



Sprouts Town Child Care Center

Parent Handbook



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Luwam Berhane - Owner/Provider

Dear Parents and Families,

Welcome! Below are the policies and procedures that determine the way that we at Sprouts Town Child Care Center operate our center. Our hope is that our intentional planning provides the best possible early care and education experience for your child. By reading this and enrolling your child in our program, you are agreeing to abide by the policies written here.

We know that we ALWAYS have more to learn, so we welcome your questions, ideas, and feedback related to the contents of this handbook, or anything else going on in the center. We also know that as family members of the enrolled children, YOU are the children's most important caregiver and advocate, and that we are here to support the very important work that you do. If you'd like to speak with us about the contents of this handbook, or anything else, please contact the owner, Luwam, to set up a meeting or phone call.

Thank you for entrusting your children in our care. We are thrilled to be working with them and with you!

*Sincerely,
Sprouts Town Staff*

Inclusion in the Classroom

Our program provides for all children, including those with identified disabilities and special learning and development. Modifications are made in the environment to include children with special needs. Staff are aware of the identified/diagnosed special needs of individual children and trained to follow through on specific intervention plans. The Director makes appropriate professional referrals when necessary. Family members and staff are involved in development and use of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individualized Educational Plans (IEP). Staff address the priorities and concerns of families of children with special needs.

Philosophy

The philosophy of the Sprouts Town Child Care Center is to put into practice with a well designed program using the Creative Curriculum approach for Infants and Toddlers and Preschool age to support the bond between the busy working parent and child because we understand that they need to meet career demands and still be a part of their child's daily activities.

There are two basic goals which support our philosophy: to serve the needs of children by providing a safe, nurturing, enriching and happy environment ensuring school readiness and to serve the needs of the parents making childcare a secure and affordable environment.

The center addresses these goals through activities that foster a strong bond between staff and children as well as through programs that provide age-appropriate learning experiences that strive to balance structured activities with sensitivity to each child's readiness to learn. In addition, parents are provided with current information about child safety and health issues as well as by developing programs that encourage parental involvement in both their children's activities and in the center's decision making.

Our convenient location to the workplace, enables parents to be good employees and share in their child's day. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress through monthly, weekly and daily reports built around weekly studies and projects designed to capture a child's interest and imagination.

Learning materials are often sent home and "homework" given to enhance each child's experience that provides a "bridge" between center and home, thus enabling parents to be more involved in the daily activities of their children.

Photographs of the children at work and play are always on display at the center and when a child leaves, an album is presented for keepsake. We have an open door policy. Parents and visitors are welcome at any time and an open invitation is extended to all family members to participate in parades and celebrations of the center.

We realize that our philosophy will be of little use without the right people to implement it. We therefore strive to include only the best faculty on our team regardless of their position. Our staff members are selected not only for their childhood educational skills, but also for their ability to interact lovingly with children. Staff training and development are strongly emphasized with in-service training programs to assure continued professional growth.

Mission

The mission of the Sprouts Town Child Care Center Program is to provide a model program that is responsive to the changing needs of the children, parents, staff and community. The program is based on the principles of the Creative Curriculum for Infants and toddlers and preschool age. The philosophy behind the Creative Curriculum is that young children learn best by doing which requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and learn firsthand about the world we live in. The most important goal of the early childhood curriculum is to help children become enthusiastic learners. This means encouraging children to be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas and to think their own thoughts. The curriculum's goal as well as ours is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners. We're teaching them *how* to learn through their lives. The curriculum identifies goals in these areas of development:

- *Social*: To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are a part of the group.
- *Emotional*: To help children experience pride and self- confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.
- *Cognitive*: To help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success, and by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings.
- *Physical*: To help children increase their large and small muscle skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do.

The activities we plan for children, the way we organize the environment, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, and talk with children, are all designed to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give the children in our care a successful start in school.

The Creative Curriculum

In keeping with improving our quality of care, Sprouts Town Child Care Center will through OSSE, train all staff in the Creative Curriculum assessment and curriculum system for infants, toddlers and twos and preschool age children. The Creative Curriculum Assessment system helps conduct an authentic, observation-based assessment tool for measuring child progress and development. The Creative Curriculum for Infants toddlers and twos is a research-based resource for programs serving children from birth to age 3 and will help provide the consistent and responsive care environment that will start children on the path to a lifetime of engaged learning.

The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos forms the basis of our fully integrated program for this age group. It helps build relationships with children by showing how to create meaningful daily routines and experiences that respond to individual children's strengths and interests.

These early, positive interactions with caring adults can give young children the confidence they need to explore their surroundings and take delight in their day-to-day discoveries.

The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos helps plan and implement every aspect of caring for the children in your program, from managing daily routines, to creating a responsive environment, to building partnerships with families.

As an educator working with preschoolers, you have the opportunity to set the stage for children's success in school and in life. Your ongoing efforts to value children as individuals and embrace their unique contributions to the classroom community can inspire in them a love of learning that will last a lifetime. Children learn best when they are actively involved with materials and with others. This is why the resources for preschool programs place so much emphasis on setting up the proper learning environment and building positive, meaningful relationships with children and their families.

The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool forms the basis of our fully integrated program for 3- to 5-year-old children. Nationally known for its forward-thinking, comprehensive, and rigorously researched model, its unique approach helps to successfully plan and implement a content-rich, developmentally appropriate program that supports active learning and promotes children's progress in all developmental areas. There is support to plan appropriate learning experiences for all the children, including children who are English-language learners, children with disabilities, and children who are gifted.

The Creative Curriculum assessment tool-kit is a valid and reliable assessment tool designed to be used in all preschool, child care, and Head Start programs with children ages 3-5. It includes everything needed to assess one classroom of children, partner with and report to parents, and plan for each child and the group.

Confidentiality

Information given to the Sprouts Town Child Care Center is confidential and will not be distributed without the authorization of the parent. However, if information is requested by Law

Enforcement, the Federal or State Government or other regulatory agencies (i.e. Health Department, Immunization Department, NAEYC, OSSE, etc.) the Center is required to comply. If permitted, the Director will notify the parent that their information was shared with authorities.

Weather Guidelines

Outdoor play is essential to children's health and well being. Children need to run, climb, jump and play outdoors. The time children spend outdoors each day is just as important to their learning as the time they spend in their classrooms. For teachers, the outdoors offers many ways to enrich the curriculum and support children's learning and development.

It is our goal to take children outside each day, with the exception of extreme weather days. We utilize weather guidelines to ensure that we have limited outdoor play during extreme weather. Flexibility in the schedule also allows us to extend our outdoor play on fair weather days.

The following guidelines have been established for healthy outdoor play:

-Cold Weather:

Temperature/wind chills between:

50 -30 degrees Fahrenheit

30-15 degrees Fahrenheit

15 degrees Fahrenheit or below

Outdoor Policy:

regularly scheduled outdoor play times are followed

15 to 20 minutes maximum

No outdoor play

-Hot Weather

Temperatures/Heat Index 96 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit and/or Code Red or Orange Air Quality:

- Outdoor activities will be limited to 15 minutes at a time. The total amount of outdoor time for the day will not exceed one hour.
- Cold water will be available for children to drink outside.

Accreditation

The Sprouts Town Child Care Center hopes to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The standards and criteria held by the Association are separated into ten categories, or the *10 Standards of Excellence*, as describe below:

1. Relationships
2. Curriculum
3. Teaching
4. Assessment of Child Progress
5. Health
6. Teachers
7. Families
8. Community Relationships
9. Physical Environment
10. Leadership and Management

A copy of the Standards and Criteria will be made available upon request. All new staff will be required to read the information within the first two weeks of employment

*for more information regarding NAEYC, please go to www.naeyc.org

State Licensing Regulation

The Sprouts Town Child Care Center is licensed through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education [OSSE]. A copy of the regulation is on file in the center's office. Our total center group size is limited to 21 children.

Code of Ethical Conduct

An updated NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct is available in the office upon request and all staff will receive an updated copy.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Sprouts Town Child Care Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, national origin, or sexual preference. Our goal is to provide an inclusive environment for all children without regard to race, color, sexual orientation, national origin, handicap, or ability. We strive to meet the special needs that children may have including developmental delays, food allergy, chronic health conditions, etc. to the best of our abilities and with the guidance and support of families and specialists.

Arrival & Departure

When your child arrives at the home/center, please sign your child in on the daily attendance sign-in sheet. Our formal educational programs begin promptly at 7:30am and end at 6pm.

Authorization for Pick-Up

Your child will ONLY be released to authorized individuals noted on your most recently submitted Emergency Card on file. Authorized individuals should be prepared to present photo identification. If you need to add names to an authorized pickup list (e.g. friends or relatives), you may do so at any time by submitting your additions or changes **in writing**.

Late Pick-Up Charges

The center closes promptly at 6:00pm. If a child has not been picked up by his or her pick-up time, in cash late fee of \$3.00 per minute per child will be charged at the time of departure. If children are at the Center past closing time (including early closures) and parents cannot be reached. We will contact individuals listed on your Emergency Card. If we still cannot reach a responsible party, we are required to notify appropriate authorities (e.g., Police and Child Protective Services).

Late pick-up charges will be charged even if a call is made stating you will be late. We are not permitted to provide care after our designated closing time. Repeated late pick-ups may result in termination of your child's enrollment.

Absences

If your child will be absent, please inform the Director or staff by phone preferably or email. In the event of a communicable illness, please notify the center immediately so a notice to parents can be posted (your child's name will not be used). It is also important to inform the center of any planned absences in person or in writing.

Payment Methods

We are committed to serving families from all different cultures and backgrounds. A weekly, bi-weekly, monthly & bi-monthly rate sheet is posted in the center.

We have two different payment-plans to ensure that our services are accessible to families, no matter your socio economic status: Private Tuition Payment (also called "private pay") and DC's Child Care Subsidy Program (in which qualifying families can receive a subsidy admissions form, also known as a "subsidy voucher," which will cover part or the full cost of care at our center).

DC Child Care Subsidy Program: If you qualify for the program, we encourage you to apply at DHS. If you are approved, bring the subsidy admissions form ("voucher") back to the Sprouts Town Center Director so that your child can be enrolled as soon as possible. Your admissions form MAY determine that you have a "parent co-pay." This is the daily amount you will need to pay (which is determined by DHS, based on your income) If you do have co-pay, we ask that you pay it at the beginning of each week, for the 5 days of the week. (If the co-pay is \$5 per day, please pay \$25 each Monday.)

Tuition Payments

The Sprouts Town Child Care Center will review tuition rates annually. Tuition rates for the upcoming year will be announced no later than December.

****Please note that tuition is due regardless of the child's attendance (including holidays, illness and vacations). Receiving tuition helps ensure that we have a robust early learning program, and provide compensation to the staff.**

A deposit of _____ is due at the time of enrollment to reserve a spot (regardless of the start date). The deposit will be applied towards your first or last _____ week(s) of tuition. The deposit is required to save a spot and is **non-refundable** should you decide to not start care at the agreed upon date.

Rest and Nap

Toddlers through age 4 are *required* by OSSE and NAEYC to have an adequate amount of quiet/rest time daily. Parents should provide children with a sheet and a small blanket to place over the child while napping. All nap items must be clearly marked with the child's name and be taken home weekly (on Friday) for washing. A favorite stuffed animal or cuddle toy may be brought to the center for use at nap/rest time.

Infant rest is on an individualized schedule. Each infant has their own crib and crib sheets provided by parents which are taken home weekly (on Friday) for washing. To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) the Sprouts Town Child Care Development Center places babies on their back to sleep and does not allow fluffy bedding or toys in the cribs. Due to current regulations, infants are not permitted to sleep in bouncers, in swings, or on boppy pillows.

Meals and Snacks

Two nutritious snacks which meet USDA guidelines are provided by the center for the children. A microwave and refrigerator are available to store and heat up lunches provided by parents. Food temperatures are tested before being served to children. Candy, soda or other non-nutritious food items are discouraged, and we are a **"Nut-Free Zone."** "Family-style dining" is encouraged where teachers engage children in meaningful conversation surrounding the events which have already taken place during that day. This is because meal times are learning, habit-forming experiences that encourage children to make good food choices and to be mindful of their manners.

Allergies

Please remember to complete the Allergy Form notifying staff of any allergies your child may have, and continue to update the form as changes occur. If your child has a medical condition which requires special dietary needs, please inform the teaching staff so that appropriate adjustments can be made. Parents are responsible for providing those items that meet the special dietary needs of their child.

Children's Birthdays and Classroom Parties

Parents are invited to bring in special store-brought treats (no candy, please) for the class on their child's birthday. Some children do have food allergies, so please check with your child's teacher prior to the event for any restrictions. **Latex balloons** are not permitted as they pose a choking hazard.

Food that comes from home for sharing among the children must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory sealed containers.

Holidays

Although the Sprouts Town Child Care Center is non-sectarian, we recognize that our families celebrate different religious, cultural and ethnic holidays. In this context, parents are encouraged to recognize holidays in appropriate ways that can be understood and appreciated by a young child.

We will be closed on the following holidays with regular tuition due:

New Year's Eve

New Year's Day – January 1

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Presidents Day

Emancipation Day

Memorial Day

Independence Day – July 4

Labor Day

Columbus Day

Veterans Day

Thanksgiving Day

Day after Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

Program Closures

In order to continue to provide the best care possible, and to fulfill our licensing regulations, our program will be closed up to five days per year for professional development training.

Parents/guardians will be notified about these closures at least 30 days in advance.

If there is an emergency situation at the facility, and we must close, we will contact parents and family members as soon as we know, and do our absolute best to keep families updated about what is going on, and communicate the timeline for re-opening.

Cameras

Sprouts Town Child Care Center prohibits the use of cameras or video equipment (including cellular phones) without the prior approval of management and authorization from parents. This includes birthday parties, field trips, and other special events. Non-compliance can result in the confiscation of the equipment, the termination of your child's enrollment, and/or the involvement of law enforcement.

Transitioning

When a child graduates to the next level, the move to another group can be a significant transition for the child. To make this transition smooth and as comfortable as possible, teachers prepare by taking children on visits to their new classroom and by visiting children who will be entering into their classroom in order to begin relationship building.

The number of children who transition to the next level depends upon the age of the child as well as space available in the next group. Children may transition up to three times a year.

These transitions occur on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Director and teacher, in consultation with parents.

Physicals and Immunizations

Regulation requires an up-to-date annual physical & dental health record be on file for each child. The Director will provide required forms that must be completed and submitted before your child may begin and/or continue to attend the center. Updates to your child's health record are required and will be requested by the center on an annual basis. (Infant and toddler immunizations should be updated every three months). It is the parent's responsibility to inform the center of any changes to the health of their child, as they occur.

Accident/Incident Reports

If your child has an accident or other significant incident while at the center, an appropriately certified staff member will administer First Aid or CPR, as needed. The teacher who witnessed the incident will complete an Accident/Incident report and a copy will be sent home. Teachers do not identify the names of other children involved in the incident. Parents will be contacted immediately when an accident or incident occurs. The Sprouts Town Child Care Center reserves the right to take appropriate measures to ensure the safety and well-being of your child, including transportation to the hospital, if necessary.

In case that an unusual incident (an incident that may adversely affect the health, safety or well-being of any child or children in the facility) occurs during the time that your child is in the facility, Sprouts Town will immediately report the incident to OSSE at ossechildcarecomplaints@dc.gov phone at (202) 727-1839, within 24 hours.

Messages for Staff

The Center has a voicemail system for parents to leave messages for center staff. Please note that teachers devote their time and attention to the children during program time, so please save lengthy discussion for a scheduled meeting.

Complaints & Unusual Incidents

If there is an incident or allegation concerning your child, you will be notified in person or by phone, and in writing. Dependent upon the issue, a meeting may be requested. Please remember that we are not permitted to provide any information concerning other individuals involved.

Parent Behavior

Effective communication and cooperation between parents and the center is crucial to a successful childcare partnership. Inappropriate verbal or physical exchanges by parents toward staff, other parents or children are not acceptable and will result in the termination of your childcare contract. In addition, in those rare circumstances where the center is unable to maintain a productive and effective relationship with parents, the Sprouts Town Child Care Center reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment.

Hours of Operation

Home/Center hours are 7:30am – 6:00pm, Monday through Friday.

Supervision Policy

The teaching staff will be aware of children in their care and implement supervision by sight and sound at all times.

1. Staff will supervise by positioning themselves to see as many children as possible both indoors, and outside on the playground.
2. Staff will supervise infants, toddlers, and twos by sight and sound at all times. All children should be easily seen if not in the direct line of sight, then looking up or adjusting one's position by at least one member of the teaching staff. **This is mandatory.**
3. Teachers should check on sleeping children by standing near and looking into the child's crib at least 3 times each hour.
4. The sides of the cribs are checked to ensure that they are up and locked.
5. For pre-school aged children, children may be momentarily out of sight and sound as long as the child is back in sight and sound within one minute. Supervision by sound alone should only be for a few minutes, (3-5) before the teacher directly gets up and observes as well as hears the child. **This is mandatory.**

RELEASE OF CHILD TO INTOXICATED OR DRUGGED INDIVIDUAL

If a parent or other authorized person arrives at the Center and appears to be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, in order to protect the children from any potential danger that could arise because of this person's condition, and to protect the Center against potential claims, it is the policy of the Center to take all reasonable steps to avoid releasing a child to a person in a drugged or intoxicated state.

Accordingly, if, in the opinion of the senior staff member present at the Center, a parent or authorized person who arrives to drive the child home appears to be in an intoxicated or drugged condition, the Center staff member will:

1. Notify any other parent or guardian or emergency contact person of the situation;
2. Ask the person to leave his/her car at the Center and take the child home using another means of transportation; and,
3. Offer to call another relative, friend or taxi (at the parent's expense) to drive the person and child home.

If the parent or guardian insists on driving the child home, the Center staff member will notify the local police department. If police officers agree that the parent or authorized person is intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, the parent or authorized person may be charged with public drunkenness and/or driving while under the influence of alcohol.

If a particular parent or guardian frequently arrives in an intoxicated or drugged state, the Center will not only notify the police department, but also will alert other appropriate governmental authorities involved with the care and treatment of children. This situation is considered inappropriate by this program and any threats of violence to any staff or children will result in immediate termination of the parent-provider enrollment agreement.

Termination

Parents must give a minimum of 4 weeks WRITTEN notice upon withdrawing their child from the program. The initial deposit will then be applied to the last 4 weeks of care. The Enrollment Agreement between the parent and the center can also be terminated by the Center Director for the following reasons:

1. Failure by the parent or guardian to pay tuition on time.
2. If the child is out of the center without proper notification for an extended period of time, the center has the right to replace the slot with a new child and the security deposit is forfeited.
3. Consistent failure of the parent/guardian to follow policies of the center (i.e., chronically picking up late after the center has closed; failure to pay late fees, etc.)
4. Threatening violence to staff or children by any parent/guardian or other.
5. If a parent/guardian is consistently uncooperative, unpleasant or disrespectful to any staff member. (Caring for a young child requires mutual trust and respect.)
6. Behaviors of any child that include:
 - a. unprovoked physical violence
 - b. persistent bullying
 - c. verbal harassment of peers or staff
 - d. Unauthorized departure from the grounds of the program.

Termination will be based on observable behaviors. We give parents Incident Reports that keep you informed about problematic behavior and also convey our expectations about your role, insights about what may be the root cause, ideas or strategies to help us and a commitment to follow through with an appropriate outside source when we feel we need the help.

Attempts will be made to negotiate difficulties or differences with parent/guardians by meeting with the center director before termination. Parents /guardians are expected to cooperate with Center policies for the benefit of their child and all children in the program.

Refunds

Refunds must be requested in writing and include the mailing address for a check to be mailed. Refunds can be expected within 10 business days of receipt of request, once approved by the Director.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE
(Signature required)

I, _____, have received, read or been read to, the contents of the **Sprouts Town Child Care Center's Handbook**. I agree to follow the policies, procedures of this handbook and the Enrollment Agreement and to support the Sprouts Town Child Care Center program at all times if I choose to enroll my child/ren at Sprouts Town Child Care Center.

Parent Printed Name

Parent Signature Date

Parent Printed Name

Parent Signature Date