



Parent Handbook

4200 N. 204th St. Elkhorn, NE 68022

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 6:30 am – 6:00 pm

Director: Katie Apley

kapley@bethanyfirststeps.org

402-289-3224

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Bethany First Steps. Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your most precious gift. Bethany First Steps is designed to help your child grow in the four core areas of development-Physical, Social/Emotional, Cognitive and Language. We promote Christian values, manners, morals, respect and caring in a nurturing environment.

Bethany First Steps will promote the use of interest areas in the classroom for music and movement, manipulatives, math, science, dramatic play, writing and art as a way of providing experiences that promote Physical, Social/Emotional, Cognitive and Language skill development. Children also participate in Bible time each week where they will learn about God's love for them, sing praise songs and learn more about the Bible.

All children are welcomed and treated with respect. Communication and developing relationships between the parent, child and teachers creates an atmosphere of respect, cooperation, communication, professionalism and kindness in which to give children the best care possible. It is our goal that all of the children that attend Bethany First Steps leave with a strong sense of self and knowing that Jesus is in their heart.

Parent Questions or Concerns

Please see your child's teacher or the Director if you have any questions or concerns regarding the care of your child(ren). All concerns about your child's care are important to us and we want to provide them with the highest quality of care possible. The teachers and the Director will work with you to create a solution that best supports your child(ren).

If any questions or concerns ever arise, please feel free to ask. I look forward to getting to know your child and family. Welcome to Bethany First Steps!

Katie Apley
Director, Bethany First Steps
kapley@bethanyfirststeps.org
402-289-3224

Purpose of the Handbook

Families have many questions when it comes to the care of their children. It is our hope that you become familiar with this handbook and in doing so, answer many of the questions you may have. This handbook supersedes any previous handbooks. The material in this handbook provides you with a description of Bethany First Steps, policies, procedures, and benefits.

After reading this book, please sign the acknowledgement sheet provided and return it to the Director. Should a policy change, you the parent will be informed immediately of this change. A letter will be sent home to each family and if you should have any questions about the change, we ask that you question the Director.

Mission

Bethany First Steps' mission is to provide safe, high quality and developmentally appropriate childcare in a loving Christian environment to children ages 6 weeks to 6 years. Specifically, Bethany First Steps is committed to:

- Support and encourage the families we serve
- To provide for all areas of a child's development
- To teach children to respect themselves, others, and their environment
- For children to learn self-confidence, grace, forgiveness, accountability, and responsibility



General Information

Licensing

Bethany First Steps complies with all licensing regulations and standards to ensure the best interest of all children and their families. These standards relate to our facility, staff health and safety procedures, meals and nutrition, child to teacher ratio and other administrative tasks. Our facility is subject to routine inspections by the State Licensing Agency, Health Department and Fire Marshal.

State licensing regulations require that childcare centers be staffed at the following staff-to-child ratios:

6 weeks to 18 months	1 teacher: 4 children
18 months to 3 years	1 teacher: 6 children
3 years	1 teacher: 10 children
4 to 6 years	1 teacher: 12 children

Child Enrollment

1.) Prior to enrollment, a visit can be scheduled to introduce the parent and child to the school and to observe the program in which they are interested in enrolling. This is to assure that both the parent and the child are comfortable, and that the program fits their needs. If, after that visit, the decision to enroll the child is made, a registration form and fee must be completed, signed and returned. Once the registration fee and tuition deposit is paid, the child's name will then be added to the roster.

2.) A non-refundable registration fee and tuition deposit (equal to one week's tuition) must be submitted prior to the child's start date of any given program.

3.) Bethany First Steps requires a two-week notice if you choose disenrollment of your child from our center. This needs to be in written form and handed to the Director. Your last week will be covered by your deposit.

Daily Operations and Education Hours of Operation

6:30 A.M.-6:00 P.M. Monday through Friday

Bethany First Steps will be closed the following days: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, the Friday after Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Bethany First Steps will close at 12:00 pm on Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve and Good Friday. Lunch will be provided on these days. Tuition is not reduced for these days.

If these holidays fall on a Saturday, we will be closed the previous Friday. If these holidays fall on a Sunday, we will be closed the following Monday. Tuition is not reduced for these days.

There will be a sign-up sheet for the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. If there is less than 20% of our licensed capacity of children attending, we will be closed.

Inclement Weather Policy

Bethany First Steps is open year-round, with the exception of the above listed holidays. In the event of inclement weather such as ice, snow, other storms, power failure, etc., we will evaluate each situation on its individual merit before deciding to alter our normal business hours. In the event of a closing or late start, all local news stations will be notified. An email and text message will be sent as well. In the event of an early closing you will receive an email, phone call or text from the center. If we are not able to provide quality care or be able to prepare meals during a power outage the center will need to close early. You will be notified by a phone call. We will make every effort to remain open; however, if we find it necessary to close, we will not credit or discount tuition fees.

Bethany First Steps does **not follow the same schedule as Bethany Preschool/KDO in the event of a closing.*

Fire Drills/Tornado Drills

We are required by the state law to do one fire drill per month and four tornado drills between the months of March and September. We vary the time of day to help the staff and children prepare to evacuate the building quickly and safely. We will not do fire drills when the temperature is below twenty degrees or above eighty-five degrees. Evacuation cribs with wheels are used to transport infants and non-walking toddlers to the emergency meeting area.

Arrival

As you arrive at the center, please encourage your children to be respectful of their caregivers and the facility. By demonstrating to your child that the rules still apply even when you are present, you are helping us to not only facilitate the transition into the center for your child, but also helping us to continue the work that you do in teaching your child a respect for authority and personal property.

When arriving and departing, be sure to sign your child in and out at the Check In Station. Please make sure that your child is signed in and out each day. This ensures accurate attendance tracking that we must practice.

Please accompany your child to their classroom, and be sure center personnel acknowledge your child's presence before leaving. When the center opens for the day your child may be dropped off in another classroom and then will move to their classroom once their teacher has arrived. This may be the same at the end of the day.

Releasing Your Child

Children will not be released to anyone other than parents or guardians unless you have given written consent on the State forms given to you at the time of registration and you have notified the center of another individual picking up for the day. We also require a photo I.D. at time of pickup to verify that person. Bethany First Steps will not release a child to anyone that seems to be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If this is a concern, we will ask that other arrangements are made for that child or we will call proper authorities. Authorities will also be notified if we are aware of children not being properly placed in a car seat or riding in the front seat of a car without proper restraints.

As Bethany First Steps is located within a church we recognize that there will be days with public traffic. On these days, such as when there is a funeral or voting days, your child's classroom door will be locked from the inside. A teacher will open the door and admit you. The doors will remain locked for the duration of the church building being used by the public.

Late Pick-Up Fee

Beginning at 6:01 pm, a late fee of \$1.00 per minute per child is assessed. Time will be based on the time clock at the sign in station. Teachers will begin calling parents 5 minutes after closing time. Emergency Contacts will be phoned 15 minutes after the closing time if a parent is unreachable. We are required by law to contact legal authorities and Child Protective Services if a child is left one hour after closing time and all attempts to reach emergency contacts have failed. As a courtesy, if you know you will be late please call ahead to let us know.

Parking

When arriving or departing, please park near the West doors to ensure everyone's safety. The drive at the front of the church should be used only as a drive and not a parking lane. Please hold your child's hand in the parking lot. Please do not let your child exit the building ahead of you. Please enter and exit the parking lot with care. We have children who are arriving at all times of the day.

Keys

Each parent will receive 1 key fob to give you access into the South West doors. In the event that keys are lost a replacement will be \$5.00 per key paid in cash or check made out to Bethany Lutheran Church.

Court Orders

If there is a court order prohibiting one or both parents from having custody of the child, we must have a note from the custodial parent or guardian as well as a copy of the court documentation. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. Please understand that we cannot legally keep a parent away from his or her own child without legal documentation. In the absence of a court order on file with the center, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order and/or Restraining Order we are obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated. Any violations of these orders will be reported to the court.

Visitations

Bethany First Steps has an open door policy and parents are encouraged to visit their child during the day. Your child loves to see you and involve you in their day. This also builds a positive home/school relationship between you, your child and teachers.

Grandparents or other family members are also welcome to visit. In this case, please inform your child's teacher and Director of a special visitor. The special visitor will need to show identification (driver's license) before entering the classroom.

Bethany First Steps welcomes mothers who are nursing to come to the center to nurse their child. We want you to feel comfortable so please let us know if there is anything we can do to make this time with your child more enjoyable.

Attire

We want your children to enjoy their day to the fullest. As much as we try with our paint shirts and washable markers, children's clothes do sometimes stain. Please keep this in mind and dress them comfortably for a day of adventure and fun.

Diapers & Training Pants & Potty Training

If your child is still in diapers or using training pants, you are expected to provide them.

When you feel your child is ready for toilet teaching, we ask that you begin the teaching process at home. We will follow through and encourage your child while in our care. The child must be showing signs of readiness. Parents need to supply training pants or pull-ups, plus a couple of extra changes of clothing each day (don't forget the socks!). During toilet training, we ask that the child be dressed in "user friendly" clothing, as much as possible. If your child is beginning potty training, please help us work with you and encourage independence by dressing your child in elastic waistbands and clothing they manage by themselves. A few seconds can make all the difference.

Cubbies

To help children feel secure and to encourage a sense of responsibility, we provide cubbies for our toddlers and pre-school children, which can be shared with another child. The cubby is for your child's personal property: clothing, naptime items, etc. PLEASE LABEL ALL ITEMS BROUGHT FROM HOME WITH A PERMANENT MARKER!

For germ and disease control, we will send blankets, pillows, and other sleeping items home to be washed every Friday. Items should be returned Monday morning.

Cubby Supplies:

****Children in our Infant Room****

Diapers

Wipes

Breast Milk or Formula (Please write the child's first and last name, the date expressed, and the date Bethany First Steps receives the milk)

2 complete changes of clothing (including socks)

Paba free sunscreen for children over 6 months (summer)

Other items that may make your child more comfortable

Bottles need to be brought daily (Please label)

****Children Toddler Age and Above****

Diapers/ Training pants if needed

A complete change of clothing (including socks & underwear)

Second change of clothing (If your child is potty training or still in diapers)

Child-Sized Blanket

Fitted Crib Sheet

Travel-Sized Pillow (if desired)

Stuffed animal (if desired for naptime)

PABA Free Sunscreen, swimsuit, towel and swim diapers if needed in the summer

Toys from Home

Personal toys from home are not permitted for the following reasons:

- They may not be safe for all children in the room.
- They may be lost or damaged by other children.
- They may make sharing difficult.

Celebrations of Holidays and Birthdays

Holidays can be a very exciting time for children. To help them fully enjoy the special days of the year, we often do related crafts and may have special snacks and activities. Because we understand that not everyone celebrates the holidays in the same ways, we will try to observe holidays from different cultures.

For birthday celebrations, parents who wish to bring a special snack on their child's birthday are welcome to do so, although this is in no way expected or required. If you do decide to bring something special, please check with the director ahead of time to make sure that it meets childcare guidelines for your child's age group. Please be aware that due to severe allergies, we never serve peanuts or peanut products.

Health and Safety Practices

Bethany First Steps strives to maintain an environment that is both safe and healthy for the staff and children.

Hand washing

Frequent hand washing is the best means of preventing the spread of disease. Staff is asked to wash their hands:

- *Before entering the classroom
- *Before handling food and bottles
- *After using the restroom themselves or helping the children
- *After handling of coming in contact with bodily fluids
- *After using cleaning products
- *After taking the trash
- *After handling an ill child

Children will be assisted in handwashing:

- *Before and after meals

- *After toileting and diaper changes
- *After playing outside
- *After coming in contact with bodily fluids

Steps on hand washing:

1. Always use warm water and a liquid soap
2. Wet hands and apply a small amount of soap to hands
3. Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds
4. Rinse hands with warm water
5. Dry hands with a paper towel

Cleaning Toys

The items listed below will be cleaned with appropriate bleach/water solution (or other approved sanitizer) which consist of 1 tsp bleach to 1 gallon of water or ¼ tsp bleach to 1 quart of water; do not rinse off after being sprayed and let air dry:

- *Crib rails
- *Pacifiers
- *Teething rings
- *Counter tops
- *Highchairs
- *Tables
- *Infant bouncers and swings

Disinfected Items

The items listed below will be cleaned with a stronger bleach solution on a daily basis at the end of each day, this consist of ¼ cup bleach to 1-gallon water or 1 Tablespoon bleach to 1 quart of water (or other approved disinfectant):

- *Hand washing sinks
- *Soap dispensers
- *Nap cots
- *Toilets
- *Doorknobs
- *Diaper changing areas

Illness

In order to maintain the health of all children at Bethany First Steps, we ask that parents NOT bring children who exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- A temperature of 100 or higher (May not return until they are fever free for 24 hours without medication)
- Any contagious condition (chicken pox, Roseola, mumps, measles, flu, conjunctivitis)

- Unusual rashes
- Excessive unexplained drowsiness
- Vomiting (May not return until they are symptom free for 24 hours)
- Discharge from eyes or ears
- Diarrhea (more than 3 in 2 hours, exception to this would be if your child was on an antibiotic and then we will need a doctor's note explaining this is the reason) (They may not return until they are symptom free for 24 hours)
- Flu like symptoms
- Head lice (must be treated and have no live lice present before returning)
- If your child exhibits any of these symptoms while in our care, we will notify you and expect you to make arrangements to pick up your child within two hours. If this is not possible, we will contact your emergency numbers. If your child has any of the above symptoms and is sent home from Bethany First Steps they will need to be symptom free without medication for 24 hours before returning to out center.

Communicable Diseases

If your child were to contract a communicable disease you would need to notify the center immediately so that we can alert the other families in the center. We would distribute detailed description detailing the disease, symptoms and child's classroom, but we will protect the child's privacy according to state regulations. We are required to report certain diseases to our local health dept. Take note that communicable diseases can be spread through direct contact with body excretion or discharge or open sores. Indirect contact with inanimate objects such as drinking glasses, toys, blankets, etc. The list below lists some of the possible diseases your child could come in contact with along with the exclusion period:

Chicken Pox- 6 days after rash appears or all sores are dried and crusted over

Pink Eye- 24 hours after treatment has begun

Measles or rubella-6 days after onset of rash

Hand Foot & Mouth-after sores on hands and mouth have healed, usually 3-5 days

Hepatitis A-Once treatment has begun

Impetigo-24 hours after treatment has begun

Mumps-9 days after onset of swelling

Ringworm or scabies-24 hours after first treatment

Strep-24 hours after antibiotics have begun

Thrush-24 hours after first dose of medication

Tuberculosis-After health Dept verifies that child is no longer contagious

Pertusis-5 days after treatment begins

COVID-19

We will follow all local and state guidelines through the Department of Health and Human Services, while also following all guidelines related to COVID-19 set forth by state and local officials.

If a family member or your child becomes sick with COVID-19, your child will not be able to return to school until they have been fever and symptom free for 72 hours. You must notify the school of a positive case of COVID-19 within your household within 24 hours. If your child or family member has been tested for COVID-19, you must keep your child home until the test results come back.

Medications

Bethany First Steps will not administer any forms of medication that is not considered a rescue medication. If your child needs medication, you will be required to come to the center to personally administer medication.

Medications administered will not be considered an exception to the illness policy stated previously.

Topically applied medications, such as diaper rash ointment, sunscreen, lotion, lip balm and insect repellent can be administered at the parent's request and with a Medication Authorization Form. We do require each child (12 months and older) to have a **non-aerosol** sunscreen during the summer months (May – October). Parents supply such items as needed. All containers need to be clearly labeled with the child's first and last names.

EPI-PEN

If your child has an allergy that may require the use of an Epi-pen, Bethany First Steps will require the child's own Epi-pen to be kept on site, which will be provided by the parent or guardian. We must have a note from the doctor with a rescue action plan and a Rescue Medication Form will need to be filled out. It will be the parent's responsibility to make sure to provide a new Epi-Pen when the current one is expired. If your child would require the use of an Epi-pen while in attendance, the following steps will be taken:

1. The Epi-pen would be injected by a staff member.
2. 911 would be called after the Epi-pen is injected.
3. The parent or guardian would then be contacted and given further information.

Allergies

If your child has a food or environmental allergy, Bethany First Steps will work with the family to develop an individualized action plan specific to your child and the severity of the allergy. This will be done at the time of enrollment or at the onset of a new allergy. Bethany First Steps will need a note from the doctor stating the allergies the child has as well as an action plan for the individual child. If the child has a food allergy, we will need a list of foods the child may not. The parent will need to make sure to either provide an alternative meal for the child or Bethany First Steps will only offer the child the foods we know the child can eat.

BETHANY FIRST STEPS IS A PEANUT AND NUT SAFE CENTER! Due to children with many food allergies we are a peanut and nut safe center.

Medical Emergencies

In case of minor injury:

1. First Aid will be given by a trained staff member (washed off with soap and water),
2. The staff will give lots of TLC,
3. An accident form will be filled out and given to parent at pick up time.

Moderate Injury:

1. First aid will be given by a trained staff member
2. A parent may be called and given details of injury for them to decide the best plan of action to be taken.
3. An accident form will be filled out and given to parent at time of pick up

Head Injury:

1. A parent will be notified immediately to inform you of the injury and you can choose to pick up your child to supervise the injury. If there is a great deal of blood or child is inconsolable, we will ask that you come pick up your child.
2. An accident form will be filled out and given to the parent at time of pick up.

Major injury:

1. Determine the extent of the injury and administer first aid
2. If the injury needs medical attention and is not life-threatening, we will contact parent immediately to inform and receive instructions.
3. If the injury is life-threatening, we will:
*Call 911 and administer first aid until EMS arrives

*Call parents

*Go with child in the ambulance to your specified hospital and bring the child files with to hospital

***Any costs or liability in association with 911 or emergency medical care will be the sole responsibility of the parent or guardian.**

***Bethany First Steps is not financially responsible for any cost of an accidental injury.**

Suspicion of Child Abuse/Neglect

Child Abuse and Neglect

Children who attend our program are cared for, nurtured, and kept safe at all times. Child abuse is a very serious allegation, policies are intended to protect both the children in our care as well as colleagues at the center.

It is the center's goal to employ childcare professionals who are committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior. To ensure the health and safety of young children in care, a policy of "Zero Tolerance for Child Abuse" is strictly enforced.

Children at the center should expect to be treated with kindness, concern, and respect at all times. An employee who exhibits unprofessional behavior that could be construed as abusive in any way may be dismissed from work without accrued benefits or assistance in legal representation. Any evidence of physical or sexual abuse or misconduct will be grounds for immediate dismissal.

Any person who has information about behavior that may reasonably be characterized as known or suspected abuse or neglect shall make a report to a director and to appropriate authorities, as required by law. Allegations of abuse shall be reported to parents and investigated.

Any employee accused of abuse or neglect shall have an opportunity to respond to the allegations. Until the issue is resolved, an employee suspected of abuse or neglect may be reassigned, suspended, or placed on administrative leave, either with or without pay, at the discretion of the director.

On the other hand, if any staff member suspects a child may be the victim of child abuse or neglect either by another staff member or outside the center, we as childcare providers are obligated to report this to proper authorities. We ask that you first come to a director either in person, by phone or email as soon as you have any suspicion what-so-ever. We will then, together, decide what would be the best direction to take the issue and possibly contact the Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline at 1-800-652-1999 for a further investigation.

Bethany First Steps staff and management does not take any situation in a light manner, so we need to make sure that we have all the possible facts laid out and discussed before taking further action. Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- *Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the body
- *Severe verbal reprimands
- *Improper clothing cleanliness
- *Transporting a child without proper restraints
- *Dropping off or picking up a child under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- *Children who exhibit behaviors consistent with an abusive situation

Disaster Preparedness

In the event of a natural disaster the following plans will be used to reunify you with your child.

Tornado

In the event of a tornado, all staff and children will be taken to the basement of the church. Children will **only** be released to custodial parents. Dismissal will occur on the grounds of Bethany Lutheran Church as is safe. If the property is unsafe, teachers will take all the children to the St. Patrick's Catholic School front door loop. A sign on the door will notify you of your child(ren)'s location.

Fire

In the event of a fire, teachers will take all the children to the St. Patrick's Catholic School front door loop. Parents will be notified by phone/email of their child's location. Children will **only** be released to custodial parents.

Flood or Other Natural or Man-Made Disaster

In the event of a flood or other natural or man-made disaster, teachers will take children to the St. Patrick's Catholic School front door loop. A sign on the door will notify you of your child(ren)'s location. Parents will be notified by phone/email of their child's location. Children will **only** be released to custodial parents.

St. Patrick's Catholic Schools address is: 20500 W. Maple Road Elkhorn, NE

Rates & Payments

When you are enrolling your child at Bethany First Steps, you are contracting for a time slot that will be held open for your child on a regular basis regardless of attendance. Once we have agreed to hold the space open for your child, we have already incurred all of the same expenses whether your child attends or does not attend on a particular day. We have already paid for the correct number of staff to be present, for enough food to be

prepared, and may have turned away another child who might have attended in your child's place. For this reason, the tuition of your child will be due whether your child is in attendance or not.

The center's facility, salaries, supplies, and administrative expenses are supported entirely by parent's fees.

Therefore, in order to provide the best possible care at the most reasonable rates that we can offer, we must insist on prompt payment. No matter how compelling the circumstances, we cannot allow some families to not meet the financial obligations; to do so would require other families to pay more and might jeopardize the future of the center. The following schedule has been set in order to ensure a fair and equitable situation for everyone involved:

Registration Fee	\$100 per child
Re-Registration Fee	\$50 per child
Infant Room	\$240 a week
Toddler Room (1-2 yrs)	\$240 a week
Two's Room (2-3 yrs)	\$225 a week
Preschool 1 (3-4/5 yrs)	\$220 a week
Preschool 2 (5-6 yrs)	\$210 a week

A 10% discount is given to families with multiple children; this is taken off the oldest child's tuition price. For families with 3 or more children, a 5% discount will be taken off the second oldest child's tuition price.

Rate changes are based on your child's age, not on what room they are in

- Automatic Withdrawal will be taken out of your bank account on the first day of the work week.
- Even if a child is absent for the entire week, full payment for that week is due.
- In order to assist in timely payments, all payments will be electronically deducted from your checking account. Arrangements will be made through your bank before the first day of your child's attendance.
- If your account is not current, payment for the previous week's service, plus any late fees, is required the following week or no further care will be provided until full payment is made. Bethany First Steps has a \$25.00 fee for any return payments. If this is not received within 3 business days of notification, we ask that your child not return to the center until payment is received in full. If this becomes a

reoccurring problem you may be asked to pay in cash only and this must be received Monday by 6:00 in order for your child to return the next business day.

- If you find that you will be **late picking up your child**, please call the center and let us know. The fee for late pick-ups is \$1 per every minute that you are late.
- Each year Bethany First Steps will review tuition fees. Parents should expect some level of increase periodically to cover the cost of inflation. Bethany First Steps will give families at least 30 day written notice prior to the rate increases.
- A re-registration fee of \$50 per child will be charged if you pull your child out for any length of time that exceeds 2 weeks.

Meals

We provide breakfast, lunch and a P.M. snack to all children and these meals are fully nutritious and meet the Federal requirements for nutrition. Meals are thoughtfully planned each month and we ask that outside food not be brought to the center (excluding Infants). If your child has a food allergy or food intolerance, please inform the Director. We will do what is within our scope of ability to meet the special dietary needs of your child.

Menus are posted in each classroom, as well as on the Parent Information Board.

Bethany First Steps provides 2 meals and one snack daily (breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack). Menus are posted monthly. We serve meals family style which encourages communication, good table manners, responsibility and coordination. With our open door policy we love to have parents visit us at meal times; however under our meal plan we cannot provide you with a lunch. If you plan to visit at lunch time please make other arrangements for your meal to be eaten off-site.

As a general rule food from home should be finished before entering the classroom, including breakfast food. Food from home will not be served to the children in lieu of the meals that are prepared at the center. Bethany First Steps provides a wide variety of food to introduce to the children and we encourage each child to be adventurous and try new foods!

Classrooms and Curriculum

Bethany First Steps has developed its curriculum around the ideals of the traditional content-based philosophy. Content-based with some Highscope approaches allows teachers to plan daily activities in which children

experience learning initiated by a quality instructor. Children will follow a daily plan that produces easily assessed results. Bethany First Steps gives great attention to the look and feel of the classroom. Teachers work as researchers collaborating to advance development in your child. Children are encouraged to dialogue, compare, negotiate, hypothesize, and problem solve through group work and play. Class time is divided between both educational philosophies encouraging individualized learner outcomes.

The curriculum at Bethany First Steps recognizes that children's learning experiences must be fun and exciting for them in order for it to be of any value. The curriculum focuses on many hands-on activities related to each child's individual development.

Classroom Information

Infants (6 weeks-12 months)

It is amazing to watch an infant grow and develop. Warm and nurturing care between children and adults, and positive stimulation from the time of birth makes a difference in a child's development. We strive to make life as a parent as simple as possible. Realizing the importance of keeping your child on a routine schedule will assist parents in making the child's day as easy as possible.

Each day your infant attends, you will receive a report that documents your child's feeding times, diaper changes, and important milestones

We ask that parents of infants provide formula or breast milk, baby food, diapers, wipes, diaper cream (as needed), pacifiers (as needed), sleep sack and 2 extra outfits. You will be informed when items are needed.

For infants using formula, Infant teachers will prepare bottles as needed. We ask that you provide 3-4 bottles that will be used and washed after use.

If you are nursing and will be providing breast milk, we ask that bottles come to the center each day pre-made and labeled with your child's first and last name along with the date and the date the milk was expressed. Infants are fed on-demand so we ask that if you are providing breast milk that you provide enough for you child each day. If you use a combination of breast milk and formula, please let the teachers know.

Parents of Infants are required to wear foot coverings or remove shoes before entering the Infant Room. This is to prevent any outside debris from being tracked into the classroom. Infants spend a majority of their day exploring on the floor we want to keep them as safe as possible. Thank you for your compliance in this.

Toddlers (12 months-24 months)

The best type of learning environment for toddlers is one that allows them to explore and play in a safe, impressionable setting. Young children need to be introduced to activities that engage their attention and hold their interests enhancing their growth and development.

Bethany First Steps toddler curriculum encourages toddlers to explore the world around them through monthly themes. Toddlers build vocabulary, use small and large motor skills, creative expression, socialization, and much more. We provide opportunities to engage play, concrete and abstract manipulation, interaction, and problem solving. Each day, Bethany First Steps will document your child's day, telling you how your child napped, ate, drank, played, and diapered/potty trained.

Children will also start going outside twice a day, weather permitting. As your child enters this classroom we ask that all children wear appropriate footwear for being outside. Please send your child with appropriate outer wear when the weather is cool.

Toddlers will also be introduced to solid foods, sippy cups, sitting at the table for "Family Style" meals and snack, table manners and table prayers. One nap will be given after lunch. You may bring a blanket and/or soft toy for your child to sleep with. They will begin to transition to napping on a cot.

We ask that parents of Toddlers provide diapers, wipes, diaper cream (as needed), 2 extra outfits, a fitted crib sheet a blanket and/or soft toy for naptime, and appropriate clothing for outdoor play.

Transition Twos

Children's needs change as they become a two year old. They start becoming more independent and curiosity abounds! Teachers will interact one-on-one with each child and have a short circle time (5-7 minutes) to teach your toddler about shapes, colors, numbers, animals, families and the community they live in. Teachers will read books, show pictures and complete projects to enhance learning. Meals will include sitting at tables, using table manners, silverware, prayers and serving "Family Style."

We ask that parents provide diapers, wipes, diaper cream (as needed), a fitted crib sheet, a blanket and/or soft toy for naptime, 2 changes of extra clothes and appropriate clothing for outdoor play. As children become interested in potty training we will work with the child and parents to keep this a positive experience. Please provide extra sets of clothing during this time as accidents do happen. ☺

Preschool

Preparing children for school success is essential. We provide a wide variety of activities for the preschool child aiding in a strong basis for learning. Our curriculum focuses on fun, hand-on activities to keep children actively engaged as they learn to recognize letters, explore sounds, understand number concepts, and develop positive character traits.

Bethany First Steps preschool program builds a strong foundation upon which children construct a world of knowledge. Each day provides for a balance of individualized, small group, and large group activities. Classroom activities focus around a number of themes. This approach enables the instructors to address the various interests of young children, while including an interactive approach to overall growth across developmental areas. Each child will be assessed throughout the year to evaluate progress and develop individualized instruction.

Naptime is offered after lunch. Children are not required to sleep, but we do ask that non-nappers rest quietly for 30 minutes in order to be respectful of our children who do nap. After 30 minutes they may do quiet activities with the teachers (books, puzzles, drawing, etc.).

Please provide 2 extra sets of clothing, a fitted crib sheet, a blanket and/or soft animal for naptime and appropriate clothing for outdoor play.

Bethany First Steps partners with Bethany Preschool. If your child is enrolled to attend Preschool at Bethany he/she will be walked to and from Preschool by their center teacher.

Classroom Transitions

Bethany First Steps strives to keep classroom transitions positive. Parents will be notified in writing at least 2 weeks prior to the transition. If you have any questions or concerns about a transition, please talk with the Director and your child's teacher. The week before the move up-date, your child will begin spending time in their new classroom. As we know that each child will need to transition differently, we will make this schedule based on each child's individual needs.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held once per year. During these conferences, we take the time to answer any questions or concerns parents may have regarding their child's experience at the center. These conferences also enable parents and staff to work closely to meet each child's specific needs. Parents and teacher are also free to request additional conferences at any time they wish.

Rest/Naptime

A rest period is scheduled for each day. For children 12 months and younger, naps will be given on an as needed basis. Our teachers will work with you to match your child's routine from home in order to give them consistency in their days. Children 12 months and older will have a scheduled nap time from 12:00-2:00 everyday. For non-nappers, we require that they have a 30 minute rest time after which they will be able to participate in quiet activities while giving our nappers time to sleep. Cribs/Cots and sheets will be provided by Bethany First Steps. Children 12 months and older may bring a blanket and/or soft toy to sleep with. Please label these items with your child's first and last name. Blankets should be taken home at the end of each week for cleaning.

Children younger than 12 months will be placed on their back to sleep. They may not use blankets or a soft toy during nap time. Sleep sacks are permissible to use during nap time. Please provide one for your child if you wish. Sleep sacks should be taken home at the end of each week for cleaning.

Diapers

Diapers are changed every two hours or as needed. Parents of infants and toddlers need to provide diapers, wipes and diaper rash cream (as needed). Teachers will label each of these items with your child's name to ensure that the correct items are being used. Staff members wear gloves while changing diapers. All children will wash their hands after having their diapers changed. Staff members wash their hands and sanitize the diapering area after each diaper change. Cloth diapers are welcome. Parents will need to provide a separate bin with a lid to place used diapers. Each diaper will be put into a sealed bag. Diapers will be placed in the bag "as is."

Outdoor Play

We will be playing outdoors every day that weather permits. Please make sure your child is appropriately dressed for outdoor play at all times. Our activities will include walks, playground, water play, bike days, and others. We do not go outside when the temperature is below 20 degrees or above 90 degrees. Weather permitting, we like to

take the children outside and enjoy fresh air and exercise with them. The increased space helps children to develop physically and gain coordination. The outdoors also allows for a number of unique games and activities that promote teamwork and good sportsmanship.

Discipline Policy

Bethany First Steps' philosophy of discipline focuses on communication. Consistent, clear rules are developed with children. These rules are discussed often in order to make sure the children understand them. The staff uses positive approaches to help children behave constructively. Among the guidance methods are redirection, planning ahead to prevent problems, encouragement of appropriate behavior, and the application of logical or natural consequences to problem situations. Children are encouraged to talk about their feelings and ideas rather than using physical force in solving problems. Teachers help the children to recognize another child's feelings and will intervene immediately if another child becomes physical.

When rules are broken we:

- Remind the child what the rule is,
- Ask the child to follow the rule, and
- Explain the reason the child needs to follow the rule.
- If this does not correct the behavior; then we explain the consequences if the rule is not followed.
- Enforce the consequences using time out or a brief denial of an activity, such as story time or gym, if child cannot exhibit self-control.
- Talk with the parent.

If a problem behavior persists, the parent/guardian of a child will be contacted. They will be asked to work with the staff and director as a team to develop, carry out, and support a plan focused on helping the child behave more constructively. If, despite these combined efforts, a behavioral problem continues that causes a child to be a danger to himself or others (including staff) and/or consistently requires the attention of staff beyond those assigned to the child's class, Bethany First Steps reserves the right to discontinue services.

Biting Policy

A child biting another child is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors in group childcare. It can occur without warning, is difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the biter; the victim, the parents, and the caregivers involved. For most toddlers, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Toddlers try it out as a way to get what they want from another toddler. They are in the process of learning what

is socially acceptable and what is not. They discover that biting is a quick way to cause another child to drop what they are holding so the biter can pick it up. However, they experience the disapproval of the adults nearby and eventually learn other ways of gaining possession of objects or expressing difficult feelings. For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. They may bite for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, inadequate language skills, stress or change in the environment, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power. No matter what the cause, biting in a group situation causes strong feelings with all involved. It does help, however to be aware of the potential problem before it happens, and to form a plan of action if it does occur. The staff of the center has developed the following plan of action to be used if and when biting occurs in any of our rooms.

Before biting occurs:

1. Discuss the issue of biting with all parents at the time of enrollment.
2. Distribute written policy to all families in the enrollment packet.

When a child is bitten:

1. The biter is immediately removed with no emotion, using words such as "Biting is not okay, it hurts." Avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention to the biter. The caring attention is focused on the victim.
2. The biter is not allowed to return to play and is talked to on a level that the child can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt him. We don't put our teeth on other people." Or, "That hurts when you bite him, he is sad."
3. Redirect the child to other play.
4. Write an accident report and notify the parents of the biter.
5. Separate the victim from the biter.
6. Comfort the child.
7. Administer First Aid.
8. Write an accident report and notify the parents of the victim.

If biting continues:

1. Room staff meets with the director on a routine basis for advice. Support and strategy planning.
2. Chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.
3. Let all parents know that there is a problem and the procedures that will be followed to deal with it.
4. "Shadow" children who indicate a tendency to bite:
 - a. Head off biting situations before they occur.

- b. Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
 - c. Adapt the program to better fit the individual child's needs.
- 5. "Shadow" children who have a tendency to be bitten:
 - a. Head off biting situations.
 - b. Teach responses to potential biting situations.
- 6. Work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.
- 7. Hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action. Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
- 8. Consider early transition of a child "stuck" in a biting pattern for a change of environment, if developmentally appropriate.

Personal Property Policy

Bethany First Steps is not responsible for any lost or stolen items. This is including toys from home, eye glasses, hearing aids, backpacks, and any other items that are brought into Bethany First Steps.

Confidentiality

Please be aware that our teachers are not able to share information about other children with non-custodial parents. If an accident happens between two children we will not be able to share the other child's identity. Developmental progress will only be shared with custodial parents.

Families In Our Center Rights and Responsibilities

Rights:

- 1. To know all aspects of the program
- 2. To know all about your child's experiences in the program
- 3. To feel welcome to visit or observe
- 4. To feel free to ask questions
- 5. An assurance that your beliefs, concerns, and values are sought out and respected
- 6. An assurance of complete confidentiality on all matters involving the welfare of your child and family

Obligations:

1. To read handbook and parent agreements and follow all policies
2. To read all notices that are sent home with your child
3. To keep all important information current- addresses, medical exams, etc. and to respond to requests for information from staff
4. To respect staff as professionals who work with you to provide quality childcare

Bethany First Steps Aims To:

- Promote all aspects of development- social, emotional, perceptual, motor, language, and intellectual- in a loving, nurturing environment.
- Allow each child to develop his or her unique individual talents
- Develop a foundation that promotes success in later schooling
- Be free of discrimination or prejudice
- Be a wonderful place for being a child

Working together WE can accomplish this goal!

***POLICIES LISTED IN THIS HANDBOOK MAY BE UPDATED WITH A TWO-WEEK WRITTEN NOTICE. IF POLICIES WILL BE CHANGING, PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN AN UPDATED HANDBOOK AND A NEW "PARENT/CENTER AGREEMENT" TO SIGN.

Parent/Guardian Agreement Form

I/We have read The Bethany First Steps Parent Handbook.

I/We the parents/guardians understand the policies and procedures of this handbook.

I/We commit to uphold these policies and procedures.

Parent Name (Please Print)
Print)

Parent Name (Please

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

Handbook Updated July 2020