

Parent Handbook



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Bethel Child Care Services, Inc.

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Introduction

Since 1987 Bethel Child Care Services has provided services in Massachusetts for:

- ★ Parents
- ★ Family Child Care Educators (Providers)
- ★ Children

Bethel Child Care Services has always recognized the importance of cooperation and involvement of the family and the Educator in a child's childcare experience and is committed to high quality early education and care.

Bethel Child Care Services makes monthly visits to the Child Care Educator's home to provide the following for your child:

- ★ Developmentally appropriate workshops for parents and Educators
- ★ Comprehensive curriculum and guidance programs that focus on literacy, health, nutrition, and social interaction
- ★ Nutrition training and Menu supervision
- ★ Professionalism
- ★ Early Intervention referrals

Bethel Child Care Services has offices serving the greater Lawrence, Northshore, Springfield, and Boston area. Approximately 600 children are currently receiving quality care in over 175 licensed Child Care Educator's homes serviced and trained by Bethel.

Bethel Child Care Services is actively working in each community to bring together quality services for Child Care Educators and the parents they serve. All Educators signed with Bethel are licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care.

Bethel is a Family Child Care System. We subcontract with licensed Educators which we refer to you for your child care needs. Bethel Child Care Services does not license these homes, but we do provide training, assistance, referrals, monthly visits, and curriculum programs to contracted Educators.

Bethel Child Care Services has been active in raising the standard of quality of care by assisting Educators in obtaining degrees in Early Childhood Education, Child Development Associates Certification (CDA), NAFCC Accreditation and developmental training. Currently many of the agency's Educators have reached these levels of excellence in childcare. Bethel is committed to ensuring that all children in the program receive the best quality care possible and remains committed to the importance of providing children with the best start for a productive future.

This handbook was developed to assist parents and Educators with needed information regarding Bethel Child Care Services' regulations and policies that pertain to the care of your child. It is our hope that your experience with Bethel will prove to be a positive one. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have regarding any of our policies. If you need clarification on any of the information in this handbook, please feel free to contact the office. At the end of this handbook you will find a directory listing.

Mission Statement

Bethel Child Care Services' goal is to promote quality, affordable child care for all children in Massachusetts. This is accomplished by:

- ✓ Providing Child Care Educator trainings and workshops.
- ✓ Promoting and supporting higher education for Educators.
- ✓ Supplying Educators with curriculum programs to use with the children.

Bethel Child Care Services strives to ensure that all children will:

- ✓ Be treated with respect.
- ✓ Benefit from Bethel's curriculum programs that are rich in literacy development.
- ✓ Be cared for in a safe, nurturing environment.



Absences

Please notify your child's Educator before 8:00 am if your child is going to be absent from care. For parents on a voucher, Bethel Child Care Services must call your voucher counselor when you have incurred three unexplained absences. This can result in termination of your voucher. In addition, EEC will only reimburse your Child Care Educator for 45 absences during a 12-month authorization for care (or 15 absences during a 12 week authorization). You will be responsible for payment of any absences that exceed 45 Days at the base daily reimbursement rate paid by the Commonwealth to your provider. This payment shall include any transportation rate normally paid by EEC and the value of any Union Dues EEC will pay on behalf of the Child Care Educator/provider. Failure to pay the full rate associated with these excessive absences could result in a termination of your care.

Parents are allowed a ten-day vacation each year; however, the Educator should be notified of vacation plans in advance. **Parents are required to pay all parent fees during absences and vacations** in order to hold their slots.

If your Educator goes on vacation or is closed, you can call our office for a backup Educator. If you use a backup Educator, you will still need to pay your parent fee.

If your child will be absent due to an extended illness (chicken pox, or other contagious disease) or hospitalization, it is important to contact your Educator immediately.

Activities

The goal of Bethel Child Care Services, Inc. is to provide your child with the best learning experience possible. Children will learn through a variety of stimulating activities developed to increase self-esteem, build readiness skills and create positive communication skills. Curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate practices and is a literacy based curriculum.

Bethel Child Care Services promotes literacy by encouraging reading to children by Educators and parents. Bethel promotes language development. In addition to curriculum geared to building literacy skills, we also encourage activities that include puzzles, books, dramatic play, music, arts and crafts, outdoor play, number and letter recognition. Bethel promotes multicultural activities and awareness.

Bethel Child Care Services supports your Educator in planning curriculum to meet the developmental needs of the children their care.

We encourage you to ask your Educator what activities they do each day. Educators should make the child's family an active part of their learning experience. If you are unsure or have any questions about your child's day care activities or program, please contact Bethel Child Care Services, and we will address your questions.

Bethel Child Care Educators perform developmental screenings and assessment on children birth through 5yrs throughout the year, as well as progress reports for children up to the age of 12 years. These assessments are designed to gauge your child's developmental progress in various areas.

Behavior Management

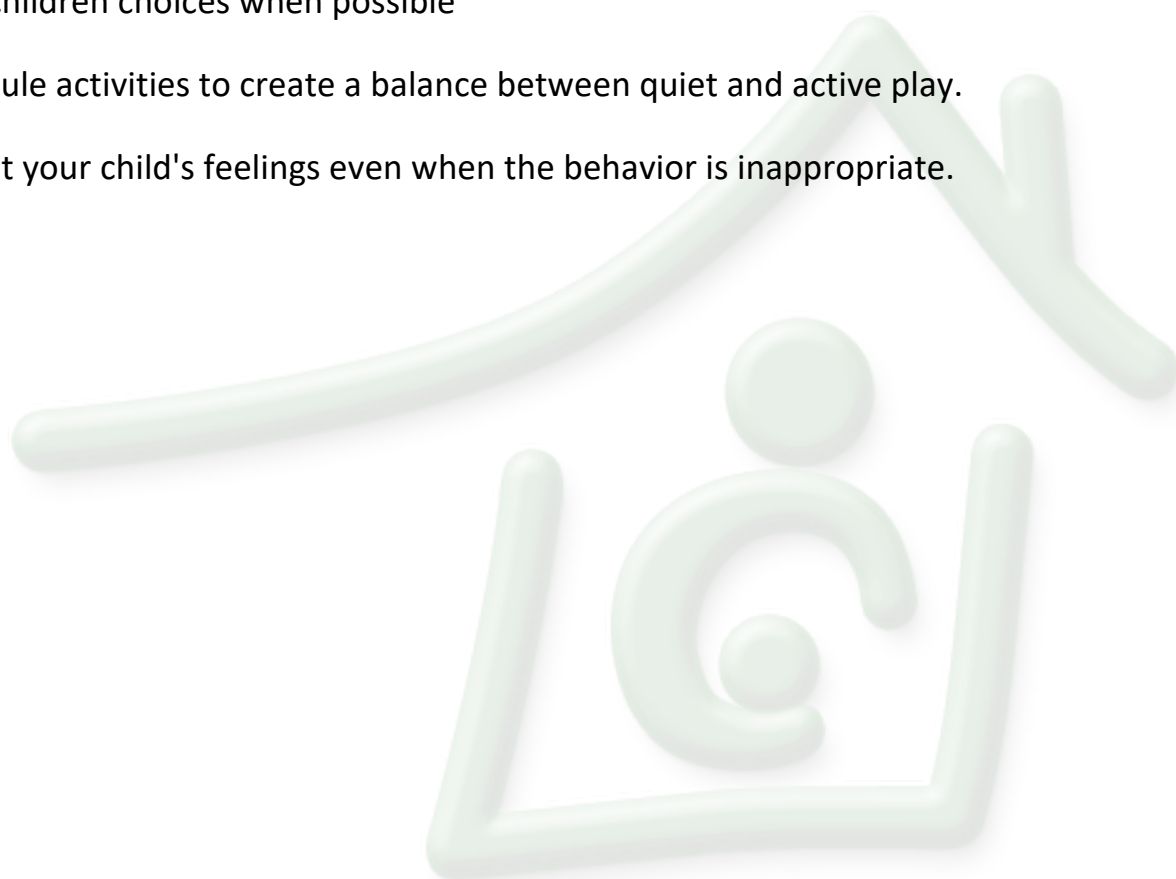
When needed, all behavior management techniques are used in a loving and nurturing manner and will be appropriate for each child's age and in accordance with state licensing regulations . Behavior management is most effective when it is consistent and a team effort exists between the Educator and parent.

Bethel Child Care Services provides training on recognizing age appropriate behaviors. Bethel teaches methods and guidance to encourage children to develop self-control. All guidance is based on age appropriate expectations on the individual child in care.

Educators are encouraged and trained to foster positive self-esteem in the children in their care. All actions by children are kept in confidence and discussed only with the parent or Bethel representative if needed.

Educators are encouraged to:

- Have age-appropriate expectations about children's behavior.
- Acknowledge and Encourage appropriate behavior rather than focusing on inappropriate behavior.
- Remember, it is what the child is doing that is the problem, not the child.
- State rules in positive terms
- Be consistent
- Redirect the younger child to another, more appropriate activity.
- Give children choices when possible
- Schedule activities to create a balance between quiet and active play.
- Accept your child's feelings even when the behavior is inappropriate.



Drop Off and Pick Up

Educators plan a variety of activities for all the children in their care. Schedules and structures are important in the lives of children. Disruptions can result in a number of problems throughout the day. Keeping the same schedule every day is important to you, your child, and the Educator. Please try to give the Educator advanced notice when you are running late or if your child will be absent from the program.

No one other than the parent(s) or designated person(s) will be allowed to pick up your child without prior notice or arrangement. If a new person picks up your child, he or she will be required to furnish the Educator with valid identification.

Parents should also note that the Educators are not allowed to release a child to anyone including a parent if that person appears in any way to be impaired due to alcohol or substance use. In this case the parent or emergency person will be contacted.

Late Pick Up:

Educators are in the business to provide your child with the best quality care available, however they do have other responsibilities and families outside of day care and should be given the courtesy of picking up your children on time. If you are scheduled from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, please observe the contracted hours. Please give advance notice whenever possible if you are going to be late. Occasionally events occur which may prevent you from picking up your child on time. Remember to call the Educator and try to make arrangements for a back up person to pick up your child. If you are running late in the morning, please call your Educator so that she can schedule her activities accordingly.

Educators can charge a late fee. Please discuss the fee amount with your child's Educator.



Emergencies

All child care homes are required by law to keep a clearly charted plan of action in case of emergencies posted by the phone and exit. Fire drills are conducted monthly and smoke detectors checked regularly.

All emergency phone numbers will be posted. Please take a moment to review this information with your child's Educator. All Educators are trained in First Aid and CPR. They are required to keep this certification current yearly.

If your child needs immediate medical attention, you will be contacted and if you are unable to be reached the child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest hospital. The Child Care Educator or agency representative will stay with your child at all times until you arrive.

It is absolutely necessary that you let Educators know how to reach you at all times in the event of an emergency. Therefore, if you are going to be somewhere different than your regular daily schedule, you must give an alternate emergency number to the Educator.

Fees

All assessed fees are to be paid on a timely basis. Fees are assessed by your income and the rates are set by the State. It is your responsibility to pay your fees one week in advance of care. Unless otherwise agreed upon, your fees should be sent directly to our office on a weekly basis.

Payment for the first week of care and a deposit equal to the last week of care must be submitted BEFORE care can begin for your child.

It is your responsibility as a parent to renew your voucher on time and to make adjustments in your payments if your fees increase or decrease. Failure to pay fees will result in a two week notice of termination sent to you. At that time, you will have two weeks to catch up or make arrangements to pay back fees. Failure to do this will result in termination from the program.

If circumstances change in your home (change of job, change in family situation, new child etc), you should notify your voucher counselor immediately so that your fees can be adjusted accordingly. Fees may be dropped off at one of our local offices or mailed to the following:

Bethel Child Care Services
411 Merrimack St, STE 100
Methuen, MA 01844

Educators can charge late fees when your child is in care over and above your contracted hours. Typically, Educators charge \$5.00 for every 15 minutes that you are late. Every effort should be made to pick up and drop off your child on time.

Field Trips

Field trips may be planned by the Educator. Parents will be notified of any outing taking place outside of the Educator's home.

A field trip permission slip must be signed by the parents before your child will be allowed to go on the trip.

Forms

All forms must be completed at intake and updated annually. Parents are required to notify the office or Educator with any changes of address, employment or phone numbers as soon as possible. It is imperative that you can be contacted at all times or that an emergency person can be contacted in your absence.

The following forms must be completed:

- Signed parent contract agreement
- Child Registration Packet
- Child's Medical Record/Forms
- Current Immunization Record
- Fee Agreement
- Contracted Intake Form or Voucher
- Authorization for anyone other than parent(s) to pick up your child

Any changes in policies or any updates pertaining to information in the handbook such as changes in rates, hours of operation or late fees will be given to parents at least two weeks in advance. Parents must also give Educators a two-week notice when changes are being made such as drop off or pick up times.

Holidays and Vacations

The following are holidays on which Bethel Child Care Services and its Educators are closed:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Patriot's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day After Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day
- EEC required professional development days*

* In addition to the holiday list Bethel Child Care Services is required to provide 5 professional development training days for all family Child Care Educators, please ask your Educator for a list of these dates each year as they change annually.

Please note that Educators may plan to take vacation days during the year. Parents should be given a ten-day notice prior to a scheduled vacation by the Educator. Educators may also need to take time off for illness or emergencies. Parents will be notified as early as possible if an Educator is closed due to illness or emergency. All children enrolled in the Bethel Child Care Services program are entitled to receive back-up care as space allows when their regular Educator is closed. Please contact the office as soon as possible to arrange care.

Illness and Medication

Please do not send a child/children to care when they are sick. Please do not send your child if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- COVID19 Related Illness – Current CDC guidelines are followed by all EEC programs. Your educator will have the most up to date CDC and EEC information.
- Rash (contagious)
- Fever (100 F./higher) Child must be fever free for at least 24 hours.
- Runny nose with colored discharge
- Diarrhea
- Discharge from eyes or ears
- Vomiting
- Communicable disease (chicken pox, conjunctivitis, measles, influenza, etc)

If your child develops any of the above symptoms while in care, you will be required to pick him/her up immediately. If your child is not picked up within an hour, your emergency contact will be called. A doctor note might be requested for your child to return to care.

Medication

If your child is taking medication, please be sure to sign a Release to Administer Medication form. Medications cannot be given to your child without it. Medication also must be in the original container, clearly marked that it is for your child and showing the dosage instructions. Please notify your Educator if you are sending medication with your child. All medications will be kept out of reach of children.

Written permission must be given to the Educator before any topical lotions or creams (bug spray, sunscreen) can be applied to your child.

Initial Intake/Registration Policies

All parents will be required to complete necessary forms at an initial intake. At this time parents can meet with the Educator to discuss the program. No child will be able to start unless all of the forms pertaining to your child's care are completed. Parents will be given two weeks to have a medical form from your child's doctor completed. If the form is not received within a week a letter must be submitted stating when the child will be seen. Failure to provide a completed medical form will result in the child's suspension from care until the medical form is completed.

Parents are also required to pay a deposit of the first and last week's parent fee for your child/children. If your account is past due or fees are not up to date the deposit will be applied to any fees owed.

Items Supplied by Parents

You will need to provide the following items for the child/children:

- ✓ Nap/Rest blanket
- ✓ A complete set of clothing at all times
- ✓ Proper outerwear for outside play
- ✓ Diaper (disposable), wipes, and ointment (if needed)
- ✓ Empty bottles
- ✓ Summer Only: Swimsuit, towel, sunscreen, insect repellent

Clearly label all your child's belongings.

Personal possessions:

Please note that the Educator will not be responsible for toys, jewelry, or possessions from home. If your child brings a toy, he/she will be required to share. If problems occur, then the possession will not be allowed in day care. Parents, please do not allow children to bring in violent toys such as guns or swords. These types of toys will not be allowed under any circumstances.

Meals

Bethel Child Care Services' Educators are contracted with a USDA food program. This program is an extension of the Federal School Lunch program. It allows for Educators' to be reimbursed for meals served that are in compliance with the USDA approved meal patterns. It ensures that your child is receiving well-planned, nutritional meals and snacks, which meet specific guidelines. All Educators are required to submit weekly menus. If you have any questions regarding your child's meals or eating habits, please feel free to talk to your Educator or the office.

Educators should not request that Parents supply snacks or food items for their day care. As part of this program, your child is encouraged to try new foods; however, your child will never be forced to eat food that is prepared.

Your Educator receives ongoing training on nutrition and ways to encourage children to eat healthy. If you are aware of any food allergies, it is important to bring them to the attention of the Educator.

All parents are required to submit a meal enrollment form for each child. Please see your Educator to complete this form. Educators may also request that the Parents supply an income eligible statement to assist your Educator in receiving a higher reimbursement rate for the foods served to your child. All income statements are kept locked in a confidential file.

Educators may make their weekly menu plan available to the parents so that you are aware what is served each day.

Naptime

Family Child Care Educators require a rest period or quiet time after lunch for the children. Most children are up early in the morning and need that time to rest. Children are not required to sleep. They may lie quietly, look at books, or do a quiet activity so they do not disturb children who are sleeping.

Your child will be given his/her own mat or sleeping bag to sleep on. If your child is under two, he/she will be put into his/her own crib or portable crib to sleep. If your child has a special blanket or stuffed animal that they sleep with you will need to supply it.

No baby or toddler will be put to bed with a bottle. Educators will always be on the same floor as sleeping children and will check on them every 15 minutes.

SIDS Notice: As required by the state, all Bethel Child Care Educators must practice "Back to Sleep" procedures with infants birth through 1 year. The state of Massachusetts, Department of Early Education and Care, requires each Educator to take a specialized training upon receiving a license and every 3 years upon license renewal. These practices are meant to minimize the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Please ask your Educator for information so that you may also practice "Back to Sleep" at home.

Problems and Concerns Procedure

If you have concerns or questions about your child's care, you may either address it directly with your family childcare Educator or contact Bethel Child Care Services, Inc. directly (see contact list in back). A Bethel Support Coordinator is in each Educators home once per month to provide support and on-going training, therefore if any concerns arise you need to make us aware of it so that we can look into it immediately.

All concerns and problems will be taken seriously, and your Bethel representative will act as a liaison to try to remedy the situation.

All complaints are investigated immediately and a Educator could be suspended or terminated with Bethel depending on the outcome of the investigation. If it is a licensing issue, Bethel Child Care Services' representative will notify the State licensing agency (Department of Early Education and Care) immediately and work together with the licensor to help rectify the problem.

Your child's safety and well-being are our greatest concern. We strive to bring the Educators signed with our system the latest training and guidance regarding child development issues. We feel that your child's child care experience is a partnership between you and the care giver. Bethel will do all we can to encourage and implement that cooperation. We will not tolerate or refer any Educator that we find in violation of any State licensing regulations, or with a record of complaints from parents.

Snow Day Policy

Bethel Child Care Services' Educators do not close on snow days. Individual transportation services may decide that the road conditions are unsafe and cancel transportation. Bethel Educators do not have to leave their homes, so if a parent can get the child to the Educator, then care will be provided.

The only exception to the above policy is if the State of Massachusetts declares a state of emergency, and bans vehicles from the road, then Educators would be closed.

Please note that your Parent fee is still due for such days!

Termination from Program

All parents are required to give a two week notice of termination to the Educator or agency in writing. Failure to abide by this policy may result in the loss of deposit.

Educators are required to give you a two week notice if for any reason care for your child can no longer be provided. However, sometimes it is in the child's best interest to be placed immediately elsewhere. Each case will be determined on an individual basis. Bethel Child Care Services will do everything possible to assist you in finding alternative care.

Some causes for termination are:

- Continually late to pick up your child
- Failure to pay parent fees or make arrangements for payments
- Three unexplained absences within a month
- Not home when your child is dropped off by transportation.

Bethel Child Care Services will try to work with sincere parents to ensure the continuation of care for your child.

Toilet Training

When your child shows readiness for toilet training, the Educator will discuss the best method to use with you. Toilet training will be done in a relaxing non-punitive manner.

It is important that there is communication between the Educator and you, the parent, regarding the method of toilet training, so that there is continuity for the child.

Please note that accidents do happen during this time, and you may need to bring additional clothing for frequent changes.

Transportation

Bethel Child Care Services contracts with over twenty independent transportation companies to provide transportation services for children contracted with our agency. All drivers are licensed in accordance with Massachusetts State Registry regulations for school transport. All children are required to be in car seats or seat belts according to age and size. No child should be transported longer than 45 minutes.

Transportation for all new clients must be requested at least two days prior to start. You must call the office and you will be given the names of transportation services in your area. In some cases you will be required to contact the transportation services; in others the transportation service will contact you. In either case you will be required to sign a contract with the transportation service. You will be required to give the service the following information:

- ✓ Pick up and drop off locations
- ✓ Pick up and drop off times
- ✓ Names of authorized persons to receive your child off the van.
- ✓ Emergency numbers

Transportation services will try their best to accommodate your requested times, however the Transportation Companies service hundreds of clients and you may have to be flexible. In some rare situations, transportation service may not be available to accommodate your needs.

The Transportation Companies that subcontract with Bethel set their own policies. They are on a tight schedule and cannot wait longer than 3 minutes for your child. If your child is going to be absent from care, you should notify your driver by 5am. If a driver repeatedly comes to pick up your child with no response, your transportation may be suspended or terminated.

In bad weather transportation may be closed. **Usually if schools are closed in your area, then transportation is also closed.** Your child's safety is the top priority. Patience needs to be displayed during bad weather; drivers may run late due to road conditions or traffic.

Transportation Companies should never charge you any extra fees for transporting your child as provided in your voucher. If any Company requests additional fee, then you should notify Bethel Child Care Services immediately.

Bethel Child Care Services does quarterly inspections of the vans used to transport children contracted with us. However, we do not see the vans on a day to day basis. If you have any concerns about your child's transportation, please call Bethel Child Care Services' office and we will look into it immediately.

Information Directory

Bethel Child Care Services, Inc.

Main Office

411 Merrimack Street, STE 100
Methuen, MA 01844

Phone: 978-458-6577

FAX: 978-327-6580

Boston Office

540 VFW Parkway, STE 7
West Roxbury, MA 02132

Phone: 617-822-7506

FAX: 617-507-5562

Springfield Office

41 Taylor St, STE 203
Springfield, MA 01103

Phone: 413-737-4777

FAX: 413-306-6068

Lynn Office

583 Chestnut St, STE 2
Lynn, MA 01904

Phone: 781-780-6508

FAX: 339-440-5440

Toll-Free calls:

1-800-244-8758

Visit us on the internet at:

www.bethelccs.com