

Bethesda Cooperative Nursery School

FAMILY HANDBOOK

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Welcome

Dear BCNS Families,

Welcome to Bethesda Cooperative Nursery School (BCNS)! We are thrilled to have your child and family as part of our nursery school community. This Family Handbook has been created to provide you with essential information about our program, policies, and procedures.

At BCNS, we understand the importance of early childhood education, and we are committed to providing a nurturing and enriching environment for your child's growth and development. Our dedicated staff is passionate about fostering a love of learning, social development, and creativity in every child.

We encourage you to read this handbook thoroughly and keep it for future reference. If you have any questions or need further clarification on any topic, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to support you and ensure that your child's time at BCNS is both enjoyable and enriching.

BCNS Admin Team

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

The Bethesda Cooperative Nursery School ("BCNS") was established in 1965 as a non-profit, non-sectarian organization by The Church in Bethesda (previously known as Bethesda First Baptist Church) as a ministry to the community. The church provides physical facilities, custodial services, utilities, office support, fire and liability insurance, and general oversight.

BCNS is a parent-participatory nursery school where parents, on a regularly scheduled basis, interact with their children in a group under the guidance of a teacher. The classroom becomes a learning environment for both parent and child. Parents can learn about child development while participating in classroom activities. The nursery school is licensed by the Montgomery County Department of Health and is accredited by the Maryland State Board of Education. BCNS is also a member of the Potomac Association of Cooperative Teachers (PACT).

Curriculum and Learning

Learning Environment

We provide a rich learning environment with materials and equipment that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

Curriculum & Assessment

Bethesda Cooperative Nursery School uses the **Creative Curriculum Infants, Todds and Twos and Preschool (6th Edition)**. As part of this curriculum, we gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress so we can modify and adjust what we are doing in our classroom so as to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. This evaluation is communicated to families periodically during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources. Bethesda Cooperative Nursery School uses **Teaching Strategies GOLD** to monitor your child's growth development in our program. BCNS teachers closely monitor each child's individual development. Parent/teacher conferences held twice a year allow the teachers to discuss each child in depth. Additional meetings may be requested by a teacher or parent at any time, should the need arise. Developmental reports are provided at the conferences

The school's goal is to enable each child to reach his or her potential through a developmentally appropriate curriculum. The individualized program and meager child-teacher ratio stimulate each child's curiosity, provide opportunities for discovery through diverse choices, and build each child's

self-confidence, self-control, and sense of responsibility. Teachers encourage children to grow both in conceptual understanding and in the development of a strong sense of self and others. Toilet training is not a requirement for registration.

Through developmentally appropriate activities and instruction the school incorporates language arts, reading readiness, social studies, math, science, music, art, and physical activities.

For information about your child's day, please see copies of daily schedules and lesson plans posted in each classroom. Teachers will also communicate on your child's experience using the Procure Child Care App.

Developmental Screening

Maryland State Department of Education has implemented a new State regulation for all children in regulated care and early childhood educational programs. Once the regulation is in effect, all children up to kindergarten entry attending regulated care and early childhood educational programs will need to have a developmental screening conducted.

The developmental screening process is a collaborative one, involving parents/guardians and done in conjunction with the child's primary care provider and health, education, and early intervention consultants. We will begin the Developmental Screening process in the late fall for select children.

Developmental screening is conducted with written consent from the child's parent/guardian(s). A separate permission form will be provided prior to the screening period for all children.

REGISTRATION

Re-enrollment for returning students begins in the Spring of each year. Priority registration is accepted for current students, siblings of current and past students, and members of The Church in Bethesda. Early registration is strongly recommended to secure your child's space for the upcoming program year.

BCNS will host Winter and Spring Open Houses for current and prospective families. Once a class is filled, children are placed on a waiting list. If a child is not accepted from the waiting list by the first day of school, parents may keep their child on the list and be notified should a space become available during the school year. Changes may be made at the discretion of the director.

Tuition and Fee Policies

A non-refundable registration fee is due with the enrollment application. Once a child is officially accepted, one month's non-refundable tuition payment, together with enrollment forms, is expected.

An annual activity fee is due for all families in October (families will be billed with October's tuition).

Tuition is not subject to discounts for holidays, emergency closures (i.e., weather or pandemic), absence

other than hospitalization, or absence at the request of a doctor.

Refer to the Enrollment Agreement for our full tuition and fee policy.

Fund Raising

Raising funds in addition to tuition is essential to the overall success of BCNS. Fundraising efforts support ongoing program improvement and some community initiatives. Stay tuned for updates on ways to participate in fundraising events throughout the year.

Family Engagement

BCNS believes in parental involvement and tries to make classroom participation as enjoyable for the parent/guardian as it is for the children. No special skills are needed, only a willingness to learn from your child and the teachers. Classes are well staffed by qualified and experienced teachers.

Refer to the Family Engagement plan for a list of scheduled events for the program year

Snack

Snack time is an excellent social experience for children and a great way to introduce new foods. Good experiences at snack time help children to develop positive attitudes toward food and nutrition. Children are encouraged to try the food provided but are never forced to eat anything they do not care for.

BCNS is a nut "FREE" school. No snacks may contain nuts or nut products such as peanut butter. Please ask your classroom teacher about any allergies in the class. Parents of children with allergies should provide emergency snacks left at school if their child cannot eat the snack provided. We suggest following the USDA meal plan for healthy snacks for children ages 2-5.

Cupcakes, cookies, or sweets should only be brought to celebrate special events (birthdays, holidays, etc.) and must be planned and approved by your child's teacher.

Please refer to our Family engagement plan for healthy more information on suggested snacks

Parking

A parking lot is a busy place - all children must hold the hand of an adult when going to and from cars and the playground or building. Please observe all stop signs and drive slowly in the parking lot. To aid traffic flow and ensure safety for all, please enter from Wilson Lane and exit on Del Ray. If you are within

walking distance, it is an excellent idea to do so.

Please note: Designated parking spaces for Families and Staff of BCNS on the church parking lot are marked with BCNS parking signs.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

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

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child, if possible, but if after 1 hour we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Health and Illness

Physicals and Immunizations

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. A copy of your child's physical with current immunization records should be received before but must be received no later than 3 weeks after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for ensuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program. Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. Every January, we check with the public health department or the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates of the recommended immunization schedule. Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

Daily Health Check

We conduct a health check as soon as possible when each child enters the center daily. We look for skin rashes, elevated temperatures, itchy scalps, lethargy, and changes from usual behavior. These are quick checks to protect the well-being of all children in the program. Please

understand that these are not physicals and do not substitute for proper routine pediatric care.

Illness

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 has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in a greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of the spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 100.4°F or higher in the forehead/temporary artery) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea - stools with blood or mucus and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting - green or bloody, and/or more than twice during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits, are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until five days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.

Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious. • Has a physician or other health professionals written an order that the child is separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for 24 hours.
 - They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
 - They can participate comfortably in all usual activities.
 - They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething)
- unless: The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious and; The problematic areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the dressing.*

If a child has a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Head Lice

Children with head lice will not be allowed to return to the center until they have been treated and no further head lice or nits are detected during a health check.

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies must provide us with a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments, and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in all classrooms and will be updated regularly. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Medications

All medications should be handed to a staff member with specific instructions for administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the drug is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

Prescription medications require a note signed by the family and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medicine meets this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) for each medication.

All prescribed medicines should be handed to the designated manager on duty to review the medication authorization form and plan to administer them while your child is in our care.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or the Department of Public Health. We will take care to inform families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- H1N1 Virus
- Haemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness

Appropriate Dress for School

School activities are often messy, and although smocks are provided, a child's good clothes should be left at home. Footwear should be suitable for indoor and outdoor active play and include boots on rainy and snowy days. Closed toe shoes are strongly suggested. Children will play outside unless it is raining, snowing, the temperature (including wind chill factor) is below freezing, or the playground is unsafe due to ice. We follow the [national child care weather watch](#) chart for safety guidance for outdoor play.

Summer Child Care

We will share program information regarding the summer camp program and registration in the Spring.

Please refer to the operational calendar for the current year for program closures.

Inclement Weather

The procedure to notify families should severe weather or other conditions prevent the program from opening on time or at all will be announced on center voicemail, website, and electronic notification (i.e., email, messages in procare). If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or someone listed in the Emergency Contact Form, and it will be your responsibility to arrange for your child's early pick-up. We will try our best to follow the local news to make decisions on school closures, however we have to take into consideration the safety of the school building parking lots, sidewalks and travel for our teachers and staff.

Injuries

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

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

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers - and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once. When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment

for biting but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for chewing.

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

Respectful Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants' and young children's developing bodies. Therefore, the indoor and outdoor center environments and vehicles used by the center are always non-smoking. Tobacco use in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized, potentially toxic substances is not permitted.

Any adult who appears inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind altering or polluting substances must leave the premises immediately.

Dangerous Weapons

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff, or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases involving a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called, and the individual(s) concerned will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

Child Custody

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

Suspected Child Abuse

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

EMERGENCIES

Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with fire alarms, fire extinguishers, fire escapes, smoke, and carbon detectors. Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff monthly.

Emergency Transportation

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

Evacuation

For Fire, Bomb, or Biological Threat (e.g., anthrax, smallpox) The director will announce the evacuation by ringing the fire alarm. Children will be evacuated according to the existing fire-evacuation plan. The director, or designee, will "sweep" the school to determine that all children and adults are evacuated. The director will grab the Emergency Backpack containing the Emergency Form for each child. The director will meet the staff, coop parents, and children

outside, review attendance, and hear reports of any problems. If appropriate, they will wait for further instruction from public safety personnel.

We will proceed to the emergency evacuation site if the evacuation is prolonged. Our emergency site is at Bethesda Montessori. It is located at 7611 Clarendon Road, directly across from the school. The telephone number at Bethesda Montessori is 301-986-1260. A sign will also be posted on the door of BCNS letting parents know where children have been relocated. An email will also be sent to let parents know where their children have been moved. Teachers and directors will carry cell phones and continue calls to families not reached by the phone if cell phone service is still in use.

Pick-up procedures apply at the evacuation site; children are released only to a parent or an individual designated on the emergency card. A staff member of BCNS will always be with the children during this process and will stay until all children are picked up.

II. Lockdown mode (shelter-in-place): tornado, hurricane or other weather emergency, crisis outside building (e.g., suspicious person, flooding, etc.)

"Shelter-in-place" means that it will be necessary to immediately secure students and staff indoors in specific emergencies. Shelter-in-place is an enhanced level of Code Blue to be used if there is a suspected chemical, biological, or radiological incident. Shelter-in-place also may be used in the event of weather-related emergencies. The emergency or public safety officials will determine the nature and duration of the shelter-in-place.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

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

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

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

I have received the **BCNS Family Handbook**. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure, or information contained in the **BCNS Family Handbook** that I do not understand.

Recipient Print and Sign

Date

Center Staff Signature

Date

Place Signed Copy in Child's File