



Sunny Starts, Where Children Grow & Families Thrive

Parent Handbook

School Year 2020-2021

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Welcome to Bright Beginnings!

We're so excited that you've chosen to partner with us in providing enriching educational opportunities for your child. Bright Beginnings operates two-generation early childhood and family learning centers. Therefore, in addition to the direct services your child will receive, we also strive to serve your entire family, providing you with Health & Wellness, Workforce Development, Therapeutic & Family services and supports as you move to the next step in your life.

Parents and other caregivers are an important part of Bright Beginnings, Inc. Our hope is to establish a partnership with the families of our Bright Beginnings students to ensure that we provide the best possible learning environment for your child or children. During your child's early learning years, your active involvement will help build a foundation for lifetime success! There are so many ways that parents and family members can get involved at Bright Beginnings, and we look forward to exploring those with you.

In this handbook, you will find information about the two programs we provide: Center-Based and Home-Based. The handbook contains information on important policies and procedures for each program, important dates for the school year, and contact information.

Our Partnership with You

Parents are encouraged to speak regularly with staff about their child's progress and well-being. It is helpful for staff to know anything new or unusual that is happening in your child's life. The information you share helps us to understand and meet your child's needs. Please keep us informed of your concerns, problems, comments, and suggestions. Our partnership is built on excellent, mutual communication. Likewise, Bright Beginnings' staff will share with you about the progress of your child and any questions or concerns.

There are several ways we communicate with parents at Bright Beginnings. In the Center-Based program, one important source of communication is your child's cubby. It houses many wonderful treasures and creations as well as written communication from Bright Beginnings staff. There are bulletin boards throughout the classroom area and additional parent boards located near the front entrance. Please check Bright Beginnings' website, Facebook, Twitter or Instagram pages daily and bulletin boards regularly for new and helpful information. In the Home-Based program, staff will communicate via phone calls, texts, and emails, in addition to your weekly visit. Families in all programs can also expect to communicate with support staff via phone, email, and sometimes text message.

Bright Beginnings' History

We are celebrating over 30 years of service. Bright Beginnings is a nonprofit that operates early childhood and family learning centers for Washington, D.C. children and families experiencing homelessness or home instability. The center offers free, full-day, year-round and developmentally-appropriate childcare and Pre-Kindergarten education services for children aged six weeks to five years old. The program is designed to (a) provide a safe, nurturing environment; (b) prepare children to enter kindergarten ready to learn, and (c) support parents as they stabilize their lives and strive toward self-sufficiency by providing family supports and workforce development services to families.

Bright Beginnings, Inc. was established in 1990 by the Junior League of Washington to provide quality childcare to families experiencing homelessness in Washington, DC. For over 30 years, Bright Beginnings has helped thousands of children experiencing homelessness and their families by providing high quality care and support during times of hardship and transition. In 2014, Bright Beginnings pioneered the first home-based program in the country with the sole focus of supporting families experiencing homelessness. Through these programs, Bright Beginnings team members have provided hundreds of Washingtonians living in shelters and transitional housing with the same high-quality family and educational support we offer in our centers.

Our Vision

Bright Beginnings seeks to restore and revitalize the quality of life for every child and family experiencing homelessness in Washington, D.C. The children we serve enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed, and our program serves as a model for other communities in need.

Our Mission

Bright Beginnings is dedicated to meeting the immediate needs of Washington, D.C. children and families living in homeless environments by:

- providing children with a safe, nurturing educational environment;
- preparing children to enter kindergarten ready to learn; and
- supporting homeless parents to stabilize their home lives and become self-sufficient.

Bright Beginnings Program Options

Center-Based Day Services

Bright Beginnings' Center-Based Program is a free, full-day developmentally appropriate child development program that offers supportive social services to families who are experiencing home instability or residing in shelters or transitional housing programs throughout the District of Columbia. Bright Beginnings also serves families that are receiving services through DC Rapid-Rehousing or doubling up (staying temporarily with a family member or friend). Our goal at Bright Beginnings is to provide a safe, comfortable, stimulating environment where your child can learn and grow. Our Center-Based Day Program is an Early Head Start/Head Start program that includes infant nurseries, toddler rooms, and PreK-3 and PreK-4 classrooms.

Home Based Services

In the Home-Based Program, parents and children meet once a week for two (2) hours with a Home Visitor from Bright Beginnings. The visits usually take place where families are living, such as in an apartment or in the activity room at a shelter. The program also offers special bi-monthly socialization events so families can get together for fun, learning-infused activities. The focus of the program is on providing support for parents as they strive to be the best parent they can be for their children, while also dealing with whatever else life throws their way. Home Visitors coach parents through various activities they can do to support their children's development.

They also serve as a listening ear for parents, a source of referrals for community resources, and a partner in supporting children in whatever ways possible. The Home-Based Program is an Early Head Start program that serves children from birth to 3 years old as well as pregnant women.

Transitioning Between Programs

Many families will come to Bright Beginnings in one program but may later wish to transition to another program depending on their circumstances. We are always happy to work with parents to facilitate these transitions.

Head Start comprehensive services include:

- Education
- Screenings and follow-up for health, development, and behavior
- Promote children’s social and emotional well-being
- Services for children with disabilities
- Health and Wellness services
- Nutrition
- Family services
- Family goal-setting
- Therapeutic services
- Transition services
- Fatherhood services
- Workforce Development services

Comprehensive services are delivered in a safe and nurturing high quality environments that is individualized to support children's growth in the five essential domains. Additionally, Head Start services are designed to be responsive to each child and family's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage.

Parent Rights and Responsibilities

Working together toward our common goal of providing excellent services for your child and family, we have created the following list of rights and responsibilities. These are designed to provide guidance to you about what you can expect while your child is enrolled at Bright Beginnings. It is our hope that parents will join us in following the expectations below so that we can make Bright Beginnings a safe and welcoming place for all.

Rights:

- You have the right to be treated courteously and professionally by all Bright Beginnings staff.
- You have the right to inquire about your child’s day and classroom/home visit activities.
- You have the right to withdraw your child from Bright Beginnings at any time.
- You have the right to participate in all relevant services offered by Bright Beginnings.
- You have the right to address concerns you may have about your child’s education or development while in any Bright Beginnings program.
- Within the center, you have the right to volunteer and participate in classroom activities.

Responsibilities:

- You have the responsibility of sharing information and health information about your child with the appropriate staff.
- You have the responsibility of maintaining communication with staff (ex. checking your child’s mailbox and/or responding to phone calls/messages/emails).
- You have the responsibility of getting your child both to and from school on time or arriving on-time to your weekly home visits.
- You have the responsibility of complying with all program policies and procedures.
- You have the responsibility of participating in required programming and activities.
- You have the responsibility to participate in CARE team meetings and education conferences.

Notices:

- You must treat all other BBI families and staff members courteously and professionally by demonstrating appropriate conduct while on the Bright Beginnings premises or at Bright Beginnings events. Failure to do so may result in one or all of the following; being barred from any BBI site or event sites or denied access to participate in any parent programming. The previous statement does not jeopardize your child's space in the program. However, you will have to make arrangements for another responsible adult to pick-up and drop-off your child(ren).
- You must be truthful and honest about any information involving/shared with any parent or BBI staff. False accusations against any staff will result in your automatic dismissal from the parent program. The previous statement does not jeopardize your child's space in the program. However, you will have to make arrangements for another responsible adult to pick-up and drop-out your child(ren).
- Bright Beginnings requires 100% ID Check for all entering any of our sites.

**Parent Participation and Engagement Policy
Home Base and Center Base Participants**

Volunteering

There are many ways for parents and family members to be involved with Bright Beginnings. Parents are asked to volunteer by attending parent conferences, parent meetings, helping with planning curriculum, making menu suggestions, serving on parent committees, or being a volunteer in the classrooms.

In the classroom, volunteers can:

- If elected, participate in Parent Policy Council.
- Assist Teachers with large group activities.
- Assist with small group activities.
- Assist children in hand washing and tooth brushing.
- Assist children at mealtimes.
- Arrange to share a personal skill or hobby with the children.
- Chaperone fieldtrips.

Home-based volunteers can:

- If elected, participate in Parent Policy Council.
- Participate in Health Services Advisory Committee.
- Assist in the organization of a socialization.
- Complete Monthly Family Take Home activities.
- Complete Monthly Calendar of Activities.
- Contribute ideas and suggestions for activities.
- Chaperone fieldtrips.

Please discuss your interests and preferences regarding volunteering with our staff. When you are involved in your child's education, you teach your child that school is important. Research shows that children perform better in school when their families are involved in their education.

Parents as Partners: Our Two-Generational Approach

CARE Team

After enrollment, Family Advocates and Home Visitors complete the Family Profile Agreement. CARE Team meetings are then coordinated to support each family, using a two-generational approach to move families towards self-sufficiency. The CARE Team is comprised of a Family Advocate and/or a Home Visitor or a member from the Education Team, the Health Services Manager and the Therapeutic Services Team. Parent participation is not mandatory, but may be needed and is always encouraged.

CARE Team is responsible for ensuring available supports for families and requiring at least two contacts (via videoconference or phone) per month with your Family Advocate. All parents are expected to schedule and attend quarterly meetings with your child's teacher in order to be updated on your child's progress and development.

Parent Cohort Programming

Bright Beginnings offers a variety of groups for parents promoting positive parent-child relationships and family literacy. When you enroll your child at Bright Beginnings, you will be expected to complete a family needs assessment and the CASAS workforce readiness assessment. It is expected that parents participate in activities regularly and/or volunteer in their child's classroom as frequently as possible. Bright Beginnings will make every reasonable accommodation to ensure that these activities take place at a mutually convenient time and pose no hardship or threat to your or your child's safety.

Participation Guidelines

- All programming activities are open to enrolled children and families free of charge.
- Parents are expected to participate in and complete: Workforce Programming, Parent Conferences, Family Partnership Agreements, Family Support Services, CARE Team Meetings, and other required program activities.

Parent Resource Center for Workforce Development:

Parents are required to:

- ✓ Complete an onsite intake interview with the Workforce Development Coordinator within 30 days of enrollment
- ✓ Provide proof of their employment and/or educational placement OR
- ✓ Participate in Workforce Development programming/coaching.

Family Services Center:

Parent are required to complete:

- ✓ **Mandatory Parent Conferences** - parents are required to attend at least 4 Parent Conferences with your child's primary teacher during the school year.
- ✓ **Family Partnership Agreement** - within 30 days of your enrollment, parents will meet with Family Advocates to complete the Family Partnership Agreement. Renewals for this contract occur once every year.
- ✓ **Family Support Services** - parents are required to comply with follow-up services offered to children (and families). These services are coordinated through the Multi-Disciplinary Team Coordinator and Child & Family Trauma Support Specialist.

Required Activities:

Parents are expected to attend the following sessions during the school year:

- Back to School Night
- Literacy Nights
- Parent Policy Council Meetings (elected representatives only)
- Family Forums
- Connections
- Parent Café
- Parenting Classes
- Soft Skill Classes
- Career Certification Courses
- Fatherhood Support Group Sessions
- Home Base Socializations
- Healthy Living Club

Note: Parents that are experiencing any extreme hardship that impacts participation in any of these activities must notify your assigned Family Advocate. Bright Beginnings will make every reasonable accommodation to ensure that these activities take place at a mutually convenient time and pose no hardship or threat to your or your child's safety.

Family Partnership Agreement

Bright Beginnings works with each family to build on their own individual strengths. You will complete your Family Partnership Agreement with your Family Advocate. The Family Partnership Agreement will help you identify your family's strengths and assist you in setting goals for your future. It also provides baseline information from your family history, resources that you have access to, parenting and life skills, housing supports, physical and mental health needs, substance abuse history and your employment needs and history. You will have continued support to meet your goals during your regular contact with the Family Advocate or Home Visitor.

The staff will help to:

- Identify the needs of the family and assist the family in finding the resources to help meet those needs.
- Provide a community resource list for families.
- Provide on-going information about available community services and how to use them.
- Provide assistance with adult education: GED, ESL and college information.
- Serve as an advocate for your family.
- Provide emergency assistance or crisis intervention.
- Identify school readiness goals for your child.

Therapeutic Services

Bright Beginnings has a Therapeutic Services Team who works to support any child with an identified or suspected disability or developmental concern and provides mental health services to children and adults. The Therapeutic Services team consist of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and a Child & Family Trauma Support Therapist. The MDT team consist of a MDT coordinator, Speech and Language Pathologist, and an Occupational Therapist,. The MDT professionals provide consultation to parents and teachers, as well as one on one supports to children, to ensure that each child is well-prepared as possible for Kindergarten. The Child & Family Trauma Support Therapist, provides mental health supports to both children and parents. The Therapeutic Services Team is available to answer questions or concerns that you may have about your child's comfort in school, development, or

behavior at home or in school. All records are kept confidential and remain on file at Bright Beginnings

The Fatherhood Initiative

The Fatherhood Initiative is based on the belief that fathers and mothers contribute in different ways to the healthy growth and development of their children. When one of those parents are missing and/or not involved in the child's life, important areas of development are affected.

Recent research gives us new and important information on the role that fathers play in their child's lives. This role is influenced by the quantity and quality of time that they spend with their children.

Benefits for **Children** with involved fathers:

- Are more likely to do well in school
- Have healthy self-esteem
- Are less likely to have separation anxiety
- Demonstrate a greater ability to take initiative and have better self-control
- Are better problem solvers
- Get along better with peers
- Have fewer behavior problems
- Avoid high risk behaviors

Benefits for the **Families** with involved fathers:

- Loving and nurturing relationships
- Better communication between fathers and family members
- Greater sense of commitment
- Help coping with everyday hassles and stressful situations
- Less troubling conflicts with teenage children

Our goal is to offer special activities and events for fathers and positive male role models. We encourage all men involved in your child's life to participate in home visits, socializations, parent meetings, field trips and male involvement activities.

Parent Policy Council

Parent Policy Council (PPC) is a parent and community governing body. Prior to an election, Early Head Start classrooms, Head Start classrooms, and Home Base will hold their own elections to choose Classroom Representatives or Home Base Representatives. From those Representatives, those who are interested, are able to run for an officer position which includes; President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Prior to the first PPC meeting, a Listening Session will be held for all parents of BBI to attend. This will give Classroom Representatives an opportunity to give a 3-5 minute speech on why they are running for an elected position.

At the first PPC meeting, an official election will occur, and only Classroom Representatives will be able to vote for those running for an elected position. Both Elected Officials, Classroom and Home-Based Representatives will participate in monthly PPC meetings. This is a great opportunity for you, as parents, to connect with your peers and gain important leadership skills so you are able to advocate for your child and family. PPC members participate in fundamental aspects of Bright Beginnings, such as:

- Approving Head Start grant proposals
- Monitoring the Head Start budget
- Approving policies and procedures
- Making key personnel recommendations
- Participating in recruitment and outreach

An annual training for PPC is provided, typically in October, to ensure PPC members understand the Head Start regulations applicable to their roles and responsibilities, and PPC By-Laws. If you are interested in being a PPC representative, see your child's Teacher, Home Visitor, or Family Advocate.

Confidentiality Policy

Disclosure of Information

Bright Beginnings is committed to protect the confidentiality of the children and families we serve. Information will ONLY be shared with outside agencies with a parent's written consent on file at the center and in the main office. The granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent and may be revoked at any time. If a parent revokes consent, that revocation is not retroactive and does not apply to an action that occurred before the consent was revoked.

Parents have the right, at any time, to request certain information not be shared with a particular agency or agencies. **An exception to this agreement is if the welfare of the child or parent is threatened at any time.**

Limits to Confidentiality:

The followings are some exceptions under the Head Start regulations to allow for disclosure of protected information without parental consent:

1. A federal or state entity auditing or evaluating the program to ensure compliance with federal legal requirements.
2. Appropriate parties in order to address a disaster, health or safety emergency during the period of the emergency, or a serious health and safety risk such as a serious food allergy.
3. A judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena.
4. Authorized representative from the Food and Nutrition Service to conduct program monitoring, evaluation, and performance measurements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
5. A caseworker or other representatives from a legally responsible state, local, or tribal welfare agency, who has the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement.
6. Appropriate parties on reporting child abuse and neglect, consistent with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws.

NOTICE: Confidential information includes but is not limited to personally identifying information, service information, historical family & social information, medical & mental health, disabilities assessment & evaluations, client progress & treatment, and any other relevant information of clients and their families within Bright Beginnings.

Educational and Developmental Philosophy

Curricula

Bright Beginnings offers age-appropriate activities that stimulate intellectual, physical and social and emotional growth as a part of our daily developmental curriculum. We strive to enhance skills such as motor ability, problem-solving, creative expression, cognition, and positive social interaction. In each Bright Beginnings program, curriculum and experiences are individualized to meet the unique needs of every participant.

In the Center-Based program, Bright Beginnings uses the *HighScope* curriculum. *HighScope* was selected due to a research based study with urban preschoolers showing accelerated success in school and in later life. High/Scope is organized around a set of key experiences, which children master before they enter kindergarten. Observation and tracking techniques help teachers and parent(s) follow each child's progress in the mastery of these experiences. Using the Child Observation Record (COR), teachers make brief, objective notes on children's initiative, social relations, creative representation, movement and music, language and literacy, and logic and mathematics.

Plan/Do/Review, a cornerstone of *HighScope*, helps children develop techniques to remain focused as they begin an activity. Most importantly, Plan/Do/Review demonstrates ways for children to make plans and follow through on their own, what they learned or accomplished upon completing the activity. The cornerstone of this curriculum is the belief that students have/need direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. Children's interests and choices being explored are at the core of the *HighScope* program.

In the Home-Based program, Bright Beginnings uses *Parents as Teachers*. This curriculum is organized around developmental stages – from pregnancy to three years old. It includes parent-child activities, information on development-centered parenting, and other useful handouts. The Home-Based program also uses the same COR observation system as our other programs so that we can track children's developmental progress.

Developmental/Behavioral Screenings

Bright Beginnings provides developmental and social-emotional screenings using Ages and Stages and Brigance for each child in the program. Parents are important partners in this effort and we ask you to complete the paperwork on site at Bright Beginnings or with your Home Visitor during your visit. Screening outcomes and information are always shared with parents. If concerns are noted during the screening or if parents have further concerns, the parents must consent to any additional testing.

Parent-Teacher Conferences and Home Visits (Center Based Program)

Teachers will conduct two home visits and two parent conferences within the school year to discuss each of their children's progress. The Home Visitors will conduct 3 parent teacher conferences within the school year. The first meeting occurs within the first two months of the child's enrollment to complete and discuss the screenings results that will/have been completed. Later meetings focus on child's developmental progress and generate goals based on the Child Observation Record (COR) assessment.

Teachers will post a schedule for you to choose a day/time that works best. Home Visitors will include the conferences as a part of the regularly scheduled home visits. Additional conferences can also be scheduled at any time during the school year at the request of parents and/or staff.

Enrollment and Re-Enrollment

Center-Based Day Program

Children are accepted between the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years of age for this program.

Prior to enrollment, a family must provide the following documents:

- Completed Bright Beginnings application
- Long Birth Certificate for applying child
- Photo ID
- Medicaid Cards for applying child
- Proof of Residency (Dated within 30 days)
- DC Health Certificate for applying child
- DC Dental Certificate (Children 3 and older)
- Proof of Income (Dated within 30 days) for community families only
- \$75.00 enrollment fee – waived if family is eligible for a childcare subsidy (All enrollment fees will go toward funding Parent Policy Council activities)

Home-Based Program

Once a week, a home visitor will come to your home. Your **home visit** will last for 90 minutes. You, your spouse or partner, your child's brothers and sisters, and any other household members can take part. You will talk together about your child and how things are going for your family. Together, you will plan activities for you to do with your child during home visits and during the week between visits using what's available in your home environment to support your child's development. Additionally, your family will participate in the LENA (Language **EN**vironment **AN**alysis) – Closing the Vocabulary Gap program.

Home-based **socializations** are held at a minimum twice a month. Parents are required to attend with their child. During this time parents can get to know one another and share parenting successes and challenges. Socializations provide a time to learn about topics such as feeding an infant or dealing with the challenging behaviors of a toddler. Your home visitor will be there as a resource. As your child's first and most important teacher you will become partners in helping your child grow and learn.

Pregnant women and children from birth to 3 years old are accepted into this program.

*ALL center-based participants who are pregnant are encouraged to enroll in Home Base services.

The only required documents for initial enrollment for this program are:

- Completed Bright Beginnings application
- Long Birth Certificate for the child (or other proof of age) OR Proof of pregnancy
- Proof of Residency (dated within 30 days)
- DC Health Certificate
- DC Dental Certificate (Children 3 and older)

After initial enrollment, Home Visitors will support families to collect the remaining necessary documents from the Center-Based Day list above.

Re-Enrollment (all programs)

For annual re-enrollment, updated copies of some documents will be required, such as recent proof of income, residency letter on letterhead dated within 30 days, proof of family insurance, Dental Home Verification Form and any relevant health information. Parents will be notified of all re-enrollment requirements for their specific program in advance of the deadlines for the coming school year. Some

additional intake paperwork will be required.

Schedule and Attendance

Center-Based Program

Schedule

- Operating Hours: Monday through Friday from 8:30 am-4:30 pm
- Extended hours available for those families who are pre-approved and receive a DHS Childcare Subsidy. The subsidy hours are from 7:00 am-6:00 pm.
- Bright Beginnings is a Level II Provider- if you are a working parent or student for 20 or more hours a week, you can obtain a traditional childcare subsidy (7:00 am- 6:00 pm hours) onsite if you are NOT receiving TANF. Required documentation will be requested of you in order for the subsidy to be assigned. Contact the Enrollment and Eligibility Office for more information.

Attendance Policy for Center Based Program

Head Start requires that enrolled students attend classes consistently. Regular attendance is essential for your child to gain the most out of their educational experience. It is critical for your child's success in the program that you have them at school on time and that they participate throughout the day. Excessive absences, late arrivals or early pick-ups deny your child the full benefits of the experiences essential for their success.

1. For emergency and legal purposes, parents/guardians are required to sign-in/sign-out their child with the correct time of arrival and departure each day that the child attends school. The sign in sheets are used for roll call in an emergency situation. Children not properly signed in/out may be considered absent without excuse and may be dropped from the program for excessive unexcused absences.
2. Parent/Guardian is responsible to contact the center staff on the morning of or the day before the child is expected to be absent. Parent/Guardian will provide reason for absence. **NOTE:** Staff makes determination of absence category based on specific reason for absence provided by the parent or guardian. Doctor's excuses are required in cases of communicable diseases and serious illnesses/injuries, including fractured bones.
3. Children that show excessive late drop offs and early or late pick-ups may be dropped from the program. When a child is dropped off late, picked up early and/or not picked up at the end of class, a Late Drop Off/Pick Up notice will be issued.
4. After three Late Drop Off/ Pick Up notices have been given, a plan of action will be developed that parents are required to adhere to. If the problem continues, the plan will be reviewed and a meeting scheduled to determine if the child will be dropped from the program. If the child is dropped from the program, they may re-apply and could be placed on the wait list for services.

Multiple Absences – Unexcused Absences

Bright Beginnings' program policies state that if children are unable to maintain consistent attendance, they may be withdrawn and replaced. Communication between the parent/guardian and our staff is very important. If your child is absent and you do not contact us regarding the reason for the absence, a staff member will contact you to discuss it. Program staff may be able to help recognize attendance challenges and assist with referrals for services.

Home-Based Program

Schedule

- Service Hours: 90-minute home visits once each week. If more than one child in the family is enrolled in the program, additional time is added.
- Home visits are scheduled on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday between the hours of 8:00 am-5:00 pm.
- Required Socializations occur twice per month. These large-group gatherings usually occur on Fridays either in the morning or afternoon.

Attendance Policy for Home Based Program

Regular attendance at weekly home visits is a crucial part of the program:

- Parents should notify their Home Visitor in advance if they need to cancel or reschedule a visit.
- We ask that parents make every attempt to schedule appointments so as to not interfere with their weekly Home Visits.
- It is critical for your child's success that they participate in their weekly visits. Visits cancelled by the parent are not required to be rescheduled, but will be recorded on the Home Visit Weekly Lesson Plan form. The following absence codes will be allowed for Home Based Option: E= Excused and U= Unexcused. These codes will be documented on the Home Visit Weekly Plan form with the date, absence reason, absence code and the home visitors' initials.
- Excused Absence - When the child/family member is sick or has an unforeseeable occurrence that causes the child or parent to miss the schedule home visit appointment. Parents must communicate to make sure that proper documentation occurs.
- Unexcused Absence - When a family calls the home visitor and states that they have a scheduled home visitor appointment and they will not be home for the visit. If the parent does not communicate the reason for the missed appointment, nor reschedule a follow up appointment, than the parent will receive an unexcused absence. Families will be dropped from the program if they receive three or more unexcused absences for scheduled visits.

Arrival and Pick-Up Policy (Center-Based Day)

Arrival:

- Bright Beginnings opens for operation at 7:00 am for parents who have a childcare subsidy and prior approval.
- All other children will be admitted until 8:30 am
- All children must arrive to the center by 9:00 am
- Breakfast is served from 8:30-9:00 am. **ALL** children must arrive at the center **NO LATER THAN 9:00 am** to receive a hot breakfast. Children arriving between 9:00-9:30am will be served a glass of milk and a breakfast bar. Children arriving after 9:30am are considered late and will not be accepted into the program for that day. (If families present proper documentation of being at a legal or doctor's appointment, they will be accepted.)
- **After three late arrivals**, children will be required to attend a Family Services meeting and could be dropped from the program.

Pick-Up:

- Those parents who have not been granted extended hours must pick-up their children by 4:30 pm.
- Children who have a childcare subsidy must be picked up before 6:00 pm. Late slips will be issued to late arrivals.
- **After three late pick-ups**, children will be required to attend a Family Services meeting and

could be dropped from the program.

- It is the parent's responsibility to notify the main office or their Family Advocate at Bright Beginnings of any emergencies (ex. caught in traffic). However, this does not excuse the lateness. Children who are not picked up by 6:30 pm with no notification will be reported to the Child and Family Services Agency.
- Once your child is picked up and signed out, they may not return until the next school day. An exception is if the child is picked up by a Child and Family Service Worker.
- Children may not be picked up by anyone who is not on your child's Emergency Contact List. If you would like to add someone to your child's Emergency Contact List, you must do so the day before or the morning of by meeting with your Family Advocate or anyone from the Enrollment Team. Adding someone to the Emergency Contact List must be done in person. It is prohibited to add someone via email or phone. Anyone picking up a child must have valid identification.

NOTE: For the protection of both you and your children, Bright Beginnings, Inc. will not release a child to any person who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or an illegal substance. If in the professional opinion of staff, any parent, legal guardian, or authorized person appears to be under the influence, the staff must notify the other parent, guardian, or emergency contact of the situation.

Withdrawal or Drop from Program

Families can withdraw their child(ren) from Bright Beginnings at any time by informing their Family Advocate/Home Visitor/Evening Care Coordinator.

Inclement Weather Closing

In the event of inclement weather, such as extreme cold, icy roads or heavy snowfall, it may be necessary for Bright Beginnings to close early or cancel school. During inclement weather Bright Beginning will follow DC Public Schools (DCPS) schedule. If DCPS is closed due to weather our center will be closed also. **If DCPS is operating on a 2-hour delay, Bright Beginnings will open on-time.** During the summer or if DCPS is out of session, Bright Beginnings will follow the District of Columbia Government closing procedures. We will not call you to notify you of cancellations. Please check out Facebook, Twitter and Instagram sites or listen to local TV and radio stations for the cancellation lists.

In the event of inclement weather, there will be a message on the center's answering machine by 6:00 am stating whether or not we are open for the day. Parents are encouraged to call before leaving home on weather emergency days. Families in the Home-Based program should communicate with their Home Visitor to confirm whether visits will occur during inclement weather.

Key Classroom Policies/Procedures (Center-Based)

Daily Health Checks

Upon arrival to the classroom, teaching staff will conduct a visual health check of your child with the parent present. This allows Bright Beginnings to monitor the health/safety of all of our children and ensure that they are coming to school ready to learn. This brief check must be completed before you can sign your child in.

COVID-19 Health Checks

Every child and staff member will have a COVID-19 check conducted at the start of each day. The check will include a series of questions as well as a temperature check. Persons who have a fever of 100.4 or above or other signs of illness will not be admitted to the facility. Children and staff should stay home, and will not be admitted if the child, staff member, or any member of their household has

had a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, cough, shortness of breath or if there are any signs of illness upon arrival. Parents/guardians and staff should call their health care provider for further directions.

Clothing Policies

Children must have **two changes of clothes** in their cubby at all times. Please provide weather appropriate clothing, such as jackets, hats, gloves, and scarves. We recommend clothing that is washable, durable, and appropriate for play. Shoes should be comfortable and practical for running, climbing, and walking.

Bright Beginnings is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing. Please label your child's clothing so that it can be easily identified. If your child is sent home in their change of clothes, please be sure to replace them on the following school day.

Prohibited Shoes and Accessories:

- **No Open Toe Shoes** – Your child must wear closed toe shoes. Open toes shoes are unsafe for playing outside.
- **No Crocs** – Crocs (or similar brands) are not allowed at Bright Beginnings.
- **No Hair Beads/Small Barrettes** - Please do not put beads/small barrettes in your child's hair. Barrettes that are smaller than a nickel are NOT acceptable. Both pose a choking hazard.

NOTE: If your child comes to school with open toe shoes, crocs or beads in their hair *they will not be allowed to stay.* Please help us keep your children safe.

Parent Grievance Procedure

A Parent Grievance Procedure is established to provide a means of encouraging parents to feel comfortable with expressing any concerns you may have with our program or staff. If you have a complaint and would like to file a grievance, please report concerns/complaints in the proper chain of command:

- Family Services Manager or Home-Based Manager
- Education Director or Director of Programming
- Chief of Staff
- Executive Director

Nutrition Services

Mealtimes (Center-Based Day)

Breakfast	8:30-9:00 am
Morning snack	10:00-10:30 am
Lunch	11:00am-12:00pm
Afternoon snack	3:00-3:30 pm

Mealtimes (Home-Based)

Healthy snacks and/or meals will be provided at each socialization activity for families in the home-based program. Families can also coordinate with their Home Visitor if they would like to incorporate mealtime routines into their weekly visits.

Food Prepared at Center

Lunch is provided by a private catering service. Breakfast and snacks are prepared at the center. All menus and servings meet USDA childcare food requirements. Menus will be posted and available in your child's classroom at the beginning of each month.

Food Brought from Home

All children at the center should have the same food choices. Children are not allowed to bring food, drinks, or snacks from home.

Infant Feeding

Bright Beginnings supports breastfeeding mothers by providing a nursing area and a place to store breast milk. For formula-fed infants, Bright Beginnings supports their nutritional needs by providing formula throughout the school day. Parents must provide bottles for their infants for breast milk or formula.

Food Allergies/Dietary Restrictions

Bright Beginnings will accommodate restricted diets or special diets for health or religious reasons with proper documentation from a medical professional. We will make every effort to accommodate your child's dietary needs within the USDA Childcare Food Program. We request written permission from a medical professional stating the special dietary need.

Food Disclaimer for Special Events and Activities

Food consumed during special events and activities while at Bright Beginnings such as (but not limited to) Connections, Literacy Night, Parenting Class, Holiday Events, and Family Forum that IS NOT prepared by our regular food vendors (Good Foods, Sysco) and kitchen manager MAY contain products with (but not limited to) peanuts, shellfish, tree nuts, soy, milk, eggs, and wheat or may have been made in a factory that process (but not limited to) peanuts, shellfish, tree nuts, soy, milk, eggs, and wheat. It is also true that many of the foods served during these events may not be supported by a Child Nutrition Label (CNL).

While Bright Beginnings takes steps to avoid the risk of cross-contamination and food allergens, we cannot guarantee that any of the products offered during these special events and activities are safe to consume for people with (but not limited to) peanut, tree nut, soy, shellfish, milk, eggs or wheat allergies. We also cannot guarantee that these foods have Child Nutrition Labels to support them. However, information for children with food allergies will remain posted in the appropriate food preparation areas center wide and followed closely when serving meals of any kind. And any foods served via our Kitchen Manager and food vendors will have a Child Nutrition Label.

However, there is no guarantee that special event meals that are NOT prepared by our regular food vendors (Good Foods/Sysco) and kitchen manager will be closely prepared and monitored. Meals consumed by children during these activities and events are the responsibility of the parent. Parents who wish to have a separate food allergy meal or Child Nutrition Labeled meal prepared for their child during these special events and activities should contact the Health & Nutrition Manager immediately and in writing to have these arrangements made. If not, it is assumed that this disclaimer is fully understood.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

For all other FNS nutrition assistance programs, State or local agencies, and their subrecipients, must post the following Nondiscrimination Statement: In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information

(e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Health Documentation

Health Certificates (Annual Physicals)

At the time of enrollment, every center-based child must have a current DC Health Certificate, signed by a physician and age-appropriate immunizations, unless otherwise noted by a physician. In the home-based program, families have 90 days to submit their children's current health certificate. A tuberculin test, lead screening, and hematocrit/hemoglobin screening are required at one year of age. In some instances, the lead screening may be required as early as 6 – 9 months. (Parents also need to submit Well Child Check Forms from children as early as 5 days to 36 months. Parents will receive documents from the Health Services to submit to their primary physician.)

Dental Health

In the center-based day program and home-based program, children who are 12 months old or older must have a dental home that is accessible and family-centered, as evidenced by submission of a complete Dental Home Verification Form. In all programs, children 3 years old or older must also have a complete DC Dental Certificate.

Updated Health Information

Please share updated health information as soon as it becomes available. Notifications to update your child's health information will be provided to you by the Health Services team within 30- 60 days in advance of the information's expiration date. If you ever receive a notification and have questions or concerns about it, please see Health Services immediately.

Illness (Center-Based)

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children, you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center also has the right to refuse or send home a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits symptoms of illness. We will try to keep your child comfortable but s/he will be excluded from all activities until you arrive. It is the responsibility of the parents to keep their children home if they exhibit symptoms before arriving at school.

Generally, children may not return to the center until they have been on medication for 24 to 48 hours, but some illnesses require a longer period of exclusion. A doctor's note may be required depending on the condition. The Health Services Team will communicate with parents directly to discuss required documentation and when a child will be allowed to return for each specific situation.

Illness (Home-Based)

It is the responsibility of parents to notify their Home Visitor if they or someone in the household is sick with a communicable disease. In these instances, visits will be canceled. Likewise, the Home Visitor will notify their families to cancel visits if they are ill themselves.

COVID-19

If a child or staff member reports any symptoms related to COVID-19, or is confirmed to have COVID-19, the child or staff member cannot return to child care until:

- 72 hours after the fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication (e.g., Motrin, Tylenol) and respiratory symptoms have improved; AND
- At least 10 days after symptoms first appeared, whichever is later.

If a child or staff member has had close, prolonged contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19, but the child or staff member is not sick, they should not return to child care for 14 days from the last day they came into close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual. Throughout this period, they should closely monitor their health for signs of illness, and call their medical provider if they develop.

Asthma and Other Ongoing Health Concerns (Center-Based)

Many children in our program suffer from asthma. In order to address the health needs of these children, the Health Services Team will require an Asthma Action Plan to be on file. This plan details specific steps to be taken for your child with asthma when symptoms occur.

Similar plans will be made for any children in the program with other ongoing health concerns or chronic illnesses that require attention while at Bright Beginnings.

Emergency Medical Treatment (Center-Based)

Upon admission to Bright Beginnings, each parent must sign an Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment form. This form gives Bright Beginnings permission (in the event of an emergency) to transport your child to the nearest hospital where they will be given treatment. In case of a medical emergency, we will contact the parents and/or emergency contact person. If we are unable to reach either parent or the emergency contact person, the child will be transported to the hospital. At management's discretion, your child may be taken directly to the hospital's emergency room.

Medication Administration (Center-Based)

Bright Beginnings will only administer prescribed medications with a completed DC Medication Administration Form on file signed by the prescribing physician and the parent. Medication must be in its original containers and clearly labeled with the child's name. If medication is shared between school and home, parents must leave the medication with child's teacher each morning to be stored properly. If possible, we request that parents schedule the doses of their child's medication, so the center staff assumes minimal responsibility for its administration.

Medication stored at Bright Beginnings will be inspected monthly, and if expired will be immediately reported to the parent in writing.

Discipline, Safety and Emergencies

Procedures for Guidance and Positive Discipline

The goal of any necessary discipline or guidance in our program is to promote life-long self-control, self-esteem and self-discipline in children. We want children to learn to make appropriate choices by themselves and not to rely on adults to control their behavior.

In accordance with our goals of discipline, we utilize supportive and fair discipline techniques that help children acknowledge the behavior, make choices about the solution and be responsible for the consequences.

The children are taught and encouraged to use a problem solving approach when conflicts arise. They are taught to show respect for themselves and others as well as their environment. We do this with positive attention and by setting limits for inappropriate behavior.

At no time will any adult use corporate punishment, ridicule, humiliate, threaten a child, or use food or isolation as a means of gaining compliance. The discipline and guidance techniques used by the center staff are designed to help children develop self-control.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

Bright Beginnings will not tolerate any forms of hitting/physical punishment or verbal abuse towards children nor adults in our program. Any form of hitting/physical punishment or verbal abuse on Bright Beginnings property or while attending Bright Beginnings events will be reported to DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).

In accordance with the District of Columbia Department of Child and Family Services, all Bright Beginnings staff and consultants are mandated reporters and are legally obligated to report any potential child abuse or neglect to the local child protection agency. Reports of suspected abuse and neglect are made to CFSA by calling the reporting hotline at (202) 671-SAFE (7233). CFSA to determine next steps, including possible investigations. Bright Beginnings does not investigate claims, but will fully cooperate with CFSA in any investigations, while still maintaining confidentiality. Staff must report suspicion or knowledge of child abuse or neglect. The proper authorities will be notified if there is any such evidence of:

- Physical or psychological abuse
- Child neglect, i.e. failure to provide food, clothing and shelter even if no physical injury is evident.
- Sexual abuse, assault or child molestation

Fire Drills and Other Emergency Preparedness (Center-Based)

Fire drills are performed once a month. All children and staff practice safely evacuating the building and gathering outside at a safe distance or at our nearby evacuation site, depending on the weather. Other emergency drills, such as for severe weather or earthquakes, are done periodically.

Emergency Contingency Plan (Center-Based)

In the event of an actual emergency that requires evacuation of the building, staff and children at 3640 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE will be evacuated to National Children's Center. Staff and children at 3418 4th Street SE will be evacuated to Simon Elementary School. This information is subject to change.

In the event of an emergency that requires sheltering in place, each classroom and office has a designated shelter location within the building. Plans are posted for children and adults around the center.

Outings and Field Trips

Travel and Activity Authorization (Center-Based)

At the time of enrollment, parents are asked to sign a Travel and Activity Authorization form designed as a blanket permission slip for all given activities, giving your child permission to participate in trips using a bus/van to and from Bright Beginnings authorized trips. Bright Beginnings will use the appropriate child safety restraints and abide by all District of Columbia safety rules when a child is transported in a vehicle. Bright Beginnings will notify a parent each time a child is to participate in an activity that would involve transportation. The authorization form is valid for approximately one school year. Children being transported to and from the center in a vehicle will have records kept on the details of any vehicle used. The vehicle owner/operator must maintain valid registration and insurance and must conduct safety checks.

Field Trip Policy (Center-Based)

We encourage parents to sign up and accompany their children on field trips. Parent volunteers will sign waivers before participating and will be expected to assist teachers throughout the trip; further information about volunteering for field trips will be shared at the time of the trip.

Safety is the most important concern and focus when Bright Beginnings staff take children on field trips. We recognize that some children require additional supervision while outside of the classroom/playground area and that teachers/staff may need assistance when outside of Bright Beginnings. Based on recommendations from the classroom teachers and other staff, Bright Beginnings may require you to accompany your children on field trips if we believe your child's safety and/or the safety of the other children may be compromised without this supervision. This is to meet the needs of those individual children, as well as to ensure the safety of all children on the trip.

Socializations (Home-Based)

The Home-Based program puts on socialization activities approximately twice per month. These are large-group gatherings that offer a chance for Home-Based families to get to know each other while still supporting parent-child interactions. Socializations take place in various locations around DC. For all socialization activities, parents must accompany their children and are responsible for supervising their children throughout the event.

Parents and children enrolled in the Home-Based program are encouraged to attend all socialization activities. When there are additional, older children in the family, they may also attend if they are not in school during the time of the event.

Other Miscellaneous Policies

Pet Policy

Pets are not allowed on the premises of Bright Beginnings.

Non-Smoking Policy

Bright Beginnings has a non-smoking policy that prohibits smoking in the center and at Bright Beginnings events.

Additional Bright Beginnings Policies

If you have questions about other Bright Beginnings policies or would like to see full versions of policies, they are available upon request.

Bright Beginnings 2020-2021 School Schedule

First Day of School	July 6, 2020
Labor Day	September 7, 2020
Home Visiting Day for Teachers	October 8, 2020
Professional Development Day	October 9, 2020
Columbus/Indigenous People's Day	October 12, 2020
Election Day	November 3, 2020
Veteran's Day	November 11, 2020
Thanksgiving Break	November 25, 2020 – November 27, 2020
Winter Break	December 21, 2020 – January 1, 2021
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day	January 18, 2021
President's Day	February 15, 2021
Professional Development Day	February 18, 2021
Home Visiting Day for Teachers	March 4, 2021
Professional Development Day	March 5, 2021
Professional Development Day	April 9, 2021
Spring Break	April 12, 2021 – April 16, 2021
Memorial Day	May 31, 2021
Professional Development Day	June 25, 2021
Independence Day Observed	July 5, 2021
Last Day of School/Transition Ceremony	July 23, 2021
Summer Break for Students	July 26, 2021 - August 6, 2021

Parent Incentive Program

PIM Points Program	Points
Home Based Services	
Home Based Socializations	5 pts per event
Kiwanis Socializations	10 pts per event
Home Visits (Home Based)	5 pts per visit
Home Based Services Special Events	5 pts per event
Closing the Vocabulary Gap Initiative (successful participation in initiative – Return LENA devices, attend data discussions and trainings)	5 pts per successful cycle
Successful Movement to Next Self-Sufficiency Level	30 pts
Workforce Development	
CASAS Assessment	5 points per assessment
Workforce Development Programming	2 pts per session
Employment Training	2 pts per session
Educational Training	2 pts per session
Job Fair Participation	5 pts per event
Fatherhood Workshops	2 pts per session
Workforce Development Special Events	5 pts per event
Family Services	
Parent Orientation	5 pts per event
Parent Café	2 pts per session
Connections	2 pts per session
Family Services Workshops	2 pts per session
Family Services Special Events	5 pts per event
Health Services	
45 & 90 Day Health Screenings – On Time Completion	10 points per screening
WIC Club	2 pts per session
Successful Completion of Program (attend all 6 sessions)	Additional 5 pts
Health Services Advisory Council (80% percent attendance)	10 pts
Health Services Special Events	5 pts per event
Therapeutic Services	
MDT Meetings/IFPS Meetings	5 pts
Individual Counseling	2 pts per session
Group Counseling	5 pts per session
Center Based Services	
Classroom Meeting/Activities	5 pts per meeting
Home Visits with Teachers	5 pts per meeting
Literacy Night	5 pts per night
Classroom Volunteering	3 pts per hour
Back to School Night	10 pts per event
Field Trip Chaperone	5 pts per event
Closing the Vocabulary Gap Initiative (successful participation in initiative – attend data discussions and trainings)	40 pts
Center Based Special Events	5 pts per event

Program Expectations	
Student Attendance: Child(ren) Meet 80% Monthly Attendance Rate	15 points per month
Successful Movement to Next Self-Sufficiency Level	30 pts
Policy Council	5 pts per meeting

Minimum Points Required to Participate in Incentive Activities

Holiday Store	125 points – Home Based Families 150 points – Center Based Families
End of Year Ceremony	375 – Home Based Families 450 – Center Based Families

Important Staff Contacts

Name	Title	Number
Dr. Marla Dean	Executive Director	<u>202-842-9090</u>
Erin Fisher	Chief of Staff	<u>202-853-2198</u>
Toyeka Milam	Director of Programming	<u>202-868-0376</u>
Shaquita Tillman	Education Director	<u>202-672-4133</u>
Michelle George	Administrative Assistant (4 th Street)	<u>202-796-4761</u>
Pamela Dean	Administrative Assistant (MLK Site)	<u>202-796-4776</u>
Carolyn Pruitt	Instructional Coach/Master Teacher (MLK Site)	<u>202-796-4765</u>
Sylvia Guerrero	Instructional Coach/Master Teacher (4 th Street)	<u>202-796-4763</u>
Rosaline Nwoko	Instructional Coach/Master Teacher (4 th Street)	<u>202-842-9090</u>
Jamie Holloway	Family Services Manager	<u>202-672-4165</u>
Ashley Williams	Health Services Manager	<u>202-695-8304</u>
Amber Colney	Eligibility, Enrollment & Attendance Coordinator	<u>202-236-9571</u>
Angela Hamilton	MDT Coordinator	<u>202-897-2613</u>
Ebony Tuzon	Home Based Manager	<u>202-236-9383</u>
Anthony Sessoms	Family Recruitment & Outreach Specialist	202-868-9856

Other Useful Contact Numbers

Department of Human Service Child Care
 Services Division 4001 South Capitol Street SW
 Washington, DC 20032
 (202) 727-0284

Police – 911
 Fire – 911
 Ambulance – 911
 Poison Control Centers – (800) 222-1222

Office of the State Superintendent
 810 First St NE, Washington, DC 20002
 (202) 727-6436

Locations

Early Head Start Location:
 3418 4th Street SE
 Washington, DC 20032
 Main (202)-842-9090
 Fax (202)-842-9095

Head Start Location:
 3640 MLK Jr Ave SE
 Washington, DC 20032
 Main (202)-796-4776

Full staff list available at <http://www.bbdc.org/> or by request at the front desk.

Acknowledgment

I have received the Bright Beginnings Parent Handbook for SY 2020-2021, and I have reviewed it with a member of Bright Beginnings staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself the Parent Handbook and to ask Bright Beginnings management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the handbook that I do not understand.

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

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Relationship to Child: _____ Date: _____

I have fully explained to _____ the Bright Beginnings policies and procedures that are enclosed in this handbook.

Signature of Head Start Staff: _____ Date: _____

I have fully explained to _____ the Bright Beginnings policies and procedures that are enclosed in this handbook.

Signature of Head Start Staff: _____ Date: _____

Please sign this acknowledgment, detach it from the handbook, and return it to Bright Beginnings prior to enrollment.

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