



Blessed Beginnings

Nazareth Learning Center, Preschool, and School Age

Handbook Version Printed/Distributed October 2022.

Blessed Beginnings reserves the right to make changes to this handbook upon approval of the Blessed Beginnings Committee, or in the case of an emergency, with the approval of the Blessed Beginnings Director and Nazareth Lutheran Church Administrator.

Any changes will be made in writing to all current Blessed Beginnings Families via Brightwheel.

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Learning Center Handbook

Mission Statement of Nazareth Lutheran Church:

Living together in God's amazing grace, we invite all people to know Christ, grow in Christ, and make Christ known.

Goal of Blessed Beginnings: To develop and support the growth and development of young children who acknowledge the daily presence of Christ in their lives.

Blessed Beginnings Child Care Ministry Offers:

- Christian environment
- Low staff-to-child ratio
- Developmentally appropriate activities
- Weekly Worship in the Chapel
- Daily Communication with families via Brightwheel
- Full-sized gym for indoor play
- Engaging activities for all ages
- Outdoor playgrounds when weather permits

Belief Statements

- Each child is a gift from God and, therefore, we continually seek to nurture children and support parents.
- Children, families and staff deserve a safe and healthy environment.
- Developmental and age-appropriate activities support the physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth of children.
- Christian values are presented and practiced through modeling, prayer, songs, Bible stories, weekly worship and special events.
- A professional staff works together as a cohesive team by cooperating, communicating and supporting each other to achieve individual, program and Nazareth ministry goals.

Jesus said, *“Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”*

Matthew 19:14

Blessed Beginnings Program Objectives

- To lead children to appreciate the wonder of God’s creation and His great love for us in sending Jesus as our savior.
- To offer a curriculum that encourages social, emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual growth.
- To teach children to relate to others, to value friendship, and to respect all people.
- To provide a safe, comfortable environment for early learning and growth processes to take shape.
- To help children develop age-appropriate self-discipline and independence, and to deal with emotions in an age-appropriate manner.
- To provide a balanced and age-appropriate schedule of activity and rest.
- To provide nutritious snacks and lunches that contribute to the growth and development of a happy, healthy individual.

Hours/Days of Operation

Blessed Beginnings Learning Center will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for the holidays designated below and one Professional Development Day per program year.

New Year’s Day	Labor Day	Christmas Eve
Memorial Day	Thanksgiving Day	Christmas Day
Independence Day	Friday following Thanksgiving	Day after Christmas
Professional Development Day		

When holidays fall on a Saturday, Blessed Beginnings will be closed the preceding Friday. When holidays fall on a Sunday, Blessed Beginnings will be closed the following Monday. The professional development day will be indicated in parent communications at least 30 days in advance. The day will generally coincide with the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children annual conference in the Fall.

Enrollment

Children between the ages of six weeks and five years will be accepted in Blessed Beginnings Learning Center. An annual registration fee of \$50 per child is required upon enrollment in Blessed Beginnings Learning Center and yearly upon re-registration. Enrollments will be accepted based on the date of the completion of required forms.

The following forms must be completed for enrollment in Blessed Beginnings:

1. Physical Examination Form (updated yearly)
2. Immunization Card (must be kept current)
3. Enrollment Agreement
>Includes Covenant Not to Compete Agreement
4. Medical Release
5. Photograph/Video Release
6. Field Trip Consent
7. Sleeping Arrangements (Infants only)
8. Emergency Information Card (updated yearly)
9. Proof of Medical & Dental Insurance
10. CACFP Enrollment Form

Policy for Children Requiring Special Accommodations

An attempt will be made to reasonably accommodate all children with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Brightwheel App

We started using Brightwheel in 2021, a tool for classroom management, communication, photos, videos, online bill pay, and much more. Brightwheel is the industry leader in early education, proven to save time for staff, allowing for measurably more time with students, while also delivering a much better experience for parents. All parents are required to participate in Brightwheel and encouraged to utilize Brightwheel as much as possible while their child(ren) are in our program.

Easy steps to follow:

1. Create a free Brightwheel account. When you receive an invitation via email or text, please create a free parent account using either the [web](#) or [mobile app](#). Make sure to use the same [email address](#) or [cell phone number](#) that the invitation was sent to. Here is a [quick video overview](#).
2. Confirm your child’s profile. You will see your child’s profile after you create an account - you can confirm information such as birthday, allergies, and additional contacts. If you do not see your child’s profile, please contact us with the

email address or phone number you used to sign up. You will not see updates within Brightwheel until we start to use it regularly.

3. Set your account preferences. You can adjust your notification preferences within your profile settings on the app.
4. Add your payment information. Brightwheel offers secure, automated online payments that saves time for us and gives you advanced tools and reporting. Please add your [payment information](#). Here is an online [Payments Setup Guide](#) with more info.

See a video tutorial [HERE!](#) We're excited to be adding this state-of-the-art system and hope you enjoy it!

Cameras

Blessed Beginnings uses a closed-circuit camera system for safety of children and staff in all classrooms. This system is for monitoring purposes only.

Emergency Closing Prior to Opening (Usually Weather-related)

If Blessed Beginnings is closed due to an emergency, announcements will be made over KWWL television (NBC) and KWWL website. We will also send out a Brightwheel announcement to all enrolled families, and utilize all forms of social media to post and communicate about each program. Parents are encouraged to utilize Brightwheel and social media for communications regarding Emergency Closing. Each program will be listed separately as follows:

Blessed Beginnings Learning Center
Blessed Beginnings School Age Program
Blessed Beginnings Preschool

Determination of closing, usually weather related, is determined by Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church Administration.

Withdrawal Policy

Parents who wish to withdraw their child/children from the Learning Center should contact the Blessed Beginnings office two weeks prior to leaving.

Fees

Weekly fees are payable on the preceding Friday. Please follow the schedule below to determine your child/children's rates. Fees are paid via the Brightwheel app, including automatic payments.

No refunds will be made for absences or closings. This policy is necessary since operating costs continue and Blessed Beginnings reserves space for the child. Children enrolled part time may be present at the Center 2.5 days per week, or 5 days in a two-week period. Part time days and times must be communicated the week before by Wednesday so staffing may be adjusted as needed.

Current fee structure for Learning Center and Preschool are found in the Blessed Beginnings Brochure and is annually updated. Any increase in tuition will be communicated to all parents 3 months in advance of when the increase will take place. This allows parents adequate time to plan accordingly for the calendar year.

School-Age Programming has a separate fee schedule and handbook.

Late Fees

Parents will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute for any child who remains at Blessed Beginnings beyond the publicized closing time that day. Habitual late pick-up of children may result in suspension or dismissal of the children from the program. The additional late fee will be added onto the next bill from Blessed Beginnings. If a weekly fee payment is late, an additional \$5 will be charged for each week the payment is late.

Vacation

Blessed Beginnings Learning Center will allow one week of vacation per calendar year at no charge. Vacation weeks will not be carried over from one year to the next. The vacation must be taken as a full week. Parents/Guardians must notify the Blessed Beginnings Learning Center Director seven (7) days in advance when taking a vacation week, or the weekly fee will be charged because expenses continue regardless of whether all enrolled children are present. Unique cases need to be discussed with the Director in advance.

Holding Fee

A holding fee is available to families at a rate of 25% of the normal weekly fee. Holding fee arrangements must be made a minimum of four weeks in advance with the Blessed Beginnings Director. Holding fee agreements can be granted for cases

where the child will be absent at least three consecutive weeks and no more than twelve consecutive weeks from the Learning Center. The holding fee is due in advance of the absence and is non-refundable. This fee is to assure placement for your child(ren) upon their return to the program.

If a position becomes vacant and the child/parent from the waiting list is not ready to enroll, the parent may choose to pay a holding fee equal to 25% of the full-time weekly rate up to a maximum of 4 weeks to reserve the spot. If a parent chooses to pass, they may maintain their position on the list until another opening occurs (only one pass per child).

Child Care Assistance

Assistance for child care is provided through the Department of Human Services. All recipients are required to maintain a regular attendance. If a recipient is found to have inadequate attendance (absent more than 4 days a month) during more than three months per year, it is grounds for dismissal of the child from the center.

Center Procedures

Center assistance

Our program will provide reading assistance to any family or parent as needed. If translation services may be needed our program will work to find resources in our local community.

Dropping Child(ren) Off – Daycare and Preschool Program

Deliver children to the Southwest entrance (door #4) off of Main Street or Southeast entrance (door #6) off University Avenue. Children must be brought into the center and checked in via Brightwheel, using the QR code, by an adult indicating time of arrival. Contact must be made with one of the staff members before leaving your child.

Parents/guardians are given a fob to enter into the building between 7a.m.-6p.m. for drop-off and pick-up. This fob is not to be shared with anyone.

Picking-Up Child(ren)

Children must be picked up by an authorized adult(s) indicated by parents when enrolling the child. Parents may add or remove names from the list at any time via Brightwheel. The adult must come to the child's classroom, and scan the QR code to sign out the child. If the staff member does not know the adult, identification will be required. Parents are expected to update Brightwheel for approved pick up persons, including uploading photo of any authorized pick-up persons. We strongly advise parents to upload photos of any pick-up persons to their child's profile so staff can recognize those approved for pick up. Please explain this policy to those who may be picking up your child/children. Communication to Blessed Beginnings staff via the Brightwheel app is expected as soon as it is known that someone not previously approved will be picking up the child.

Placement of Children

Blessed Beginnings will notify parents of classroom transitions for their child. Transition date decisions will be determined by Blessed Beginnings based on classroom capacity and developmentally age appropriate practice. Blessed Beginnings must follow these standards to remain a licensed child care center.

Children older than two years of age should not be in classrooms with children younger than 18 months. Blessed Beginnings must follow this standard to remain a licensed child care center.

Supplies for Children

Blessed Beginnings will supply Gerber Good Start (gentle) iron fortified formula. We will also supply baby-foods. If you wish to supply a different brand of formula for your child, you may. Infants under the age of one will be provided with a sleep sack. Infants under the age of one will not be allowed to have a blanket in their crib.

Parents will need to supply the following items:

Infants and Toddlers

1. Pacifier (if needed)
2. Light weight blanket
3. A change of clothes
4. Disposable diapers and wipes
5. Diaper ointment
6. Bottles (will be sent home daily to be cleaned)

2-Year-Olds:

1. Disposable diapers and wipes
2. Diaper ointment
3. A change of clothes
4. A blanket

5. Water bottle (optional)
6. Bike Helmet (optional)
7. Weather appropriate outdoor clothing:
 Winter: Warm coat, hat, boots, mittens, scarf
 Summer: Clothes for water play

3-5-Year-Olds:

1. Change of clothes
2. A blanket
3. Bike Helmet (optional)
4. Water bottle
5. Weather appropriate outdoor clothing:
 Winter: Warm coat, hat, boots, mittens, scarf
 Summer: Clothes for water play

Any items not listed above will be provided by Blessed Beginnings. Once a week each child's blanket will be sent home with the parents for laundering.

Appropriate Dress

Please dress your child comfortably to suit the activities. Jeans are fine for boys and girls. Please provide sturdy, close-toed play shoes that will not be damaged by outdoor play. Paint shirts are provided to wear during messy activities. Accidents will happen, so no dress clothes, please. Be sure your child's name is on all outdoor clothing - coat, mittens, hat, boots, and scarves. Children will be going outside whenever the weather allows.

Health

Attendance

If a child has any of the following symptoms, he/she will not be admitted to the center or allowed to remain at the center:

1. A fever of 100 degrees or higher
2. Vomiting
3. Diarrhea
4. Communicable diseases

A child must be free of symptoms and non-contagious for at least 24 hours before being admitted to the center unless a communicable disease restriction state differently.

Please notify Blessed Beginnings via Brightwheel if your child is ill and will not be attending on a given day. Blessed Beginnings reserves the right to call a parent to pick up a child who does not feel well.

Exposure to Disease including Coronavirus

Parents are required to notify Blessed Beginnings staff whenever your child has been exposed to a contagious disease. Please abide by a doctor's orders regarding the length of time your child is contagious and should remain at home. A written notice from the doctor may be required at the discretion of the Director. If your child is exposed to a contagious disease at Blessed Beginnings, a notification will be posted in Brightwheel and disclosed in the classroom.

Medication Policy and Procedures

Parents are required to complete a medical form requesting the administering of medication to their child. Medication will be administered only when an authorized form available at Blessed Beginnings has been completed by the parent. Medication will be administered and recorded when medicine is given by a staff member trained in dispensing and storage of medications. The medication must be in the original container and the child's name must be on the medication. Medicine must be accompanied by the physician/pharmacist's instructions with the label intact. Medications, both prescription and over the counter, must be delivered to a staff member and may not be in the child's possession. All medications of any kind will be stored well out of the reach of all children in the center. Over the Counter medicine/medication must have written doctor-authorization for administration at Blessed Beginnings.

Ointment Application

Parents will also need to fill out and sign a medicine form for application of Aquaphor or other, including diaper cream or an antibiotic salve for rashes and/or sores.

Sunblock Application

Blessed Beginnings will not provide sun-block for children. If you wish for your child to use sun-block, you will need to provide a bottle. Please label your bottle before bringing it to the center. An authorization form is needed for sun-block application. Annually families are asked to update sunscreen permission information.

Hand-washing

Children will be expected to wash their hands at the following times:

1. Upon arrival at the Center
2. Immediately before and after eating or participating in any food service activity.
3. After using the restroom or being diapered.
4. After handling animals
5. After playing outdoors.

Staff will be expected to wash their hands at the following times

1. Upon arrival at the Center
2. Immediately before and after eating or participating in any food service activity.
3. After diapering a child.
4. Before leaving the restroom with a child or alone.
5. Before and after administering non-emergency first aid to a child.

Wearing Gloves

Staff will be expected to wear gloves at the following times.

1. When treating wounds.
2. When handling bodily fluids (i.e. vomit, urine, blood).
3. When serving food.
4. When applying sunscreen.

Accidents and Incident Reports

Accidents resulting in injury to a child shall be reported on the day of the accident, in writing, to the parent or person authorized to pick up the child. The written report shall be prepared by the staff member who observed the accident and shall include a general description of the accident and action taken by the staff member. A copy of the report will be kept in the child's file, either electronic or paper. If paper copy is given, parents should expect any paper copies will require their signature. A Brightwheel notification will be sent out to the family immediately with a picture of the injury if possible. Any injury resulting in medical attention will be documented and submitted to the Iowa Department of Human Services as per licensing requirement.

If biting occurs, one report will be sent home with the child who bit as well as one with the child who was bitten. Our confidentiality policy forbids us to release the names of children involved.

Center Personnel

Staff Members

The staff of Blessed Beginnings Learning Center will consist of the Director, Assistant Director, teachers, and associates. A list of employed adults will be available in the Blessed Beginnings office. Rooms will be staffed according to a ratio required by Iowa Law.

Age	Required Ratio
6 weeks – 9 months	1 Adult to every 3 Children
9 months – 2 years	1 Adult to every 4 Children
2 years old	1 Adult to every 6 Children
3 years old	1 Adult to every 8 Children
4 years old	1 Adult to every 12 Children
5 years old	1 Adult to every 15 Children

Covenant Not to Compete

Parents are required to sign the *Covenant Not to Compete Agreement* (listed below) at the time of registration. Below is a copy of the Covenant Not to Compete that was signed in Enrollment Form.

While my child is enrolled at Blessed Beginnings, I will not pursue any Blessed Beginnings employee to leave their current position at Blessed Beginnings in order for them to care for my child/children privately during Blessed Beginning's operating hours M-F, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. I understand that the quality teaching staff is a benefit to all families enrolled at Blessed Beginnings. I will not take that quality care away from others, as I would not want others to take this benefit away from me. (This statement excludes after-hour babysitting).

Parent Visitation

Parents are welcome to visit the Blessed Beginnings Learning Center at any time. To insure the children's safety, please come to the Blessed Beginnings office to obtain an identifying name tag. All parents/guardians are given fobs to enter the building.

Volunteers

Volunteers are always appreciated and encouraged. Prior to volunteering, background checks are done for all volunteers and are required to complete mandatory reporter training online. Please arrange with the Director the time you will be at the center and your responsibilities while there. Check in with the Director or a member of the staff for a name tag. To assure the safety of our children, identification may be required. Adults volunteering on a regular basis will be asked to know the information in the Children and Student Ministry Application Policy and Handbook and complete the Primary Screening Form.

Practicum Students

Blessed Beginnings serves as a training center for students from the University of Northern Iowa and Hawkeye Community College. These students are supervised at all times and are required to sign in each time they work in a classroom. Blessed Beginnings enjoys having them because both the children and staff benefit from their presence.

Parent/Teacher Communication

Daily Updates

Staff members are required to log in Brightwheel medications administered. For children under 3 years old, staff members log sleep times/naps, food eaten, diaper changes/potty times. Parents are encouraged to communicate regularly with staff members about their child's day.

Incident Reports

Staff members communicate to parents about any mishap such as minor medical issues and issues with other children. Usually, Brightwheel is the means of communication.

Newsletters

Newsletters are meant to keep the lines of communication open between the center and the home. Throughout the year, we will do our best to keep you informed of upcoming events, any special days, monthly activities, and other notes of importance. It will be posted on the Brightwheel app the first week of the month.

Parent Conferences

Parents may request a conference with staff members at any time; however specific conference days for children will be scheduled. Staff members may also request a conference with parents when necessary.

Reports to Parents

Daily reports will be made via the Brightwheel app. Regular reports will be communicated to families to keep them informed about Blessed Beginnings events and progress.

Schedules

Daily schedules for the children are displayed in each classroom area.

Unusual Events

Please inform the teacher(s) of any unusual changes in your child's day or life such as insufficient rest, new brother or sister, company at home, divorce, moving, etc. This information is helpful in better understanding your child's behavior and/or needs. Speaking to a staff member and communicating over Brightwheel is the best way to keep all staff members and parents up to date.

Emergency Plans

Plans are in place for a variety of emergency situations. Review of the plans is done at least twice each year and after any implementation with the staff. Each staff member is expected to know them. Emergency plans for fire and tornado are written and posted by each room exit. Emergency procedures are practiced at least once a month for both fire and tornado. Additional drills will be practiced throughout the course of the year for lockdown scenarios, shelter in place, and evacuation.

Transportation for Emergencies

Should emergencies develop requiring transportation of children to a different site, approved drivers from the center or the church staff will be used. An ambulance may be called if the situation warrants it.

Specific emergency plans follow:

1. Emergency Plan for Fire

In the event of a fire, the children will follow posted fire plans. If evacuation is required, parents will be notified via

Brightwheel. Announcements will also be made over television, radio, and social media. Blessed Beginnings will be staffed until all parents have picked up their children. Children will not be allowed to leave the center with staff members unless authorized by a parent. Children will be taken to the NewAldaya Chapel west of Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church to wait for the arrival of parents or guardians.

Fire Alert procedures are posted by all room doors. Fire Alert signs direct staff to exit the room and proceed to the lawn. Immobile children will be assisted. The facility will be checked by the Director and/or lead staff to assure an evacuation has been complete. A required monthly fire drill is performed to prepare staff and children for an emergency, should it occur.

2. Emergency Plan for Tornado

In the event of a tornado, the children will follow posted tornado plans. If evacuation is required, parents will be notified via Brightwheel. Announcements will also be made over television, radio, and social media. Blessed Beginnings will be staffed until all parents have picked up their children. Children will be taken to the NewAldaya Chapel west of Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church to wait the arrival of parents or guardians.

Tornado alert procedures are posted by all room doors. Blessed Beginnings will take shelter in rooms with no windows or safety glass windows and move into a head tuck position. Battery operated flashlight is located inside each classroom's grab bag/first aid kit in case of power failure. A monthly tornado drill is performed to prepare staff and children for an emergency should it occur, and batteries are checked in flashlights during these drills.

3. Emergency Plan for Intruders or Intoxicated Adults

In the event that staff members identify an intruder or intoxicated adult in the center, Blessed Beginnings will take all children at risk to an undisclosed, locked location for safety. The police will be phoned immediately.

4. Emergency Plan for Lost or Abducted Children

In the event that a child is lost or abducted, staff will notify the Blessed Beginnings Office. A building-wide notice will be made including a code indicating to staff the need to secure the building exits. Available Blessed Beginnings staff will spread throughout the building in search of the child. If the child is not located after a complete search of the building, parents and police will be notified by phone. Staff should have ready a physical description of the child, time the child was last seen, and any other pertinent information to the situation.

5. Emergency Plan for Blizzards

In the event that the center is closed due to a blizzard, parents will be notified via Brightwheel. Announcements will also be made over television, radio, and social media. Blessed Beginnings will be staffed until all parents have picked up their children. Children will not be allowed to leave the center with staff members unless it has been authorized by a parent.

6. Emergency Plan for Power Failures

In the event that the center experiences a major power failure, Blessed Beginnings may need to close the center. Parents will be notified via Brightwheel. Announcements will also be made over television, radio, and social media. Blessed Beginnings will be staffed until all parents have picked up their children. Children will not be allowed to leave the center with staff members unless it has been authorized by a parent. If evacuation is necessary before parents can arrive, Blessed Beginnings will proceed to the NewAldaya Chapel west of Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church.

7. Emergency Plan for Bomb Threats

In the event that the center receives a bomb threat, the police will be notified immediately and the center will promptly evacuate to the NewAldaya Chapel west of Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church. If given the clear to return to the center, Blessed Beginnings will resume daily activities. If the center is closed, parents will be notified via Brightwheel. Announcements will be made over television, radio, and social media. Blessed Beginnings will be staffed until all parents have picked up their children. Children will not be allowed to leave the center with staff members unless it has been authorized by a parent.

8. Emergency Plan for Chemical Spills

In the event that the center encounters a chemical spill, civil defense directions will be followed. The authorities will be notified immediately. Outside ventilation systems will be closed. Windows will be closed and towels placed on window ledges to prevent chemical seepage into the building. Heating and air conditioning units drawing air from outside will be turned off. Parents will be notified via Brightwheel. Announcements will be made over television, radio, and social media. Blessed Beginnings will be staffed until all parents have picked up their children. Children will not be allowed to leave the center with staff members unless it has been authorized by a parent.

9. Emergency Plan for Earthquakes or Structural Damage

In the event of an earthquake, Blessed Beginnings will seek shelter for the children under tables, in doorways, and, as a

last resort, in hallways. If given the clear to remain in the center, Blessed Beginnings will resume daily activities. If there is structural damage and the center is closed, the center will evacuate and proceed to the NewAldaya west of Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church. Parents will be notified via Brightwheel. Announcements will be made over television, radio, and social media. Blessed Beginnings will be staffed until all parents have picked up their children. Children will not be allowed to leave the center with staff members unless it has been authorized by a parent.

10. Emergency Plan for Nuclear Evacuation

In the event that the center suspects a need for a nuclear evacuation, Blessed Beginnings will immediately contact the Blackhawk County Emergency Management Agency or the Iowa Emergency Management Division in Des Moines. The center will be evacuated. If given the clear to return to the center, Blessed Beginnings will resume daily activities. Parents will be notified via Brightwheel if the center intends to close. Announcements will be made over television, radio, and social media. Blessed Beginnings will be staffed until all parents have picked up their children. Children will not be allowed to leave the center with staff members unless it has been authorized by a parent.

Food Policy

Nutrition Policy

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Standards are followed for planning meals and snacks. Exceptions are allowed for food allergies and medical conditions as indicated by the child's doctor. Parents must notify the center in writing and provide Doctor orders of any requested exceptions necessary for their child. Menus are posted in each classroom and on the food carts from the Kitchen.

Meals and Snacks

Blessed Beginnings will provide Gerber Good Start Formula and baby food for your infant. Please let us know when your child has been introduced to new foods and we will serve them those foods as they are ready. Blessed Beginnings will provide food for breakfast, lunch and a snack. Breakfast will be served between 8:00 and 8:15, lunch will be served between 11:00 and 11:30, and snack will be served to the Learning Center children between 3:00 and 3:30. Please check with your child's classroom teacher in regard to classroom specific serving times.

Food Brought from Home

Children may not bring their own food once they are able to eat food prepared here.

Birthday and Holiday Treats

Children may bring birthday or holiday treats that are purchased, nutritious, individually wrapped, or homemade. Homemade treats need to be approved prior to the occasion by the Blessed Beginnings Director to check for allergies of students. A healthy snack is always a choice and is offered to the child. A note can be placed in your child's file to serve nutritious snacks only, as requested by parent.

Discipline Policy

Children at Blessed Beginnings are expected to be respectful to all people including themselves. They also need to show respect for property and rules. The focus of our discipline will be to **redirect** a child's undesirable behavior. When a child's behavior is dangerous to him/her or others, or is destructive to anything in the environment, a child will be required to sit in a supervised time-out away from the others for an age appropriate short period of time. When the child is old enough to do so, he/she will be expected to explain what was wrong with the behavior and what needs to be done or remembered next time. Corporal punishment, including spanking, shaking, or slapping, will not be allowed.

Biting Policy and Procedures:

Biting at our center is not acceptable behavior. Although biting is a behavior that it not entirely unexpected when young children are together in groups. We treat an incident of biting with great seriousness. It is our desire to prevent biting and, at the same time, to help a child to learn more appropriate behavior. Young children who bite others cause great concern and the incident can cause emotionally intense reactions among families. Young children bite for a variety of reasons. Most reasons are not related to behavior problems and are categorized into three broad categories:

1. **Developmental issues**, such as:
 - a. Teething pain or discomfort
 - b. Developing oral-motor skills
 - c. Sensory exploration of the surroundings
 - d. Learning about cause and effect
 - e. Learning through imitating others
 - f. Developing a sense of space, autonomy, and expressive language skills
 - g. Needing more attention
 - h. Learning to hold on and let go

i. Exercising integration of sensory skills

2. **Expression of feelings**, such as:

- a. Frustration
- b. Anger
- c. Tension
- d. Anxiety
- e. Excitement

3. **An environment or program that needs to be modified for the child;**

- a. Too much or too little stimulation
- b. A space that is over-crowded and does not allow children privacy
- c. Inappropriate expectations
- d. Rigid schedule

Therefore, we expect staff to be sensitive to the circumstances in which biting occurs and use preventive measures to stop biting behavior. Our goal is to maintain the health, safety and comfort of each child enrolled in the Blessed Beginnings program. In order to accomplish this goal, staff members are committed to understanding the development of young children, especially the behaviors of children in the infant-toddler stages of development. We will be vigilant observers and exercise proactive measures to prevent biting, as well as intervene appropriately when biting occurs.

When biting occurs, staff will:

1. Attend to the child who was bitten first; ensure that the child is okay
2. Calm and comfort the child who was bitten to restore a sense of security and safety
3. Wash the bite area of the child who was bitten with soap and water.
4. If necessary, administer first aid by applying a cold/ice pack
5. When the skin is broken, call the parent to determine if the child needs to seek medical attention from a doctor or health care provider to prevent complications
6. Remove the biter from the situation. It is important to remove any reward or gratification the child may receive from biting. Staff will approach the biter in a calm and firm manner, teaching the child that biting other people is absolutely unacceptable.
7. Document the incident and report to families/guardians of both children involved in the incident. Each family involved will sign an incident report. The report will be filed with the director.
8. To maintain confidentiality, families/guardians will not be informed of the child/children's names involved in the incident.

Following a child's first incident, typical preventive measures will be taken:

1. Consider increasing adult-child ratio in the classroom
2. Evaluate classroom environment based on the developmental needs of the biter.
3. Reinforce language and actions to assist the child in communicating what they want, how they feel, and when they need help.
4. Teach acceptable ways for children to gain attention or access toys they desire
5. Offer teethingers
6. Explore cause and effect activities to help the biter explore in a positive situation
7. Track child interaction using an observation form, to identify and document triggers

When biting reoccurs, staff will do the following additional preventive measures:

1. Assign a person to shadow the child in order to monitor and redirect behavior
2. Schedule a conference with the family/guardians of the child
3. Develop a plan of action and determine the need for outside resources. Plans may include the following measures:
 - a. Suspension from the program for an agreed-upon duration (families will be charged the holding fee rate for suspension longer than one week.)
 - b. Assignment of a one-on-one staff member for the biter at an additional charge to the family.
4. Check with the family/guardian on a daily or weekly basis, as needed to review progress.

Discharge Policy

Children may be dismissed from attendance at Blessed Beginnings Learning Center due to:

1. Inability to adjust to the group setting, including running away.
2. Misbehavior that threatens the safety of self, staff, or other children
3. Non-payment of fees for more than two weeks
4. Irregular attendance

The procedure for enforcement of this policy is:

1. Notify the parents regarding the problem/concern
2. Develop a written plan toward rectifying the problem and identifying responsibilities of all parties
3. Set a time line for improvement
4. Proceed with plan
5. Resolve problem or dismiss child

In extreme situations, dismissal from the program without warning may be justified.

Field Trip Policy and Procedure

Regular field trips that are age appropriate, fun for children, and that expand the children's understanding of the world will be used as an extension of learning to give children opportunities to explore, be active, and conduct field studies as part of the implementation of the curriculum.

Procedure:

1. Children under 2 years of age will not be taken on field trips. However, they can be taken on stroller rides around the center or short nature walks. These outings should not regularly replace their daily playground requirement.
2. The teachers and site supervisor should know the center's field trip budget and plan accordingly. If they need more money for a particular field trip, they should discuss the possibility with the director. All field trips should be conducted in the most cost-effective way.
3. The program will maintain the adjusted teacher to child ratio for each group of children. If staff wants to invite parent volunteers, they will notify families.
4. All staff will comply with the Iowa Licensing Standards when taking a field trip.

Universal Precautions Policy:

All procedures involving blood or other potentially infectious materials shall be performed in such a manner as to minimize splashing, spraying, spattering, and generation of droplets of these substances. Specimens of potentially infectious materials shall be placed in a container that prevents leakage. Disposable gloves will be made available in all applicable work areas. Disposable gloves shall be disposed of immediately when contaminated. Disposable gloves are not to be re-used. Masks and eye protection shall be worn whenever splashes, spray, spatter, or droplets of blood or other potentially infectious materials may be generated and eye, nose, or mouth contamination can be reasonably anticipated. Hand washing is a primary infection prevention measure that is protective of both the employee and the children. Appropriate hand washing must be diligently practiced. Employees shall wash hands thoroughly using soap and water whenever hands become contaminated and as soon as possible after removing gloves or other personal protective equipment.

Access Policy:

1. Any person in the center who is NOT a staff member, substitute, or subcontracted staff or volunteer who has had a record check and approval to be involved with child care **shall not** have **"unrestricted access"** to children for whom that person is not the parent, guardian, or custodian, nor be counted in the staff to child ratio.
***"Unrestricted access" means that a person has contact with a child alone or is directly responsible for child care. It is imperative that centers not allow people who have not had a record check assume child care responsibilities or be alone with children. This directly relates both to child safety and liability to the center.**
2. Persons who do not have unrestricted access will be under the direct **"supervision"** and **"monitoring"** of the Director or Assistant Director at all times and will not be allowed to assume any child care responsibilities. The primary responsibility of the supervision and monitoring will be assumed by the Director or Assistant Director unless he/she delegates it to the teacher or teacher assistant due to a conflict of interest with the person.
***"Supervision" means to be in charge of an individual engaged with children in an activity or task and ensure that they perform it correctly.**
***"Monitoring" means to be in charge of ensuring proper conduct of others.**
3. Center staff will approach anyone who is on the property of the center without their knowledge to ask what their purpose is. If staff is unsure about the reason they will contact the Director or Assistant Director to get approval for the person to be on site. If it becomes a dangerous situation staff will follow the "intruder in the center" procedures. Non-agency persons who are on the property for other reasons such as maintenance, repairs, etc. will be monitored by paid staff and will not be allowed to interact with the children on premise. Parents/guardians must notify Blessed Beginnings staff via Brightwheel and provide authorization for new and previously unauthorized person coming to pick up a child.
4. A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor (even if the sex offender is the parent, guardian, or custodian) who is required to register with the Iowa sex offender registry (Iowa Code 692A):

- a. Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer at the child care center.
- b. Shall not be on the property of the child care center without the written permission of the center director, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender's own minor child to and from the center.
 - i. The center director is not obligated to provide written permission and must consult with their DHS licensing consultant first.
 - ii. If written permission is granted it shall include the conditions under which the sex offender may be present, including:
 1. The precise location in the center where the sex offender may be present.
 2. The reason for the sex offender's presence at the facility.
 3. The duration of the sex offender's presence.
 4. Description of how the center staff will supervise the sex offender to ensure that the sex offender is not left alone with a child.
 5. The written permission shall be signed and dated by the director and sex offender and kept on file for review by the center licensing consultant.

Mandatory Reporter Policy:

All Blessed Beginnings employees and volunteers are classified as mandatory reporters and must undergo mandatory reporter training informing of the process and their role. Any mandatory reporter who makes a report in good faith is immune from any liability, civil or criminal. Iowa Code requires that every employee of a licensed daycare or preschool who suspects or witness child abuse, must make a report to the Iowa Department of Human Services. The law requires that persons directly involved in observation of the abuse must make the report verbally by phone or otherwise and within 24 hours of becoming aware of the situation. Moreover, they must complete a written report within 48 hours after the oral report. The Iowa Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-362-2178. Furthermore, mandatory reporters must make an oral report by phone to law enforcement if they believe the child is in imminent danger as law enforcement are the only agency that can take a child into custody if needed. Finally, all employees of Blessed Beginnings who suspect or directly witness child abuse are strongly encouraged to bring the issue to the director who will coach them about the process and notify the child's parent(s)/guardian(s).

Medical and Dental Emergency Policy:

In the event that any child is seriously injured, either medical or dental, while in attendance of the child care center, the following procedure will be followed:

Procedure:

1. The TEACHER will remain with the sick or injured child. Emergency first aid is to be administered as necessary. Reassure the child and keep them calm and quiet until the emergency medical personnel take over if necessary.
2. Director or Assistant Director will call 911 if necessary. Give the exact address: 7401 University Ave Cedar Falls IA 50613. Telephone # 319-266-2503 Learning Center or 319-277-1556 School Age Building. Let them know that we are located in the Nazareth Lutheran Church on the corner of Main Street and University Ave.
3. Once the proper emergency medical personnel have been contacted, the parents of the sick or injured child must be immediately notified. (See child's enrollment form for proper emergency contacts and phone numbers) If conditions do not warrant immediate notification of emergency personnel, the parents will be contacted immediately and notified of the situation.

Miscellaneous Information

Non-Discrimination Policy

Blessed Beginnings Learning Center admits children of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to children at the center. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, and other center-administered programs.

State of Iowa License

Blessed Beginnings Learning Center is a licensed child care facility and complies with all rules and regulations established by the State of Iowa and administered by the Department of Human Services.

Blessed Beginnings Committee

The committee shall be composed of at least seven and no more than ten members: the Church Council representative, the Blessed Beginnings Chair who is a Blessed Beginnings parent or parent representative, at least three and no more than six additional parents or parent representatives from Blessed Beginnings (with representation from the Learning Center, Preschool,

and School Age Program), and one at-large member. The Director of Blessed Beginnings and the Administrator of Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be advisory members. (Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church Bylaws, Article XII, Section 4r.) Meetings are held on the last Monday of each month at 5:15 p.m. Parent in-put is open from 5:15 p.m. to 5:20 p.m.

Questions or Concerns

Questions or concerns should be addressed to the Blessed Beginnings Director or to appropriate staff members between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, either in-person, by phone, or via Brightwheel. The Blessed Beginnings office is located in Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church. The center's telephone number is 319-266-2503. Calls made directly to Nazareth Evangelical Lutheran Church, 319-266-7589, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. will be transferred to the Blessed Beginnings office.

Parent Orientation:

Parents can come in for a tour prior to being put on our wait list if they desire. When they are admitted into our program a tour date is set. Parents are instructed to come in with questions if they have any. A brochure is given to the parents which has our fees, policies, and other information on it. Parents are shown the room and introduced to the staff in their child's room. They are given the enrollment packet which has a packet of information to be filled out for their child, an emergency form, a food program form and a handbook. The parents are asked to file out the information and return the forms prior to their child starting. They are instructed to call if they have any questions after looking over the handbook and the other information.