



Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc.

FAMILY HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT US.....	1
Philosophy	1
Definition of Family	1
Hours of Operation	1
Holidays.....	1
Admission & Enrollment.....	2
Facility	2
Inclusion	2
Non-Discrimination	2
Family Activities.....	2
Confidentiality.....	3
Staff Qualifications.....	3
Child to Staff Ratios.....	3
Communication & Family Partnership.....	4
OPEN DOOR POLICY	4
Publicity	4
CURRICULA & LEARNING.....	4
Learning Environment.....	4
Assessment.....	5
Neighborhood Field Trips	5
Transitions.....	5
Electronic Media.....	6
Multiculturalism.....	6
Celebrations	6
Rest Time	7
Toilet Training.....	7
GUIDANCE.....	7
General Procedure	7
Challenging Behavior.....	8
TUITION AND FEES.....	8
Tuition Deposit.....	8
Late Payment Charges	9
Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges.....	9
Late Pick-up Fees.....	9
ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL	9
Absence.....	9
Vacation.....	10
Withdrawal.....	10
Transfer of Records.....	10
Closing Due to Extreme Weather	10
DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP.....	10
General Procedure	10
Cell Phone Usage.....	10
Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up.....	11
Right to Refuse Child Release.....	11
PERSONAL BELONGINGS.....	11
What to Bring.....	11
Cubbies	11
Toys from Home	12
NUTRITION.....	12
Foods Brought from Home	12
Food Prepared for or at the Center.....	12

Food Allergies.....	12
Mealtime.....	12
HEALTH.....	13
Health Records	13
When to keep your child home	13
Emergency Medical Procedure.....	14
Medication Policy.....	14
Allergy Prevention	14
SAFETY	15
Clothing	15
Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play.....	15
Injuries.....	15
Biting.....	15
Smoking.....	15
Child Custody	16
Suspected Child Abuse	16
EMERGENCIES.....	16
Lost or Missing Child	16
Fire Safety	16
Emergency Transportation	16
FAMILY ACTIVITIES	17

ABOUT US

Philosophy

Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. is a developmental early childhood center. Our approach to education accommodates different intellectual abilities, physical abilities, interests and needs. While providing a safe, warm and nurturing environment, our qualified staff addresses the intellectual, emotional, social and physical needs of your children. This is called “whole child” development. The teachers provide opportunities for children to engage in activities that are developmentally appropriate, thus avoiding stress and encouraging a positive sense of self. We strive to keep alive a child’s natural curiosity and love of learning. At Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. we also believe children learn through play. “Child-initiated, child-directed, teacher supported play is an essential component of developmentally appropriate practice.”(Bredekamp 1987,54). Our learning centers include art, music, block building, dramatic play, language arts, puzzles and manipulatives, sand and water exploration, the science center and math discovery center. Each center is designed to encourage independence, creativity, curiosity, development of the “Whole Child,” and a lot of fun.

History

Smart Start was started in 1996 by two sisters who were having a difficult time finding quality preschool care for their own young children. Rosemarie Amzallag, an experienced business owner and Carolyn Capizzi, an experienced Early Childhood teacher decided to combine their professional expertise and open a preschool that offered all children the same quality care that Rosemarie and Carolyn wanted for their children. Today Smart Start provides childcare services to approximately 75 children.

Certification

Smart Start is licensed by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Bureau of Daycare. In addition, we partner with the NYC Department of Education and offer PreK For All.

Definition of Family

In this handbook we refer to family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest and responsibility of the child in our care.

Hours of Operation

Childcare services are provided from 7:00 AM through 6:30 PM Monday through Friday. Please note: Our temporary hours during the current Covid-19 crisis are 8:00-5:00.

Holidays

Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. closes in observance of the following holidays:

- *Labor Day*
- *Staff Development* Tuesday after Labor Day
- *Columbus Day*
- *Veteran’s Day*
- *Thanksgiving Thursday and Friday*
- *Winter Recess* Christmas Eve through New Year’s Day
- *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day*
- *President’s Day*
- *Good Friday*
- *Memorial Day*

-
- *Independence Day*
 - *Summer Vacation*

Last week of Aug. (refer to school calendar)

Admission & Enrollment

Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. has a rolling admission policy for our daycare provided space is available. The first step of the enrollment process would be a tour of our facility. If you decide this is the right setting for your child, we would have you complete our registration packet. To maintain our teacher/child ratios, you must register for a set of days each week and those days must remain constant. At the time of registration, you must let us know if your child will be attending our ten-month or twelve-month program.

All admission forms must be completed. A registration fee, security deposit and the first month's tuition must be paid prior to your child's first day of attendance. The registration fee is \$150.00. This fee is non-refundable. A security deposit, which is 50% of your child's monthly tuition, is required for each child enrolled non-refundable. This security deposit will be held without interest and will represent tuition payment for the last two weeks of the child's enrollment.

Pre K for All registration is completed on the NYC Department of Education website. Information can be found at www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/new-students

Facility

The center is located at 8411 Fort Hamilton Parkway in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn. The building, which is handicap accessible, meets all New York City health and fire code regulations. In addition to spacious and well-equipped classrooms, we have an enclosed outdoor playground with equipment for climbing, riding, and sliding.

Inclusion

Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

If your child has an identified special need, in order to meet the required mandates of the IEP and to tailor a program to meet your child's needs, it is important for you to submit a copy of your child's IEP upon enrollment.

Non-Discrimination

At Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Family Activities

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

Please see the list of Family Activities at the end of this booklet.

Confidentiality

All child files are kept in a locked cabinet in the administrator office. The files typically contain our registration forms, family questionnaire, and assessment information. The information contained in each file is confidential and will only be shared with Smart Start staff and the child's parent or guardian. If an outside agency needed information contained in your child's folder, we would require permission from the parent or guardian to release this information.

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except for that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Staff Qualifications

At Smart Start, we follow a team-based approach to education where head teachers and assistant teachers work together to provide quality education to your child. All teachers meet the New York State Education Department and/or Department of Health requirements. In addition, our staff regularly update their skills on CPR and First Aid training and complete 20 hours of professional development training every two years in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

Outside Employment

Smart Start employees are strongly discouraged from entering employment arrangements with enrolled families. (i.e. babysitting).

Child to Staff Ratios

Children are supervised at all times. The child: staff ratios at Smart Start always meet or are smaller than the developmentally appropriate teaching staff: child ratio requirements set forth by New York State regulations and the recommendations made by NAEYC. The ratios for each age group at Smart Start are:

2 years- 1:5 with a group size of 10

3 years- 1:8 with a group size of 15

4 years- 1:9 with a group size of 18

In addition, our classes are grouped according to one age for most of the day. We have a mixed age group for the hours of 7:00 am-8:30 am and 5:00 pm-6:30 pm. Every attempt is made to maintain continuity of relationships between teaching staff and children and among groups of children.

Relationships

At Smart Start we realize the importance of relationships among children and teachers. Each group of children has an assigned teacher and assistant teacher who have primary responsibility for that group. Our half-day classes and school day classes spent their entire day with their assigned teachers. Our full day children spend approximately 7 hours of the day with their primary care teachers. Teaching teams are responsible for planning, supervision, personal contact and care of their group. Every attempt is made to maintain continuity of relationships between teaching staff and children and among groups of children.

Communication & Family Partnership

Daily Communications. Daily notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at the center. This information will be communicated via our childcare app called Procure.

Bulletin Boards. Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, upcoming events, faculty changes, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

Newsletters. Newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc. Newsletters will be available on our the Procure App.

Email. We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

Parent Resource. While our building is not large enough to offer a parent resource room, we are here to support your family as well. We have an extensive library with books on development, behavior, play and parenting. We have resources on special education and evaluations. We can help connect you with community resources for food, counseling, and health benefits. If we can not help you, we will find you the agency that can help you.

Parent workshops. Workshops are meetings and discussion groups that cover a variety of topics that are of interest to our parents. Early in the year, we will take a survey to determine parent's interests for workshop topics.

Conferences. Family & teacher conferences occur twice a year. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

Open Door Policy

You are welcome to visit the center at any time. In fact, we encourage you to do so. We also encourage parents to participate by observing during the day, volunteering in the classroom or on a trip, reading a story, sharing information about your career or hobby, or sharing a cultural or foreign language activity. If you would like to do this, please speak with your child's teacher. Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will always be locked.

Publicity

Occasionally, photos and videos will be taken of the children at the center for use within the center or on Smart Start's website, Facebook page or You Tube channel. Written permission will be obtained prior to use of photographs. Unless the family indicates that they want their child to participate, we will not use pictures and names of children for publicity.

CURRICULA & LEARNING

Learning Environment

At Smart Start we believe children learn through play. We use the Creative Curriculum in our Two and Three-year-old classrooms and Our *Pre-K for All* Classrooms use the NYC Department of Education Units of Study for Prekindergarten in conjunction with the Building Blocks Math Curriculum.

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to

advance at their own pace. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas that include blocks, dramatic play, art, music and movement, sensory, sand and water, library, science, manipulatives, and cooking.

Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning.

Assessment

Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. uses The Work Sampling System Assessment tool for our prekindergarten program. Child assessment is a vital and necessary component of all high-quality early childhood programs. Assessment is important to understanding each child and to plan a program that will meet their needs. The classroom teachers complete this assessment tool. It is open-end and looks at performance over an extended period. It includes observations and portfolio analyses of each child's work. Once all the information has been collected, the teachers analyze the information, evaluate the child's progress and plan for the child's next steps in school and at home. This assessment tool is completed three times a year. In the fall and spring, A Summary Report will be shared with parents at our parent-teacher conference. Based on the information that parents and teachers share at this meeting, together you can plan for your child. We encourage you to speak with your child's teacher should you have any questions.

Developmental Screening

Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. uses the ESIR-R developmental screening tool in our Pre-kindergarten classrooms. This tool is administered within the first 30 days of the school year. Parents will be notified if the child scores within the re-screen or refer range.

Neighborhood Field Trips

From time to time, there will be supervised neighborhood field trips or walks. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in the enrollment package. Some of the places the children can visit include but is not limited to the local park, grocery store, pet store, post office, bank, and firehouse. Depending on the destination and walking distance, the teacher may request parent chaperones.

Transitions

From Home to Center

Adjusting to school can be difficult for children and their parents. To follow are some suggestions to help you through the process:

- **Visit the school with your child in advance.** Bring your child in to meet the teachers and become familiar with the classroom.
- **Leave time to linger.** For the first week, allow yourself some extra time each morning to stay a few minutes to help your child feel secure.
- **Never sneak out.** Leaving without saying good-bye causes more anxiety.
- **Be careful not to show your anxiety.** If your child senses your anxiety, they will be more fearful.
- **Be Patient-** If your child cries, clings or shows signs of regression, it does not mean that your child dislikes school or that they are angry with you. It is an indication that they are adjusting to a new place, new people and new routine.

-
- **Talk with your child's teachers-** At Smart Start, our goal is to make this transition go as smoothly as possible for everyone.

Transition to Elementary School

The final unit of study in pre-k is titled *Transformation* and supports our students transition to kindergarten. Transition activities such as a field trip to a local elementary school, creating a memory book and reading stories about change and going to kindergarten are included in this unit of study. We will provide you with information on local schools, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary school.

Electronic Media

Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media. Smart Start does not have a television and computers are used on a limited basis. Electronic media will be offered only as a free choice and used to meet a developmental goal.

2's class: Computer use is limited to the teachers and may be used for music, a brief age appropriate video to support a lesson or to search for an image.

3's class and Pre-k: Computer use is offered as a free choice. Each child's time on the device is limited to 30 minutes per week. The pre-k Building Blocks Math curriculum does have a computer component to reinforce each week's lesson and this is offered to the students as a free choice.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

Celebrations

Why?

- Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs. We work with the school community to find the appropriate balance.
- The children will understand that everyone's holidays are meaningful.
- The children will understand that not everyone celebrates the same holidays.
- The children will understand that not everyone in the same ethnic group celebrates the same way. Families have their own unique traditions.

How?

- We keep our celebrations developmentally appropriate and meaningful to the children.
- While we can't celebrate every holiday, we make sure every group in each class is represented and honored.
- Activities demonstrate respect for every culture.

Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated during afternoon snack time. Parents are welcome to join us. We will make your child feel special but ask that you adhere to the following guidelines.

-No balloon or decorations.

-You can provide special plates, and cups but it is not necessary, we have paper goods that you are welcome to use.

-No goodie /party bags are allowed.

-A commercially packaged cake or cupcakes is best. We must see the list of ingredients to protect children with dietary restrictions.

- If you cannot attend due to your schedule, the cake/cupcakes can be given to the teacher at drop off time.

Please remember that Smart Start is a **peanut free school**.

Rest Time

After lunch, all children participate in a quiet rest time. We ask that parents/guardians provide a crib size sheet and small receiving blanket every Monday morning for rest. We will return the bedding on Friday so it can be washed and returned the next week.

Toilet Training

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

It is the parent's responsibility to be sure their child always has diapers and baby wipes at the center. In the event your child has soiled clothing, the clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home. Clothing that is soiled cannot be rinsed or washed at the center.

GUIDANCE

General Procedure

Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Discipline Policy

At Smart Start, discipline is part of the curriculum. Young children are learning how to manage their feelings and express them in a positive way. One of our curriculum goals is to help children learn self-control. Children are never allowed to hurt themselves or others.

-
- Prevention- Prevention is the best form of discipline. The teachers use many strategies throughout the day to prevent discipline problems.
 - Time out- Time out is not used in the traditional way. When necessary, a teacher will take a child aside to give that child time to settle down and give the teacher the opportunity to discuss the situation with the child.
 - Redirection- If a child is having a difficult time playing in a particular area, that child may be redirected to a different area.

Challenging Behavior

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness. Each student at Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

When a child becomes aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children. Our approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions.

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs and find your child the necessary supports.

TUITION AND FEES

Important Notice

Tuition payments are due monthly and will be drawn on the first business day of each month. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather.

Methods of Payment

All payment and fee processing will be completed using Tuition Express. Tuition Express processes payments four ways – customer initiated Online Payments, POS/Card Swipe, Recurring Credit Card and ACH transactions. Once your child is registered, we will provide you with an Electronic Funds Transfer Authorization Form and Tuition Express registration information.

Tuition Deposit

A Security Deposit, equal to 50% of your child's monthly rate, is required at the time registration for each child enrolled and is non-refundable. This deposit will be held without interest and will represent tuition payment for the last two weeks of the child's enrollment provided a two week's written notice was provided.

Annual Registration Fee- A non-refundable registration fee of \$150.00 is due annually on September 1 of each year.

Late Payment Charges

Late payments can pose serious problems for our program and as a result, the business does not have the latitude to allow families to accrue a balance. Late payments will result in the imposition of late payment fees. Failure to pay child care payments will result in child care services being terminated.

If payment is not received on the day that it is due, a late fee of \$5 will be added to your next tuition payment for each day that it is late.

Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions will be charged a fee of \$35.00. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on “cash only” status.

Late Pick-up Fees

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. Late fees of \$1 per minute will be assessed beginning at 6:30 PM and will be due upon arrival. **Repeated late pick up may result in childcare services being terminated.**

Weather-related, Environmental Disaster or Pandemic

In the event of a crisis during which we are prohibited from operating, families shall pay 50% tuition for the next 4 weeks. Payment of your tuition allows us to retain staff, pay operating expenses, and hold open your child’s spot for when we are safely able to reopen.

Customer Satisfaction

We are dedicated to providing quality care and services to Smart Start’s children and their families. Feel free to offer your ideas and suggestions. If there is ever a problem, please let us know. If we are doing a great job, tell a friend. A satisfied parent is our best source for new students.

ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL

Absence

Attending school regularly is very important. However, if your child is ill or seems under the weather, please keep your child home. Department of Health regulations require parents to notify the school if your child will be absent. It is important to notify the school prior to your child’s scheduled arrival time and no later 9:00 AM. Parents are also required to notify the school within 24 hours if a child is diagnosed with any communicable diseases. To report an absence, contact your child’s teacher on the Procure app, send an email to admin@smartstartecc.com or call 718-921-1868.

Vacation

While we recognize the value of family vacations, the center does not provide credit for vacation days.

Withdrawal

A written notice, 2 weeks in advance, is required by the center when a child is being withdrawn. Failure to notify will result in forfeiture of your security deposit.

Transfer of Records

When transitioning to new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.

Closing Due to Extreme Weather

Smart Start follows the NYC Department Of Education emergency closures. Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on our Procure Solutions school app and via email.

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

General Procedure

We open at 7:00 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. The teachers may be in the building, but they are preparing for the day. Parents are required to sign their child in. We close at 6:30 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time.

Smart Start's school day hours are 8:30-2:30.

Smart Start Prek For All hours are 8:40-3:00.

It is very important that your child arrives to school on time at the start of their session. Lateness disrupts your child's routine. Most children have a difficult time joining an activity that is in progress. Late arrivals also disrupt classroom activities that are in progress since your child's teachers and classmates will want to welcome your child when he/she enters the classroom.

It is also very important that children are picked up on time. Most children get anxious when they are not picked up on time. In addition, it is unfair to the classroom teachers who may have other obligations. A late fee is charged for late pick up.

Cell Phone Usage

Please make sure you are not on your cell phone during arrival and dismissal times. For the safety of all the children you must be attentive near the exits and staircases.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In order to safeguard your child we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child.

Parking

We ask that you respect our neighbors by not parking in or blocking any driveways on the street including our driveway. Our driveway is a shared driveway, please do not block or pull in the driveway at any time. We realize that parking in this neighborhood is very difficult. As a convenience to parents, if you call ahead, we will have your child ready and we will meet you at the door.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

What to Bring

- **Toddlers:** at least two complete changes of clothes should be left in the building. Additional sets of clothing and a pair of shoes will be required if your child is toilet training. Diapers (if applicable), wipes, crib sheet and receiving blanket.
- **Three-year-olds and PreK:** at least one complete change of clothes including socks and underwear, crib sheet and receiving blanket.

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, diapers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering.

Cubbies

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a cubby. Cubbies are labeled with your child's name and photo. Daycare parents are asked to check their child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

Toys from Home

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity. Toys from home are difficult to share. In addition, they may be misplaced or broken in school.

If your child mistakenly brings toys from school to your home, please return them to your child's teacher.

NUTRITION

Foods Brought from Home

Pre-k For All- A nutritious morning snack and lunch will be provided. Lunch is provided by an outside vendor and delivered each day. Our current lunch partner is Red Rabbit.

Daycare

Snack- Smart Start provides each child with 2 or 3 snacks per day depending on the child's schedule.

Lunch- Your family is responsible for providing a balanced, nutritional lunch for your child. Please consider the following guidelines when packing lunch for your child

- The food must be fully cooked and only require reheating. We find it very helpful when families heat the food at home and use a Thermos. This saves us a lot of time when preparing the lunches.
- Foods should be labeled with the child's name and date.
- Leftover food will be discarded except for foods that do not require refrigeration and/or come in a commercially-wrapped package that was never opened.
- If you choose to provide a snack along with your child's lunch, consider its nutritional value and keep in mind that candy is never allowed.

Food Prepared for or at the Center

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service.

Food Allergies

Please notify Smart Start and your child's teacher if your child has allergies. Food allergies can be life threatening; therefore, Smart Start will adhere to what is written on your child's medical form in the allergy section. You are required to provide us with a written list of the food or things your child must avoid. This list will be posted in the classroom. If your child has food allergies it is important to speak to the Directors to determine if lunch and snacks must be brought from home.

*If your child was prescribed an EpiPen, a special health care plan will need to be established with your family pediatrician. Two EpiPens prescribed by your child's pediatrician, in its original package with label intact, must be left at Smart Start.

Mealtime

At mealtime, the table is set with disposable plates and flatware, and the food is placed in small bowls from which the children can help themselves. Children are encouraged to serve

themselves from food passed around each table. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Weekly menus are posted and shared for viewing by families.

- A caregiver who is trained in first-aid for choking is present at all meals.
- No child shall go more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted. These foods include: hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, thickly spread peanut butter and hard candy.

HEALTH

Health Records

Your child's health is important to us. You are required to submit your child's current medical and immunization records prior to your child attending the center. We comply with New York City Department of Health regulations.

Illness-When to keep your child home

Childhood illnesses are part of growing up. Sick children should not be brought to the center for care. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. We ask that you keep your child home when he/she has one or more of the following symptoms.

- Fever-temperature of 100.4 degrees or more
- Vomiting and or diarrhea
- Breathing difficulties, wheezing
- Undiagnosed rash
- Colds with nose drainage, watery eyes, sneezing or coughing.
- Pink eye
- Sore throat
- When your child is absent due to illness, please notify us. Children absent due to a contagious disease may not return to Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. without a signed statement from a physician.
- Once diagnosed with a communicable disease parents must notify Smart Start immediately to prevent the spread.
- In the event of a communicable disease, affecting children at our center, all families will be notified and encouraged to consult their physician.

Illness- When children may return

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They can participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Emergency Medical Procedure

- We understand that it can be difficult for a parent or guardian to leave work, but if your child becomes ill during the day, you will be called. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive. We would expect you to pick up your child as soon as possible.
- In cases of small cuts or skinned knees, the caregiver or director will perform routine first aid and notify the parents.
- In case of medical emergencies, the parents will be called immediately. If circumstances require, emergency medical personnel will be notified. Parents are required to fill out an emergency medical form and agree to assume financial responsibility. For these reasons, it is extremely important that we have up-to-date emergency contact information

Medication Policy

Several members of the Smart Start staff are MAT (Medication Administration Training) certified. MAT training is required by state regulations and authorizes trained childcare providers to dispense medication.

Medication will only be dispensed if the following criteria are met.

Prescription Medication

- A parent or guardian, health care provider and childcare provider must sign a MAT Medication Consent form for all on-going (2 days or more) medication.
- Medication must be in its original prescription container.
- Parent or guardian must provide the tools to administer the medication.

*Due to potential allergic reactions and the threat of spreading germs, your child must remain home for 24 hours after being placed on an antibiotic.

Over the Counter Medication

Smart Start will not administer over the counter medication.

Non Prescription Topical Ointment

With a parent's written permission, Smart Start will apply sunscreen and diaper ointment when necessary. The product must be in its original packaging and labeled with your child's name.

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify Smart Start regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the classroom and kitchen. A Health Care Plan needs to be established with your child's pediatrician.

SAFETY

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable play clothes to school. Play is a child's work and they will get dirty. We are not messy, we are creative! Independence is also encouraged. Please dress your child in clothing for easy wear. Suspenders, belts, onesies and jumpers are not easy wear. Be sure all removable clothes (coats, sweaters, hats, etc.) are labeled with your child's name.

One aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Open toe sandals and flip-flops are not allowed. Velcro, laced or buckled shoes and/or sneakers are safest for running and active play

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is less than (wind chill + actual temperature) is 25 degrees.

There is no specific high temperature. Instead, we take into consideration the following: the availability of shade, accessible water, use of the sprinkler, humidity and heat advisories. On very hot or cold days, we may adjust the length of time spent outdoors.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment are non-smoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

EMERGENCIES

Lost or Missing Child

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within 5 minutes, the family and the police will be notified. Smart Start has a Lost Child policy which staff receive at orientation.

Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with an internal fire alarms system which includes alarms and lights. In addition, 2 fire extinguishers are available on each floor.

Fire drills are conducted as required by our operating codes. The classroom teachers prepare the children, so they will not be frightened by the event. All staff members are trained on evacuation procedures when hired and annually. Evacuation procedures are posted in each classroom.

Emergency Transportation

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for your acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received and reviewed the Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. Family Handbook. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the Smart Start Early Childhood Center, Inc. Family Handbook that I do not understand.

Recipient Signature

Date

Center Staff Signature

Date

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

We offer a variety of ways for families to participate in the growth and improvement of our program. We encourage families to take an active role.

Family Events: We have several events throughout the year that bring our entire community together. Watch for the announcements!

- Open House
- Back to School Night
- Family Fun Nights
- Thanksgiving International Potluck
- Book Swap
- Annual Family Picnic (prek)
- Art Show
- Family Day/Book Fair

Classroom Activities: Enjoy and help your child's class with these special activities.

- Chaperone neighborhood walks
- Read to children at arrival or pickup
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Donate requested items
- Contribute to class Pot Luck Meal
- Family Teacher conferences

Family/Parent Workshops: Below is a list of workshops we can offer. Parent workshops will be held in the evening. We welcome requests for workshop topics.

- Positive Guidance and Loving Discipline
- Toilet Training
- Safety in the Home
- Child Proofing Your Home
- Brain Development
- Nutrition and Exercise for Small Bodies
- Supporting Your Child in Times of Stress
- Food Allergies
- How to Prepare for a Conference
- Warning Signs for Developmental Delays
- Value of Reading to Your Child
- Everyday Math

Parent Surveys:

Your opinions, perceptions, and point of views about our program matter. We are concerned about your overall satisfaction with our program but seek your insight on key areas of our program with the goal of your child achieving a better educational experience.