misconduct; gross irresponsibility or disregard for the safety of others; or a substantiated case of child abuse or neglect. If you are dishonest in your response, this may be grounds for termination of your employment.

The applicant must also disclose whether they cannot physically perform the essential job functions and any preexisting conditions related to the back, leg, and arms.

DEEDS

To work alone with children, in addition to being determined eligible, DEEDS must qualify staff as at least an Early Childhood Intern. To become qualified for a position, the staff member must complete DEEDS's online application process. Based on their education and experience, he/she may be qualified for an early childhood intern, early childhood aide, early childhood assistant teacher, early childhood teacher, or early childhood administrator. If the staff member is new in this career, they will be considered an intern, which means the intern must follow the intern description in Delaware License regulation.

References and Service Letters

After the interview, the applicant will be required to submit three personal references from adults who are not related to them. The applicant must also complete the release of employment form, listing their current and most recent employer, as well as all healthcare and childcare facilities they have worked at over the past five years, to obtain a reference and service letter. If the applicant has never had a job, they must submit four references.

Health Appraisal and Tuberculosis Screening

All staff health appraisals must be on file before the start date of employment and conducted within one year before the start date. This appraisal must confirm the individual's health and document medical or physical conditions that may limit the person's ability to perform child care or have direct access to children and any reasonable accommodations that may be required.

TB test or medical professional risk assessment that verifies the person does not threaten to transmit tuberculosis to children or other staff on file within the first month of employment, conducted one year before the start date.

New Staff Orientation

All new staff members will be asked to read the Smart Start Learning Center staff and parent handbooks. Then, before working in the classroom, the Administrator will schedule an orientation meeting to complete the required paperwork and review center operation and policies. The administrator will create an orientation training plan created for the employee. Staff members and substitutes will receive an orientation that covers the following topics:

• DELACARE Regulations (related to your job duties);
• Emergency preparedness, disaster, and evacuation plans and procedures;
• Personnel and administrative policies;
• Release of children;
• Positive behavior management;
• Safe sleep procedures, including prevention of sudden infant death syndrome;
• Shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma;
• Routine and emergency health care, including health exclusions, prevention, and recognition of the symptoms of childhood illnesses, including reportable communicable diseases;
• Prevention and response to emergencies due to food allergies;
• Building and physical premises safety;
• Handling and storage of hazardous materials; proper disposal of bio-contaminants;
• Child accident and injury procedures;
• Administration of medication, within two months of hire;
• Child care goals and program for children;
• Recordkeeping, including documenting children's and your own attendance;
• Family involvement;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and nutrition services, including proper handling, storage, preparation, and feeding of breast milk and formula, if applicable;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and sanitation procedures;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical activity;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen time;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photographing or videotaping children;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transporting children, if applicable;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, the child abuse and neglect law and reporting requirements, and our procedures to report abuse and neglect; and
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on federal and state laws or regulations applicable to children and families in care, including non-discrimination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProCare

In addition to this orientation, staff will be given a job description that lists their assigned daily duties. If you have any questions about these duties, please speak with the administrator, who will gladly assist you.

If staff members are not certified in CPR and first aid, they must be certified within two months of hire. CPR must be taken in person or include a “hands-on” skills demonstration. An online CPR class is not accepted unless staff members demonstrate their skills in front of the instructor, either in person or electronically. Also, the staff member must be trained in medication administration within two months of hire.

STAFF EXPECTATIONS

Professionalism

Each Smart Start Learning Center staff member is a childcare professional and is expected to act as such. The following guidelines for professionalism should be maintained at all times:

- Arrive on time and stay the entire shift, if needed.
- Is not absent from work on a regular basis and finds a substitute when necessary.
- Dress appropriately for interaction with children.
- Take directions, suggestions, and criticisms, and follow through to improve performance.
- Respect confidential information regarding children, families, and co-workers.
- Display respectful thoughts and a positive attitude toward the entire center (children, families, and co-workers).
- Attend staff meetings and other center events.
- Complete required training courses in a timely fashion.
- Careful and conscientious in the performance of duties, including the use of positive words and actions.
- Courteous and helpful when dealing with children, parents, visitors, and other staff members

Dress Code

Smart Star Learning Center employees will wear a Smart Start shirt daily unless the administrator states otherwise. Smart Start Learning Center will provide you with one shirt. All other shirts and attire will be purchased within two weeks. Payment for the appeal will be deducted from payroll. The SSLC shirts will be considered their uniform.

Staff members are expected to observe the 3 C's for appropriate attire at work as follows:

- **COMFORTABLE** – Staff is expected to play with the children and be down at their level whenever appropriate. To do this, staff must wear comfortable clothes for free movement and activity. Staff members should wear clothing they feel comfortable getting dirty or stained, as staff members are expected to participate alongside the children during all daily activities.
- **CLEAN** - All clothing should be clean with no stains, rips, or tears, and must smell appropriate. This also applies to personal hygiene.
- **COURTEOUS** - Staff members interact with children and parents daily and should dress professionally. Clothing may not contain alcohol, drug, or cigarette references. Vulgar sayings or suggestions are forbidden. Particular articles of clothing are never appropriate for the work environment, including halter tops, strapless “tube” tops, and low-rise jeans/shorts that expose undergarments. Shorts and dress length permitted is 2 inches from the knee.
- All staff members must present themselves and Smart Start Learning Center professionally and respectfully. Any staff member not adhering to the dress code may be asked to leave and return dressed appropriately.

Cell Phones and Technology-Based Accessories

Cell phones and technology-based accessories (including AirPods) are prohibited in classrooms. Cell phones should remain turned off and stored in a purse, bag, coat, closet, etc., while a staff member is clocked in. Cell phone use is permitted only during an approved break and never in a classroom. It is never appropriate to make a personal phone call, send a text message, check voicemail, etc., while in the presence of children. You may give the center's phone number for emergencies, and the phone message will be given to you immediately. Texting or speaking on a device while working is common nowadays; however, it will not be permitted.

Computers and Tablets

All computers and tablets are to be used for work purposes only. Under no circumstances may software be installed without the prior permission of the Administrator. The computers and tables have internet access and should not be used for personal use (e.g., chat rooms, pornography, personal e-mail, or website browsing). They should only be used for work-related tasks. The Administrator should approve computer software that is not installed before installation.

Personal Belongings

Coats, backpacks, purses, etc., must be safely put on hooks in closets and out of reach of children. SSLC is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Personal Food & Drinks

Personal food and drinks are not allowed in the classrooms. The only food allowed in the classroom is food served from the kitchen. If you have water, it must be kept out of sight and reach of the children. Staff food may be stored in the small refrigerator in the kitchen. All food should be labeled with the staff member's name and date. Food should be removed or discarded after one week or when spoiled. Meals should be eaten and prepared only during an approved break.

Handwashing

Staff members must wash their hands at the following times:

- Upon arriving at the center
- After each diaper change
- After helping a child use the toilet
- After wiping a nose, coming into contact with saliva or any other bodily fluid.
- Before preparing meals
- Before and after meal times
- Before and after using the sensory table
- After removing gloves
- After using the restroom
- After returning to the center from a break
- After coming indoors from the playground

**Frequent hand washing with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds is the most effective way to reduce and prevent the spread of illnesses and diseases.

Parking

Staff members should park in the rear and front parking spaces. On Thursday, staff will only park in the back spaces. The Smart Start Learning Center entrance and exit door will be at the rear. Staff, parents, and children will not access the front door. SSLC shares the parking lot with other businesses in the same complex. There is NO parking in the fire lanes. Only vehicles with a handicap designation may park in the handicap-designated parking spots.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Required Training

Staff members providing direct child care and working twenty-five or more hours per week shall participate in 18 clock hours of training annually. Those working less than 25 hours per week shall participate in 9 clock hours of training annually. Staff members not providing direct child care are exempt from annual training.

SSLC shall ensure that training is associated with improving quality in early care, education, and school-age care. Acceptable topics include:

- Child development
- Developmental curriculum planning/environment and curriculum
- Observation and assessment
- Positive behavior management/social-emotional development
- Health, safety, physical activity, and nutrition
- Family and community
- Professionalism

- Management and administration

SSLC new staff members employed at the center for at least six months but less than one year have completed at least half of the required training hours since starting employment. All staff must complete first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certifications within two months of hire. The certifications must be appropriate to the ages of the children in care.

The staff member will pay for all required training courses unless otherwise arranged with the Administrator.

College Course Schedule Approval

To meet the ratio and ensure significant coverage for the classroom, the staff's college schedule will need to be pre-approved. Since this schedule was not discussed during the hiring process or in the staff offer letter, it must be approved. If a class is dropped within this semester, the staff must inform the Administrator. Failure to notify the Administrator will result in no other classes being approved. Staff will be expected to work during the dropped class hours.

Staff will be expected to work anytime the college is closed on an approved scheduled day. In times of crisis, you may be asked to work before a classroom is closed due to not meeting the required ratio. At the end of the semester, staff must provide final grades to the Administrator. If grades are not submitted, no other class will be excused from work.

Staff Meetings

All Smart Start Learning Center staff members are required to attend staff meetings. Important information, procedures, and policies are introduced and reviewed at these meetings; it is important to have staff members attend. Staff will be notified at least one week in advance and must meet with the Administrator if unable to participate in a staff meeting. Staff meetings are paid meetings.

Evaluations

The Administrator will evaluate a staff member's performance within 90 days of hire and annually. Informal evaluations will also be performed during scheduled and unscheduled classroom observations throughout the year. Staff members must complete a self-evaluation before meeting with the Administrator.

PERSONNEL POLICIES

Confidentiality

Smart Start Learning Center's confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with SSLC employees who have a "need to know" to care for your child most appropriately and safely. Confidential and sensitive information about staff, other parents, and children will not be shared with parents, as SSLC strives to protect everyone's right to privacy. We require written permission from the parent/guardian before disclosing your child's information. The Office of Child Care Licensing and another official agency with duties related to children's health, safety, and well-being will be given your child's information for official use.

Violation of the Confidentiality Policy

Smart Start Learning Center takes the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the center very seriously. Staff must understand the implications of this responsibility. Staff need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy applies not only to their child or family but to all children, families, and employees associated with Smart Start. Any staff who shares confidential information or pressures employees or other parents for information that is unnecessary for them to know will be deemed to violate the Confidentiality Policy. Disciplinary action will be taken against staff who violate SSLC confidentiality policies.

Tobacco Use

Cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products are prohibited on SSLC premises, including parking lots and outdoor play areas. Staff members who smoke are strongly advised against doing so immediately before or during their work schedule, as smoke can stay on clothing and hair for an extended time. Staff members must wash their hands immediately after smoking before returning to work. Do not dispose of cigarettes on the center property.

Swearing/Cursing

No staff are permitted to curse or use inappropriate language on Smart Start Learning Center property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Many people consider such language offensive and will not tolerate it. At NO time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of staff, children, and/ or parents.

Confrontational Interactions

Parents will not always agree with Smart Start employees or the parents of the other children; all disagreements are expected to be handled calmly and respectfully. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means of communicating a point and are strictly prohibited.

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. All threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Note: PARENTS AND ADULTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS AND MUST BE IN CONTROL OF THEIR BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES.

Firearms and Weapons

No person is permitted to possess firearms, ammunition, or other weapons on the center's property or at events sponsored by Smart Start. We respectfully request that you leave any weapons in your vehicle when visiting the center. Violation of this policy may result in immediate termination and criminal prosecution.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Smart Start employees are required to report all cases of suspected child abuse and neglect to the Division of Family Services. Child abuse is defined as a child experiencing personal injury as a result of non-accidental means. This injury would result in a mental or emotional condition resulting from abuse or neglect, negligent treatment, sexual abuse, maltreatment, exploitation, or abandonment of a child under the age of 18 or an individual who appears mentally retarded. If

you suspect a case of child abuse, you can call the Delaware Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-292-9582.

Co-Worker Communication

Communication between staff members, parents, and children is crucial to a successful center. Before leaving a classroom for any reason (bathroom, making a copy, calling a parent), an employee should inform their relieving teachers of why they are leaving. All concerns must be addressed and resolved as they arise. All staff are expected to always function as team members.

Supplies

All staff are responsible for reporting to the Administrator when supplies are running low and need to be replenished before supplies are entirely depleted. Teachers will create a shopping list based on their lesson plan, detailing the materials needed for activities. Lesson plans are due two weeks before the lesson.

Suggestions

Smart Start Learning Center is always seeking suggestions that will:

- Improve methods, procedures, and working conditions
- Reduce costs or errors
- Benefit the children, staff, and center

Staff members with suggestions or innovative ideas are encouraged to discuss them with the administrator.

Personnel Files

Smart Start Learning Center maintains a permanent personnel file for each staff. These files are confidential, and staff members must arrange a time with the Administrator to review their files. Staff are prohibited from accessing another employee's personnel file for any reason. Staff should report to the Administrator if there is a change in address, phone number, emergency contact, e-mail address, marital status, or number of dependents.

Drug-Free Workplace

Smart Start Learning Center is committed to maintaining a safe and drug-free workplace. Therefore, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, selling, buying, soliciting to buy or sell, transporting, or using a controlled substance at the center is prohibited. Any staff members reporting for work under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances will be asked to leave immediately. A violation of this policy, including a refusal to be tested or a positive test result, will subject an employee to disciplinary action, including termination.

Reimbursement

The Administrator must first approve a shopping list of all purchases a staff member makes using personal funds. Only approved purchases may be eligible for reimbursement. To receive reimbursement, original sales receipts should be submitted to the Administrator within two days of purchase.

Equal Opportunity Employment

Smart Start Learning Center provides all staff members and applicants equal employment opportunities. It prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws.

Smart Start Learning Center prohibits harassment of and by its staff members based on gender, race, age, color, national origin, religion, marital or veteran status, sexual orientation, citizenship, disability, and other characteristics. Harassment includes but is not limited to, making derogatory remarks about any of these characteristics, making jokes or stereotypical comments about ethnic or other groups, and engaging in verbal, physical, and visually offensive behavior. A staff member who feels harassed has the right to file a complaint with the Delaware Human Rights Benefits and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Staff Members Benefits

Due to Smart Start Learning Center being a small business, the medical benefits package is a staff member's contribution only. The administrator can provide you with the information if needed. Smart Start evaluates staff members' benefits annually. Benefits may include personal leave, one day of bereavement pay, and paid holidays. Training for professional development will be considered, based on budget availability.

Personal/Vacation Leave

Leave requests should be made and approved in advance, preferably using the Vacation Request Form. Employees must request time off at least ten (10) working days in advance. The Administrator will review the request to determine scheduling and center operations before approval or denial. The request will be granted to only one classroom employee per day.

If you request time off for already-designated mandatory training, a particular center event, or a meeting, your request will not be approved. Staff should not assume it has been approved because the day has been requested. Only emergencies will be honored while on the job, such as (sick on the job or death in the family etc.). Staff members can assist with coverage by asking another member to cover their absences. See the Administrator for blackout dates throughout the year.

Part-time employees working less than 30 hours a week are not eligible for personal leave. For full-time employees working less than 40 hours a week, personal leave hours will be adjusted to the number of hours worked weekly. Full-time members become eligible for vacation leave after 90 days of Smart Start Learning Center employment. Qualified full-time staff accrue hours every two weeks.

Length of Employment	Vacation Accrued During the Year
After 90-day probationary through 2 Years	40 Hours
Year 3 through Year 5	80 Hours
Year 5 and thereafter	120 Hours

Forty vacation hours can be carried over at the end of the year. On the staff member's 90-day anniversary date, vacation time accrues at the above rate. Upon termination of employment with Smart Start Learning Center, whether voluntary or involuntary, all unused vacation time will be forfeited and not paid out.

Each full vacation day will be counted as the hours usually worked. Vacation time may be taken in increments as small as one hour. However, vacation time may not be used to compensate employees for tardiness or unexcused absences.

Employee Compensation

Staff members shall be paid no lower than the Federal and State Minimum Wage. In addition, SSLC will compensate its staff based on their education and experience in early childcare.

Overtime

Due to budget restraints, overtime is not permitted without the supervisor’s prior approval and concurrence from the Administrator.

Layoff

In rare circumstances, we may be required to lay staff members off if the number of children in care decreases, so it would not be financially feasible for staff to remain employed.

Retirement

Smart Start Learning Center participates in a SIMPLE IRA retirement plan, which provides small employers with a simplified method of contributing to their employees' retirement savings. Employees may choose to make salary reduction contributions, and the employer is required to make either matching or nonelective contributions. Contributions are made to an Individual Retirement Account or Annuity (IRA) set up for each employee.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance

Consistency is crucial to creating a successful program. Therefore, SSLC attempts to put as few staff members as possible in each classroom. All staff members must regularly attend to provide a consistent environment and routine.

Tardiness and absenteeism will not be tolerated. If a staff member is ill and unable to work, the Administrator should be notified immediately by phone. Electronic communications, such as text messages and email, are not acceptable methods of contact when reporting sick or calling out of

work. When possible, a staff member must assist in making arrangements for a substitute. You must speak directly to the Administrator 1 hour before your scheduled work time to allow time for your Administrator to get a replacement if needed. **YOU MUST SPEAK TO YOUR SUPERVISOR; TEXTING OR LEAVING A MESSAGE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE AND WILL NOT BE EXCUSED! YOU MUST SPEAK DIRECTLY TO YOUR SUPERVISOR.** Staff may avoid attendance disciplinary action by covering their shift with a substitute, if one is available, or by switching days off with another staff member. Absences of three days or longer due to illness require a written physician's statement indicating the type of illness and when the staff member may return to work.

The Administrator has the discretion to approve or deny a personal time request. If an employee has an unexcused or unapproved absence, the employee will incur a written reprimand or disciplinary action, which may result in termination.

Schedule

Smart Start Learning Center is open from 7:00 am to 5:30 pm. Schedules will be created based on the needs of SSLC and the children. Occasionally, staff members may be required to commit to time outside their regular work schedule to satisfactorily complete SSLC responsibilities (meeting ratio, parent-teacher conferences, staff meetings, training, cleaning, lesson planning, etc.).

Voluntary Resignation

Employees should submit a letter of resignation to the Administrator when resigning. Smart Start Learning Center appreciates two weeks' notice if you choose to resign. This will ensure that an appropriate replacement can be hired and adequately trained.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Unacceptable Job Performance

Smart Start Learning Center uses progressive discipline as a positive way to correct unacceptable job performance. Your employment is not a contractual obligation because all Smart Start Learning Center employees are "at-will," meaning they can be terminated at the will of Smart Start Learning Center for any reason or no reason. The following are the steps taken using progressive discipline.

STEP 1 Verbal Warning

If a staff member's job performance does not meet Smart Start Learning Center standards or if a staff member violates any policy stated in this handbook, they will be informed of the problem and possible disciplinary action if performance does not improve. Suggestions on ways to improve job performance are discussed. Verbal warnings may be given for violating SSLC policies, failure to follow procedures, unsatisfactory performance, absenteeism, or tardiness.

Verbal warnings will be recorded, discussed, and signed by the staff member and the Administrator. A written warning will be issued after one (1) verbal warning has been issued for any reason within six (6) months.

STEP 2 Written Reprimand

A written reprimand will be issued if a problem identified by multiple verbal warnings has not been corrected. The Written Reprimand will be recorded, discussed, and signed by both the staff member and the Administrator. A staff member may receive only one (1) written warning during a six (6) month period. After one (1) written warning has been issued, any further issues or actions subject to the Disciplinary Procedure may result in suspension or termination.

A written warning will be issued immediately for refusing to follow lawful instructions or any other serious policy violation that endangers the safety or integrity of a child or staff member.

STEP 3 Termination

Termination may result when using progressive discipline if steps have not produced satisfactory and acceptable performance. Termination may be immediate without using progressive discipline. Reasons for immediate termination may include, but are not limited to:

- Child abuse or neglect
- Abuse of a parent/guardian of a child or another staff member
- Harassment
- Theft
- Child safety concerns
- Possession of a weapon
- Insubordination, disrespect of fellow employees, or antagonism of one employee by another
- Unsatisfactory job performance, overt negligence in the performance of job responsibilities that demand common sense and mature judgment
- Programmatic fraud or abuse
- Sleeping on the job at any time
- Misrepresenting or falsifying employment records/timesheets
- Excessive tardiness
- Excessive absence
- Unexcused absence
- Drinking alcoholic beverages on the job or working under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances
- Misrepresenting or falsifying program recipient information
- Conviction of a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude

The above violations are only examples and are not meant to be all-inclusive. At the discretion of the administrator, disciplinary action, up to and including termination, may be taken immediately.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Health Care Exclusions/Descriptions (policy for children and staff members)

Ensuring children's health is of primary importance to Smart Start staff. Therefore, if the child or staff exhibits any of the following symptoms or illnesses, he or she will be unable to be in care or work unless the symptoms are gone or your staff member's doctor provides documentation

stating the child has been diagnosed, and the illness poses no serious health risk to other children:

Symptoms of Illness for Exclusion Include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature of 100°F or higher without medication even if there has not been a change in behavior for infants four months old and younger;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature of 101°F or higher without medication accompanied by behavior changes or symptoms of illness for children older than four months;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms of possible severe illness, such as unusual tiredness, uncontrolled coughing, unexplained irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diarrhea; two or more times of loose stool during the past 24 hours, or if diarrhea is accompanied by fever, exclude for 48 hours after the symptoms end;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood in stools not due to change in diet, medication, or hard stools;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting; two or more times in the past 24 hours, or one time if accompanied by a fever until 48 hours after the symptoms end or until a health care provider determines the vomiting is not contagious, and the child is not in danger of dehydration;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing stomach pain (more than two hours) or off-and-on pain due to a fever or other symptoms;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mouth sores with drooling;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rash with fever or behavior change;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purulent conjunctivitis “pink eye” (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge), until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scabies, until 24 hours after starting treatment;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pediculosis, “head lice” or nits, until 24 hours after starting treatment;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuberculosis, as directed by DPH;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impetigo, until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment and sores are dry;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strep throat or other streptococcal infection until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varicella-Zoster "chickenpox," until all sores have crusted and are dry (usually six days);
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shingles, only if sores cannot be covered by clothing or a bandage; if not, exclude until sores have crusted and are dry;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pertussis, until completing five days of antibiotic treatment;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mumps, until five days after onset of glandular swelling;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hepatitis A virus, until one week after onset of jaundice, or as directed by DPH;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measles, until four days after arrival of rash;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubella, until seven days after arrival of rash;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herpetic gingivostomatitis, “cold sores,” if the child is too young to have control of saliva; or
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspecified short-term illness, not a chronic illness, if your child cannot participate in activities or our staff cannot provide care for your child and the other children.

Fevers (policy for children)

Children requiring acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or other antipyretics to maintain functionality throughout the day are considered too ill to be at the center.

Allergies (policy for children)

For the child's safety, parents must provide details of any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers at enrollment or when an allergy is discovered. Parents must also sign an authorization for any medication required to treat an allergic reaction, which must be provided following the Medication Policy.

Communicable Diseases (policy for children and staff members)

The Division of Public Health will be contacted if a child or employee of the center has any of the following diseases. The center will notify families about real or potential exposure to infectious diseases.

Respiratory

Diphtheria
German Measles
Measles
Meningitis
Mumps
Rubella
COVID - 19

Gastro-Intestinal

Giardiasis
Hepatitis A
Salmonellosis
Shigellosis
Whooping Cough
Tuberculosis

Children or staff members with a reportable communicable disease will not be admitted for care /work unless a doctor provides documentation stating your child or staff has been evaluated and presents no risk to himself/herself or others, or the Division of Public Health (DPH) has advised the Administrator that you present no risk to others. For information regarding reportable communicable diseases, please view DPH's website:

<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/rptdisease.html>. If a doctor states that the child or staff may return, but DPH says they may not, SSLC will follow DPH's instructions. If a child or staff is exposed to a communicable/contagious disease or condition while in care or work, families will be notified and given information on the symptoms of the disease or condition.

Illness During the Day (policy for children)

Smart Start staff is trained to recognize the symptoms of common childhood illnesses. The health of each child is evaluated upon arrival at the center and throughout the day. In the event that children become ill during the day, they may be isolated and cared for in the designated "Sick Area." ***Families will be called and given one (1) hour to pick up the child.*** The response to this pick-up requirement must be prompt. Delays can seriously impair the day-to-day operations of the center. If a family member cannot be located, the process of contacting individuals listed on the Emergency Contact List will begin. It is important to update this information as necessary. If we cannot reach a parent or Emergency contact or if the child is not picked up, we may call 911 or Child Protective Services. This will depend on the circumstances.

Medication Policy (policy for children)

Some staff members are certified by the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) to administer medication on-site at all times. Before administering any medication, you must complete a Medication Administration Record (MAR) include all of the required information listed on the form, and sign the Permission to Administer Medication Form. Medication must be in its original container and labeled. The child's name should be clearly inscribed. Written instructions regarding medication dosage should be clear and legible. A physician's written order and medication label are required. In the absence of a physician's order, parents/guardians may come to the center and administer medication to their child. Any medication that has passed its expiration date will be returned to the parent. The parents/guardians are responsible for monitoring expiration dates on all medicines, especially EpiPens.

Accidents and Incidents (policy for children)

If your child becomes injured or involved in a physical altercation with another child, emergency action will be taken to protect your child from further harm, and you will be notified.

- If a child receives a severe injury, parents will be notified immediately. Per licensing regulations, a severe injury includes any impact on a child's head. Therefore, a parent will be notified immediately if their child falls and bumps their head, mouth, or face.
- An accident/incident report will be completed and provided to the parent within one business day, and a copy of this report will be kept in your child's file.
- The parent will be notified of less serious accidents/incidents before your child is released at the end of the day. Less severe injuries include bumps, scrapes, and scratches.
- If a child has a life-threatening injury or illness or a severe medical incident such as a seizure, allergic reaction, burn, cut, etc., the parent will be notified immediately after an ambulance is contacted, and you will receive an incident report.

The parent must sign the report as proof that you were notified of the accident/injury/serious incident.

In a severe illness, accident, or injury, Smart Start staff will take the necessary emergency action to protect the child from additional harm and notify the family. If the parent cannot be reached, individuals listed on the Emergency Contact List (please keep this information current) will be contacted. If both parents and the emergency contacts cannot be reached during a medical emergency, proper medical care (i.e., first aid, ambulance, and other medical emergency services) will be provided to the child. All families are required to sign a medical release for these services.

The child's parents/guardians shall assume all expenses incurred by the center in securing medical treatment for the child. The staff and Administrator of Smart Start Learning Center are released and discharged from all claims, demands, actions, and judgments that may result after securing medical treatment for a child under Smart Start supervision.

Accidents and Incidents (policy for staff)

If a staff member becomes injured, emergency action will be taken to protect the staff member from further harm. An accident/incident report will be completed and provided to you within one business day, and a copy of this report will be kept in the staff personnel file.

If staff become injured, emergency action will be taken to protect them from further harm. An accident/incident report will be completed on the same day as the incident. If a staff member has a life-threatening injury or illness or a severe medical incident such as a seizure, allergic reaction, burn, cut, etc., the ambulance will be contacted.

CURRICULUM/ACTIVITIES

Curriculum

Experience Early Learning is the curriculum that Smart Start Learning Center selected for its learning guide. Experience Early Learning for Preschool is one of the nation's most widely used Pre-K curricula. It is comprehensive and research-based, featuring exploration and discovery as a way of learning. Research shows that a whole-child approach to education, where children have opportunities to develop math and literacy skills and social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills, is developmentally appropriate and better prepares children for a life well beyond their time in a classroom.

Experience Early Learning was explicitly designed to provide in-depth support for the unique demands of each day in an infant, toddler, and preschool classroom. The curriculum is delivered through theme-based programs that integrate language, literacy, mathematics, science, creative arts, physical education, health, and social-emotional domains, while attending to children's approaches to learning and individual learning styles. *Experience Early Learning* believes children learn best by actively engaging with people and things in their environment. Children are involved in hands-on experiences, real-life adventures, and assisted discovery as they explore concepts through play.

Daily Schedule of Activities

Each classroom will post a weekly lesson plan, listing all activities and lessons for that week. Teachers' lesson plans follow the *Experience Early Learning monthly and weekly* activities. Developmental milestones and portfolios are on file for every child. In addition, the administrator will post activities and special events on our website and ProCare. Lesson plans will be given to the Administrator two weeks before the lesson.

The Teachers will work cooperatively to create a daily schedule and plan activities that meet each child's developmental abilities and needs. Teachers are responsible for carrying out the schedule and activities. The daily schedule and activities balance active and quiet times, large and small group and individual activities, small and large muscle activities, indoor and outdoor play times, and times for self-selection and teacher-directed activities.

Consistency from day to day is particularly important to the overall well-being of the children and the classroom environment. Children thrive on consistency. Routines should be maintained whenever possible for arrivals and departures, meals and snacks, resting or nap times, personal care routines like diapering/toileting and hand washing, and transitions.

Lesson Plans and the daily schedule must be posted in the classroom and visible at all times.

Continuity of Care

Continuity of care is a system of primary caregiving that establishes an environment in which teachers work to minimize the number of teachers a child interacts with during the day and over time. Our program runs from January to December, so the children only make one classroom/teacher transition. If another child transitions to maintain the ratio, the Administrator will speak with the parent first. A primary teacher ensures consistency of relationships, environment, and communication between parents to strengthen relationships and the child's early learning experiences.

We do this by:

- Children staying in the same class until the time for transition to the next class or until a vacancy becomes available to transition to the next class.
- Teachers are assigned to a class
- Tracking, scanning, and counting children during the day is active supervision.
- Communication with families is through classroom teachers.

Communication/Messages (policy for children and staff members)

Parents will receive a daily update through ProCare, which includes the child's sleep time, diapering routines, learning experiences, activities, what they ate, well-being, and information about their child's social and emotional development. All messages are assumed to be read once sent out. Each classroom has a bulletin board where the weekly curriculum, menu, daily schedule, and upcoming events are posted. You can also check out our Events Calendar on the Smart Start website.

Email, in-person, and memos will be used to communicate between the administrator and staff.

Physical Activity

Smart Start is committed to your child's health. Staff need to serve as positive role models so that children can live healthy lives. Throughout the day, children have various engaging and vigorous physical activities for which they are encouraged to choose. It is recommended that children participate in a minimum of sixty (60) minutes of physical activity each day.

Outdoor Play

Water play is added to the children's outdoor experience during the summer months. The outside temperature benchmark is 89 degrees F or lower. When there is an extreme heat index, the teacher may limit the time the children are outside. Smart Start will monitor the Air Quality Control before outdoor play. All classes go outside when the wind chill is 32 degrees F or higher. If weather advisories are posted, children will not have outdoor play. Instead, they will have the opportunity to participate in indoor large motor activities.

Free Play

"Free play" (also called child-initiated activities, free choice, or self-selection) must be incorporated into the morning and afternoon schedule. Teachers are expected to actively participate with the children during free-play activities by asking questions about their actions,

participating in their pretend play, reading books when prompted, encouraging children to try new activities or play with a new toy, etc.

Nap/Rest Time

Nap Time/Quiet time is a significant part of each child's day. Infants are on their own schedule and are provided with an assigned crib. Toddlers through preschool-age children have a rest time after lunch. They are provided with their own cot and sheet. They may bring a travel-size pillow and a small blanket. The children must rest quietly on their cots for one hour; if they are awake, they are offered quiet activities until the remaining children are awake or nap time is over.

Sample Daily Schedule

7:00-9:30 Arrival, Attendance, & Health Checks,
8:15 – 8:30 Handwashing
8:30-9:00 Breakfast
9:00-9:15 Diaper Change, Bathroom, & Handwashing
9:15-9:45 Outside play
9:45-10:00 Group Time
10:00– 10:45 Free Play /Centers Individualization
10:45-11:00 Story Time
11:00 – 11:15 Diaper Change, Bathroom, & Handwashing
11:15-12:00 Lunch Set-up & Lunch
12:00-12:15 Diaper Check, Bathroom, & Handwashing
12:15-12:30 Nap Set - up
12:30 – 2:45 Nap time
2:45 – 3:00 Diaper Change, Bathroom, & Handwashing
3:00 – 3:30 Snack
3:30 – 4:00 Outside Play
4:00 – 5:30 Free Choice Activity until pick-up & Bathroom

Screen Time T.V./Computer Permission

In compliance with Delaware Childcare regarding viewing time, Smart Start would like all parents to be aware of the television, movies, and computers policy for children in our care.

1. Viewing of television, digital video display (DVD), and video cassettes shall be as follows:
 1. Prohibited for children younger than two (2) years of age;
 2. Not permitted without Parent/Guardian permission;
 3. Limited to age-appropriate programs, educational, listed on the lesson plans, and approved by the Lead Teacher.
 4. Not to exceed 30 minutes daily per child or group of children.

Note: Viewing periods may be extended for specific special events or occasions such as a current event, holiday, or birthday celebration.

2. The use of computers /tablets in the classrooms shall be as follows:
 1. Prohibited for children younger than two (2) years of age;
 2. Not permitted without Parent/Guardian permission;
 3. Limited to programs, games, and websites that are age-appropriate and educational;

4. Protects from exposure to inappropriate websites, such as those that are sexually explicit, violent, or use inappropriate language;
5. Supervised by a staff member;
6. Not to exceed 30 minutes daily per child or group of children.

SCREENING/ASSESSMENTS

Child Development Screening

Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) provides reliable, accurate developmental and social-emotional screening for children between birth and age 6. Drawing on parents' expert knowledge, ASQ has been specifically designed to pinpoint developmental progress and catch delays in young children. The Ages & Stages (ASQ) development screener is completed yearly to identify children at risk for developmental concerns. The Ages and Stages Comprehensive Assessment Tool will determine if a child needs to be referred for further diagnostic assessment or evaluation. All teaching staff have been trained in using the tool. We share the results with you, and if a referral is needed, we will let you know.

Ages & Stages Questionnaire Social-Emotional (ASQ: SE-2) is a highly reliable system focused solely on social-emotional development in young children. ASQ: SE-2 accurately identifies behavior that paves the way for the next steps—further assessment, specialized intervention, or ongoing monitoring. If you do not want your child to participate in these assessments, you must put your request in writing.

Child Assessments

Our teachers use information gathered through observation, screening, assessment, and comprehensive curriculum materials linked to the Delaware Early Learning Foundations to plan for both group and individualized learning experiences. Smart Start uses *Experience Early Learning*, an assessment tool, to determine what areas the teacher needs to focus on with the child. Each infant/toddler and preschool child will receive a developmental assessment within 45 days of enrolling. The plan will be based on the assessment, including developmentally appropriate goals, activities, and experiences. If a parent decides not to participate in the assessment, they must submit their request in writing.

Conferences

Classroom conferences are conducted with families once a year. Teachers will discuss the child's growth and development, progress towards current learning goals, identify new goals, and give an insight into the child's classroom experiences. The parent can share information about life at home, participate in goal setting, and ask questions to help understand the child's learning experiences and activities. While Smart Start strongly encourages all families to participate in parent/teacher conferences, it is not a requirement. If a parent decides not to participate in the parent/teacher conference, they must submit a written request.

Portfolios

Each child's portfolio will be kept and passed to the next teacher when a child transitions. These portfolios will not be released to anyone outside of Smart Start Learning Center without written permission from the parent/guardian. Portfolios will contain various items, including photographs, examples of artwork, assessment profiles, and parent-teacher conference forms. The Teacher is responsible for ensuring portfolios are periodically and continuously updated. When a child leaves Smart Start, the assessment portfolio should be given to the family.

CLASSROOM DUTIES

Staff Duties

Each classroom has tasks before opening, during nap time, before closing, and for weekly cleaning. Below are some general things that must be completed each day. In addition, staff members are expected to familiarize themselves with the classroom-specific duties.

Morning Duties: Mix new bleach water; put away sanitized toys; straighten toys and shelves; re-stock supplies such as soap, paper towels, toilet paper, diapers, wipes, etc.; and complete room set-up for the day's lesson plan.

Noon/Nap – Time Duties: Straightening shelves; sanitizing toys; cleaning tables/chairs/floors; planning curriculum; completing daily activity paperwork for children; and preparing for the afternoon and next day.

Afternoon Duties: Wash or spray toys that have been mouthed by children with bleach solution and air dry; take the trash to the dumpster, sanitize the trash can, and replace the trash bag; put toys and equipment away; check the outdoor play area for equipment that needs to be put away; sanitize tables, chairs, and shelves; wash dishes; empty bleach solution; vacuum carpets; lock all center doors after the last parent leaves for the day.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Arrival

Arrival hours are 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Staff members are expected to greet each child and parent by name upon their arrival to the classroom. Arrival is the opportune time to discuss how the child's night was, etc. Upon arrival, each child must have direct contact with a staff member. Staff should look for previous injuries, signs of illness, or unusual behavior.

Pick-up Procedures

During the enrollment process, each family completes an Emergency Contact Information form. This form provides authorization for select individuals to pick up children from the center. If staff are unfamiliar with the person attempting to pick up a child, you must request photo identification and check the Emergency Contact Information form. At the end of the day, staff must check the attendance to verify that all children have been signed out. Everyone must leave the building by 5:30 p.m. to ensure on-time closing for Smart Start staff. Once a parent signs their child out, they are solely responsible for supervising their child while in the center and on-premises.

Late Pick-up

If a parent arrives to pick up their child after 5:30 p.m., you will be responsible for the \$2.00 per minute late pick-up fee. Parents must notify the center and let them know they will be late; however, this curious call does not excuse the late fee. Late fees are charged regardless of the reason for lateness. If by 6:00 p.m. and no one contacts the center and the staff can still not reach anyone, the local police and Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families will be contacted as a last resort.

POSITIVE GUIDANCE STRATEGIES

Positive Guidance

Smart Start staff will adhere to the guidelines for child discipline and positive guidance, which will comply with state and federal guidelines. Positive Guidelines demonstrate respect for the child and help the child develop self-control, self-direction, positive self-esteem, and social competence. No child shall be subjected to the following techniques by staff.

Physical Punishment is defined as, but not limited to, spanking, hitting, slapping, pushing, pulling hair, biting, kicking, rough handling, harsh restraint, tickling for long periods, jerking, shaking, pinching, non-verbal intimidation, etc.

Verbal Punishment is defined as, but not limited to, screaming, teasing, humiliating, intimidating, insulting, blaming, threatening, frightening, laughing at, or discussing a child's behavior in the presence of the child, other children, staff, or parents, etc.

Isolation is defined as, but not limited to, confining the child in a small area, keeping the child in the classroom while others play outside, restricting the child from eating with his/ her classmates, enclosing the child in a confined structure, etc.

Staff will not use food as a reward or punishment, withdraw their affection/love for a child, punish a child for the toileting accidents, or punish a child for not sleeping during rest time. Staff will also not delegate discipline to another adult or child. Appropriate Positive Guidance Techniques will be utilized within Smart Start Learning Center.

When interacting with young children, staff should ask themselves the following questions:
“Am I...”

- Validating feelings?
- Asking open-ended questions?
- Encouraging problem-solving?
- Respecting children’s choices?
- Using praise and positive reinforcement?
- Talking with children – not at them?
- Circulating throughout the classroom?
- At the child’s eye level?

Reasons for Misbehavior

If caregivers understand why children misbehave, they can be more successful at reducing behavior problems. Here are some possible reasons why children misbehave.

- Children want to test whether caregivers will enforce rules.
- They experience different sets of expectations between school and home.
- A child does not understand the rules or is held to expectations beyond their developmental levels.
- They want to assert themselves and their independence.
- They feel ill, bored, hungry, or sleepy.
- They lack accurate information and prior experience.
- They have been previously "rewarded" for their misbehavior with adult attention.

Preventing Misbehavior

Child misbehavior is impossible to prevent entirely. Children, usually curious and endlessly creative, are likely to do things parents and other caregivers have not expected. However, caregivers can take many positive steps to help prevent misbehavior.

- Set clear, consistent rules. (e.g., walking feet; gentle touches)
- Make sure the environment is safe and worry-free.
- Show interest in the child's activities. (e.g., participating in activities with the children so they stay interested for longer periods)
- Encourage self-control and independence by providing meaningful choices. (e.g., "You may pick up the blocks ")
- Focus on the desired behavior rather than the one to be avoided. (e.g., "Ashley, please use gentle touches with your friends.")
- Build children's images of themselves as trustworthy, responsible, and cooperative.
- Give clear directions, one at a time.
- Say "Yes" whenever possible.
- Notice and pay attention to children when they do things right. (e.g., "Joey is playing so nicely. I like it when you keep the blocks on the table.")
- Encourage children often and generously.
- Set a good example. (e.g., using a quiet voice when children should be quiet)
- Help children see how their actions affect others.

Responding To Misbehavior

Below are strategies Smart Start staff will use to respond to child misbehavior. Remember, however, that it's always a good idea to explain rules thoroughly and clearly before misbehavior occurs. Then, whenever possible, involve children in making the rules for the classroom.

• **Redirection** This strategy should be used most frequently when working with young children. If a child is not following the rules or being uncooperative, quickly get the child's attention and introduce another activity. For example, "Kate, please help me water the flowers now. You've been riding the bike for a long time, and it's now Logan's turn."

• **Logical consequences:** These are structured consequences that follow specific misbehaviors. The child should be able to see how the behavior and the consequence are directly related. For

example, Andrew is standing on his chair at lunch. His teacher should remind him that he could fall and get hurt if he stands on his chair; this will make him sad.

- **Participate in the solution:** If a child damages something, he/she needs to help fix it or clean up. If a child causes someone distress, he/she should help relieve that. For example, "It made Brandon very sad when you told him he wasn't your friend anymore. Please come apologize and help me make him feel better."

- **Natural consequences:** Allowing children to experience the consequences of their behavior is also called learning the hard way. For example, Laura does not put her books back in her school bag after she finishes reading. One day, she loses a book and, therefore, must find a way to replace it. Only use natural consequences when they do not endanger the child's health or safety.

- **Take a break or calm down chair:** In some instances, a child may need to be removed from a particular situation in which he/she has become overwhelmed or violent. The child should be directed to "take a break" or sit in the "calm down chair." This strategy allows the child to calm down, regain control, and reflect quietly on their behavior away from others. Once the child has calmed down, staff should talk with the child about the actions that led up to and resulted in needing a break or being sent to the calm-down chair. For example, "Hannah, we have often talked about how hitting is unacceptable. But because you hit John, please leave the blocks center and go to the calm-down chair. I will talk to you when you are ready."

If these actions do not help in reducing or changing behavior, the following will take place:

- Staff will report behavior and what strategies have been attempted to the Lead Teacher and Administrator.
- The Lead Teacher and Administrator will observe the child and meet with the teacher to develop a behavior management plan.
- The behavior management plan will be discussed with the parent and implemented.
- The Teacher, Lead Teacher, Administrator, and parents will evaluate the behavior management plan and make adjustments if necessary.

If a child's behavior poses a threat to themselves, other children, staff, or teachers, the child will be removed from the classroom and possibly the center.

Useful Phrases

The following phrases are useful when problem-solving with children.

Instead of "No" or "Don't"

Say, "Please stop," "I don't like that," "That's not OK," or "That is not a choice."

Instead of "That's not nice."

Say, "That's not OK," "Please use gentle touches," or "That hurts Jordan."

Instead of "No running."

Say, "I need you to use your walking feet" or "You may run when we go outside."

Instead of "Stop crying."

Say, "I need you to use your words to tell me what is wrong."

Instead of “Can you put away your toys?” (If it is not a choice, do not pose it as a question)
Say, “You may help me pick up the blocks or help Alyssa pick up the puzzles.”

Instead of “I said yes” (when a child tells you “No”)
Say, “No is not a choice; I need you to…”

Removal of a Child from The Classroom

In rare instances, children may be brought to the main office, and the Administrator will assist the child in calming down and help staff manage the classroom. If a child’s behavior becomes threatening to themselves, other children, staff, or teachers, the Administrator should be immediately notified.

NUTRITION/MEALS

Meals

Smart Start follows the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) nutrition and practice guidelines for meals and snacks.

- Before each meal, tables must be washed with soapy water. Each table must then be sanitized with bleach water and either air-dried or wiped clean with a dry paper towel.
- All staff and children must wash their hands before and after each meal for at least 20 seconds.
- Staff shall sit with children at the tables and supervise all mealtimes. Staff should encourage conversation by asking questions or discussing the food; good table manners should be modeled.
- Children will never be forced or bribed to eat. They must have every food on their plate. However, if a child states that they do not like a particular food, they will have just a small amount (e.g., one or two peas) placed on their plate.
- After every meal, tables and chairs must be washed with soapy water and sanitized with bleach.

Modification to Meal Pattern Requirements

If a modification is required due to a child's medical need (i.e., food allergy or intolerance), families must provide the center with written documentation from the child's health care provider. If modification of the basic meal pattern is requested due to a family's cultural or religious beliefs, written documentation specifying which foods are unacceptable and the food group must be provided. No home-cooked meals or unpackaged meals will be accepted. Your child will be encouraged to eat but not forced to eat. If a child requests a second portion of food or milk, we will gladly provide it.

The administrator will work with families to substitute foods. If this is impossible, we require families to send necessary food substitutes. These substitutes must meet the CACFP requirements. Only food substitutes with the above documentation are permitted. We do not provide Soy, Rice, or Almond milk. These items will also need to be labeled and sent.

Special Celebrations/Birthdays

Special foods are sometimes included in center celebrations such as birthdays, holidays, or a child's last day at the center. These foods must also align with healthy guidelines and our peanut-free policy. These restrictions are due to liability issues and regulations established by the Department of Health. Families are prohibited from sending food treats unless they are "store-bought" in the original package and follow healthy guidelines. We encourage families to make healthy choices.

Healthy Suggestions for Celebrations

- Fruit Kabobs
- Mini Muffins
- Whole Grain Fig Bars
- Oatmeal Cookies
- Yogurt Parfait
- Mini Soft Pretzels
- Fruit Tray
- Jell-O Cups
- Fruit Bars
- Fruit Cups
- Raisins (can be individually packed)
- Fruit (such as strawberries, apples, oranges, etc.)
- Granola Bars (no chocolate)
- Graham Crackers or Teddy Grahams
- Vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, celery, etc.)
- Cheese (unopened packages of cubed or block cheese)
- Sun Chips
- Pretzels
- Crackers

Special Note: Smart Start Learning Center reserves the right to change or amend this Staff Handbook at its sole discretion at any time and without notice to comply with government and state requirements or for any other necessary reason. Staff will be notified in writing in case of a policy change.