



Bright Minds Children Academy – Parent Handbook (Aurora, CO)

Welcome to Bright Minds Children Academy! We are delighted to partner with you in providing a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment for your child. Bright Minds is a large licensed child care center serving children from **6 weeks to 12 years** of age. We offer full-time and part-time care, provide all meals and snacks, and our qualified staff is trained to administer medications (under the guidance of a monthly visiting nurse consultant). We participate in the **Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)** and **Universal Preschool (UPK) Colorado**, and we are actively pursuing a **Level 5** rating in Colorado Shines, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System. We are proud to say we are currently rated at a 4 star rating and continue to strive for improvement every day! This handbook outlines our center's policies and procedures, which are fully compliant with Colorado's licensing regulations (8 CCR 1402-1) and health and safety standards (6 CCR 1010-7), as well as the requirements of CCCAP, UPK, Colorado Shines Level 5, and all other applicable laws.

Please read this handbook thoroughly. Its purpose is to inform you of our program's operations, expectations, and commitments to quality, health, and safety. All language is intended to be parent-friendly and clear. If you have any questions, we encourage you to ask—our team is here to support your family. Thank you for choosing Bright Minds Children Academy!

Philosophy and Mission

Our Mission: At Bright Minds, our mission is to foster each child's development in a loving, inclusive, and stimulating environment. We believe that children learn best through play, exploration, and positive interactions. Our curriculum is child-centered and developmentally appropriate, emphasizing social-emotional growth, early literacy and math skills, creativity, and physical development. We strive to "*brighten minds*" by nurturing curiosity, confidence, and kindness in every child.

Our Philosophy: We view each child as a unique individual. We celebrate diversity and ensure equitable opportunities for all children regardless of background or ability. Our staff build warm, responsive relationships with children and families, creating a home-away-from-home atmosphere. We promote learning through play, hands-on discovery, and guided experiences that ignite a love of learning. We also emphasize the importance of partnership with families – parents are children's first teachers, and together we support each child's success.

In alignment with these beliefs, Bright Minds is committed to continuous quality improvement. We engage in **Colorado Shines** quality initiatives and ongoing staff development to stay at the forefront of early childhood education. Our program culture promotes children's mental health and well-being by building positive relationships and a supportive community. We also actively include children of all abilities (see Inclusion & Non-Discrimination section) and implement research-based practices to help every child thrive. By choosing Bright Minds, you join a family that values safety, learning, fun, and inclusivity in equal measure.



Ages Served and Program Overview

Ages Accepted: We are licensed as a **Large Child Care Center** to care for children from **6 weeks through 12 years** old. This includes infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. We do **not** discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex/gender, national origin, disability, or any other status – all children are welcome in our program.

Program Classrooms: Children are grouped by age/developmental stage to ensure appropriate activities and caregiver ratios. Our classrooms include:

- **Infants:** 6 weeks to 12/18 months (non-walkers and young toddlers).
- **Toddlers:** 1 to 3 years (we may have younger and older toddler groups based on development).
- **Preschool:** 3 to 5 years (children roughly 3 until Kindergarten entry).
- **School-Age:** 5 to 12 years (Summer camp).

Each group has a regular teaching team led by qualified early childhood teachers. We maintain **low child-to-teacher ratios** that meet or exceed Colorado's requirements. For example, we have at least **1 teacher for every 5 infants, 1:5** for young toddlers, **1:7** for older toddlers (~2 years), **1:8** for 2½–3 years, **1:10** for 3–4 years, **1:12** for 4–5 years, and **1:15** for school-age children, with corresponding maximum group sizes as specified by state licensing. These small ratios ensure each child receives attentive care and supervision. We never exceed these limits and often schedule additional staff to provide even more individualized attention.

Full-Time and Part-Time Options: We understand families have varying scheduling needs. Both full-time (5 days/week) and part-time schedules are available. Part-time slots (e.g. 2 or 3 set days per week) are offered when possible in certain age groups. We will work with you to accommodate your schedule, though consistency is important for your child's routine. **Universal Preschool (UPK)** hours (for eligible 4-year-olds, see UPK section) may be integrated into either part-time or full-time schedules as needed.

No Transportation Provided: Please note that Bright Minds does **not offer transportation** to/from the center or to schools. Parents/guardians are responsible for drop-off and pick-up of children at our facility. If your school-age child needs care before/after elementary school, you must arrange their transportation (e.g. parent drop-off, school bus if available, etc.). We do occasionally take walks or have on-site "field trips," but we do not transport children in vehicles for routine outings (any special trip would require parent permission – see Field Trips section).

Meals and Snacks Provided: We provide **nutritious meals and snacks** for all children in our care. This includes breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack (and a morning snack for late breakfast toddlers as needed). Our menus follow healthy guidelines and are posted for parents to review (see Meals & Nutrition section for details). Because we handle all food service, parents generally do not need to send food except for infant formula/breast milk or if your child has a specific medically required diet (arranged with the Director).



Center Licensing and Standards: Bright Minds Children Academy is licensed by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood as a Child Care Center. We strictly adhere to the state child care regulations for health, safety, and quality (8 CCR 1402-1). We also comply with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment rules for sanitation in child care (6 CCR 1010-7). We participate in **Colorado Shines** (all licensed centers with children under 5 participate by law) and are currently **rated Level 4** (as of this writing) and actively working on achieving **Level 5**, the highest quality level. This means we are engaged in ongoing quality improvement, staff training, and family engagement efforts to meet rigorous standards. We also partner with programs like **CCCAP** (child care subsidy) and **Universal Preschool** to serve our community's needs.

Days, Hours, and Calendar

Hours of Operation: Bright Minds is open **Monday through Friday, from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM**. Children may not be dropped off before opening or picked up after closing without prior arrangement (late pick-up fees apply, see Late Pick-Up Policy).

Full-Day vs. Half-Day: We primarily operate as a full-day program. A “full day” is considered any schedule over 5 hours in a day (typically up to 10 hours). For families needing half-day preschool (for UPK or other reasons), we offer a limited number of half-day morning or afternoon slots for preschoolers; please speak with the Director for availability and exact times.

Center Calendar and Holidays

We operate year-round. The center will be **closed on major holidays** and a few additional days for staff training, curriculum planning, or facility maintenance. Our **annual closed holidays** include:

- **New Year's Day** (January 1)
- **New Year's Eve** (December 31)
- **Memorial Day** (last Monday in May)
- **Independence Day** (July 4)
- **Labor Day** (first Monday in September)
- **Thanksgiving Day** (fourth Thursday in November)
- **Black Friday** (Friday after Thanksgiving)
- **Christmas Eve** (December 24)
- **Christmas Day** (December 25)

Additional Holiday Closure Clause:

If **Christmas Day** or **New Year's Day** falls on a **Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday**, the center will **remain closed for the remainder of that week** to accommodate family travel, staff planning, and historically low attendance. These extended closures will be **communicated in advance** as part of the annual calendar.

We also schedule:



- **Four (4) half-day closures per year** (one per quarter) for staff professional development and training.
- **Four (4) additional early closures or full-day closures** (one per quarter) for **classroom deep cleaning, curriculum preparation, and environment refresh.**

If a holiday falls on a weekend, we will close on the closest weekday (e.g. Friday or Monday) and will notify families in advance. A detailed **annual calendar of closures and events** is provided at enrollment and at the start of each year and updated as needed.

Tuition is not prorated or refunded for scheduled holidays or staff-related closures, including extended holiday week closures, as these are planned and factored into our calendar and staffing model.

Inclement Weather Policy: We have a procedure regarding severe weather (snowstorms, etc.) and excessively hot weather:

- **Weather Closures:** In the event of extreme weather (e.g. heavy snowfall/blizzard, dangerous ice, etc.) or other emergencies (e.g. power outage) that make it unsafe to open, Bright Minds may close for the day or delay opening. We generally follow the lead of the local public school district (Cherry Creek / Aurora Public Schools) for snow closures: if schools are closed, we likely will close. However, the final decision is made by our Director based on conditions. We will notify parents of closures or late starts by 6:00 AM via text message, and Email. We will also update our center's voicemail message with closure info. Please ensure we have your current contact information to reach you in these events. **No tuition credits or refunds** are given for weather or emergency closures beyond our control.
- **Excessive Heat/Outdoor Play:** We monitor weather conditions daily. In extremely hot weather (high heat index), we **limit outdoor play** to early mornings or shorter periods and ensure children have shade and stay well-hydrated. On days of poor air quality or temperatures above safe levels, children will have indoor physical activities instead. Conversely, in very cold weather (below about 20°F with wind chill), we also keep children indoors. We follow state guidelines for safe outdoor play and inclement weather; children are dressed appropriately for the weather (see Clothing section) and we adjust as needed for their health (e.g. ensuring infants are not exposed to direct sun and are appropriately clothed).
- **Notifications:** If we must close early due to sudden weather changes or other emergencies during the day, we will contact all parents/guardians immediately to pick up. We ask that you or an emergency contact be available to come within 1 hour of notice in such rare cases.
- **Seasonal Breaks:** We remain open during most school breaks (spring break, summer, etc.) to serve families year-round. School-age programs will offer full-day care on days when schools are closed (summer camp, some school holidays) – separate sign-ups may be required. We will announce any optional camp programs or if any specific days (like the day before Christmas) might be half-days or closed early.



Admissions and Enrollment

Enrollment Process: Enrollment is open year-round on a space-available basis. To enroll your child, the following steps must be completed:

- **Tour and Orientation:** We encourage all prospective families to visit the center for a tour. This gives you a chance to meet staff, see classrooms, and review our program philosophy and policies.
- **Registration Packet:** An enrollment packet must be completed for each child. This includes the child's general information form, emergency contacts, health history, immunization records, and required permissions. We require a certified **Colorado Certificate of Immunization** or a valid exemption form on file **before the child's first day**. (If your child is not fully immunized due to medical or personal belief exemption, you must provide the official state exemption form signed by a physician or as required by CDPHE. Non-immunized children *may* be enrolled with a valid exemption, but in the event of a disease outbreak, they will be excluded from care as mandated by public health officials.)
- **Health Appraisal:** Colorado licensing requires a health appraisal/physical form signed by your child's doctor for admission (and updated annually for children under 7). This is included in the enrollment packet.
- **Enrollment Fee and Deposit:** A one-time registration fee of \$90 (and possibly a refundable deposit of one week's tuition, if applicable) is due upon enrollment to secure your child's spot. (Refer to the Fee Schedule for details.)
- **Orientation Visit:** We may schedule an orientation or transition visit for you and your child before the first full day. This helps your child get familiar with the teachers and classroom while you complete any remaining paperwork or ask questions. We encourage at least one parent-child visit or **home visit** (for preschool, if applicable) prior to start, to ease the transition.
- **Ages for Enrollment:** As noted, children 6 weeks through 12 years are eligible. Infants as young as 6 weeks may start (note: infants under 2 months need a physician's note to attend group care as per licensing). We will discuss your infant's schedule and needs in detail to ensure proper care. Preschool enrollment is generally open to children aged 3 and up who are toilet-trained (we will consider 2½-year-olds for preschool classes case-by-case if ready). **UPK (Universal Preschool)** eligibility is for children who turn 4 by October 1 of the school year (and some 3-year-olds with qualifying factors, see UPK section). School-age children can enroll up to age 12 for out-of-school care.
- **Admission Priorities:** If demand exceeds openings, we maintain a waiting list. Priority may be given to currently enrolled families' siblings, staff members' children, or families seeking full-time care. We strive to be fair and transparent in admissions. There is no discrimination in enrollment – we do not screen out or deny admission based on any protected characteristic or a child's developmental needs, as long as we can reasonably accommodate them with our resources and licensing parameters. We collaborate with Early Intervention or school district specialists to admit children with special needs whenever possible (see Inclusion section).
- **Trial Period:** The first 45 days of enrollment are considered a trial or adjustment period. During this time, either the family or the center may determine if the placement is not a



good fit. If issues arise, we will communicate and attempt to resolve them. If withdrawal is necessary in that period, we may refund unused tuition (registration fees are non-refundable).

- **Updates and Changes:** Parents must notify us of any changes in contact information, emergency contacts, or the child's health status (new allergies, medications, etc.) promptly. Enrollment forms should be kept current. Whenever policies are updated, we will provide written notice and require parents to acknowledge the changes. We also require all families to annually re-sign certain forms (like updated health forms and handbook acknowledgment).

Non-Discrimination and ADA: Bright Minds admits children **without discrimination** in regard to sex, race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, family composition, economic status, or disability. We comply fully with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. If your child has a diagnosed disability or special health need, please inform us so we can work together on any necessary accommodations or care plans. We will make reasonable modifications to our policies and practices to integrate all children, as long as it does not fundamentally alter our program or pose a safety risk. We are committed to inclusive care and will collaborate with you and any therapists/educators to support your child's success.

Tuition and Fees

Fee Schedule: A current Tuition and Fee Schedule is provided as a separate document, detailing rates for each age group and schedule. Below is a general overview (all rates are subject to change with notice):

- **Infants (6 weeks – 18 months):**
 - 5 days/week (Full-Time): \$505 per week
 - 4 days/week: \$435 per week
- **Toddlers (18 months – 3 years):**
 - 5 days/week (Full-Time): \$435 per week
 - 4 days/week: \$350 per week
 - 3 days/week: \$270 per week
- **Preschool (3 – 6 years):**
 - 5 days/week (Full-Time): \$375 per week
 - 4 days/week: \$315 per week
 - 3 days/week: \$250 per week
 - 2 days/week: \$190 per week
- **School Age (6 years and up):**
 - 5 days/week (Full-Time): \$315 per week
 - 4 days/week: \$255 per week
 - 3 days/week: \$250 per week
 - 2 days/week: \$195 per week
 - Full-day care on school closure days and summer program rates are available separately.
- Registration Fee (new enrollment): \$90 (one-time, non-refundable)



- **Annual Materials Fee: \$100**
(Charged each September to cover supplies and curriculum materials, if applicable)

(Note: For exact fees, refer to the official fee schedule or enrollment agreement. CCCAP and UPK families – see sections below for how those funding sources affect fees.)

Billing Schedule: Tuition is charged on a **weekly basis** (you may also arrange monthly payments in advance). Payments are due **by Monday of each week** (or the 1st of the month if monthly). We accept payment via check, credit/debit, or electronic bank draft. Receipts can be provided upon request, and annual statements for tax purposes will be distributed each January. **Late Payments:** If payment is not received by the due date, a late fee of \$X per day may be applied. If an account becomes more than one week past due, your child’s enrollment may be suspended until the balance is paid in full or a payment plan is arranged. We will communicate with you to avoid disruptions – please reach out if you’re experiencing financial difficulties.

Holding Fees and Withdrawal: If you plan to withdraw your child or take an extended break (e.g. summer off), please provide at least **30 days’ written notice** to the Director. This allows us to settle your account and possibly fill the spot. If you withdraw without notice, you will be responsible for one month’s tuition in lieu of notice. We do not typically charge to hold a spot if you temporarily leave, but we cannot guarantee availability unless a holding fee is arranged (case by case). No refunds are given for days missed due to illness, holidays, or other absences (tuition reserves your child’s spot). In rare cases of prolonged illness or family emergency, please discuss with the Director about possible arrangements.

Credits/Make-ups: We do not offer “make-up days” for part-time schedules when a day is missed, due to maintaining ratios and staffing. Similarly, no credit is given for weather closures or a child’s sick days (our costs continue during those times). If the center unexpectedly closes for an extended period (e.g. more than 3 days for an emergency), we will evaluate tuition adjustments or alternative arrangements and keep parents informed.

Late Pick-Up Fees: It is very important that children are picked up by closing time (or your scheduled pick-up time). Late pickups cause stress for children and staff. If you anticipate being late, please call us as soon as possible. A **grace period of 5 minutes** past closing may be allowed occasionally for emergencies, but after that a late fee will be charged. Our policy is **\$1.00 per minute per child after 6:00 PM**. The fee will be added to your account and must be paid with your next tuition payment. Chronic lateness (more than 3 instances) may result in a higher fee or potential discontinuation of care. Please have a backup plan (alternate pick-up person) if you might be delayed.

Returned Checks/Transaction Fees: A \$40 fee will be charged for any returned check or failed electronic payment. After two incidents, we may require future payments in cash or cashier’s check.



CCCAP Families: If you receive Colorado Child Care Assistance (subsidy), see the dedicated CCCAP section below for details on **parent fees** and absence policies. Your “parent fee” (co-pay) is due to the center by the **1st of each month** and is subject to the same late policies.

UPK (Universal Preschool) Families:

State-funded preschool hours (**15 hours/week**) are provided **free of charge** for eligible children. At Bright Minds, **UPK hours are integrated into our full-day program**. Families are responsible for tuition covering the hours beyond what UPK funds. We will clearly outline any remaining tuition owed in your enrollment agreement.

Many UPK families also use **CCCAP** to cover extended hours beyond the UPK-funded portion. We are experienced in coordinating these funding sources and will work with you to ensure your child receives continuous care and proper billing.

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Financial Assistance and Scholarships: We accept third-party assistance from CCCAP and UPK. We also have a limited **Bright Minds Scholarship Fund** for families in need who do not qualify for other aid. If you need financial help, please talk to the Director. We require that families first apply for CCCAP through Arapahoe County if likely eligible. If you are ineligible, or if there are special circumstances, a partial scholarship or sliding-scale fee might be considered based on available funds. All such requests and arrangements are confidential.

We are committed to working with families to ensure continuity of care. **Please communicate** with us if you face financial difficulties – we can often work out a plan. Open and early communication is key; we want to support your child’s attendance.

Daily Attendance Policies

Regular attendance is important for your child’s learning and for maintaining your enrollment status (especially for UPK and CCCAP programs). Below are our policies on arrival, departure, and absences:

Attendance Tracking and Sign-In/Out Policy

All families are **required to sign their child in and out each day**, as mandated by Colorado child care licensing and for the safety and accountability of every child in our care.

Bright Minds uses an **electronic tablet-based system** connected through **Early Learning Ventures (ELV)** for daily attendance tracking. This system:

- Records **arrival and departure times** for every child
- Is used by **all families**, regardless of funding source
- Is **directly integrated with CCCAP** for those enrolled in the child care subsidy program



CCCAP families:

Colorado no longer uses physical swipe cards for attendance. Instead, CCCAP attendance is tracked and submitted through the **ELV-linked tablet system**.

Failure to accurately sign in and out may result in **denied CCCAP payment or termination of care due to non-compliance**.

Attendance Corrections:

If a parent/guardian forgets to sign in or out:

- The **Director will make one-time corrections** in the system.
- All corrections **must be approved by the parent/guardian in-person on the child's very next day of attendance—no exceptions**.
- Failure to approve the correction on the next attendance day may lead to the missed time being **reported as absent or ineligible** under CCCAP, which may result in charges to the family.

Accurate attendance records are essential for child safety, licensing compliance, and funding accuracy. Your cooperation ensures our ability to continue offering high-quality care for all families.

Drop-Off Times

To ensure children are fully engaged in the day's learning, routines, and peer interaction, **children in Senior Toddler 1 through Pre-K classrooms must be dropped off no later than 9:00 AM**.

This policy supports:

- Curriculum delivery and instructional flow
- Classroom consistency and peer bonding
- Accurate attendance and meal counts

If your child arrives **after 9:00 AM without prior notice**, they may be unable to join class for the day unless it is due to:

- A **scheduled medical or therapy appointment** (please notify us in advance)
- A **center-approved emergency** (please contact us by 8:30 AM)

For **infants, young toddlers, and Junior Toddler classrooms**, we understand that routines may vary. While we still recommend arrival by 9:00 AM, these classrooms do not have a strict cutoff time.

If your child will be **absent or arriving late**, please notify the center by **9:00 AM** via phone or the Bright Minds app. This allows us to plan accordingly for meals, staffing, and classroom needs. If we have not heard from you and your child is absent, we may reach out to check in for safety purposes.



Important Note on Breakfast and Meal Service:

As a participant in the **state-administered Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**, our breakfast service follows federally required time frames. **Breakfast is served between 7:30 AM and 9:00 AM** (subject to official CACFP-approved schedule).

If your child arrives **after breakfast has been served**, please ensure they have eaten prior to arrival. Due to CACFP guidelines, **we cannot serve breakfast outside the designated time window**, and children who arrive late cannot be claimed or fed under the program.

To help your child start the day nourished and ready to learn, please arrive before 8:30 AM if your child needs breakfast at school. Meal serving time is approved by CACFP and is based on their approved schedule. Should a child arrive after approved meal schedule time we will make every effort to support their well-being if a meal is still needed.

Release of Children (Authorized Pick-ups): We will release children only to their **parents/legal guardians or persons authorized in writing** on the child's enrollment form. It is crucial that you keep your authorized pickup list updated (you can add/remove people by notifying the office in writing). **All authorized individuals** should be prepared to show photo ID at pick-up. Staff will check ID if they do not recognize the person. This is for your child's safety please understand even if someone is on the list, if we have not met them before we will verify identity.

If an **unauthorized person** comes to pick up your child, we **will not release** the child and will call you immediately for confirmation. You may authorize someone last-minute by sending a signed note or email with a picture of your ID and the person's name and ID info and then that person must show ID at pick-up.

Custody Situations

We understand that custody arrangements and family dynamics can be sensitive. Our priority is to follow the law while ensuring the safety and emotional well-being of every child. To do so, we follow strict protocols related to parental access and child release:

Legal Documentation Required

If there are any legal restrictions related to a child's pick-up, visitation, or parental access, we must have a copy of the official court order or custody agreement on file. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Parenting plans outlining legal or physical custody
- Court-ordered visitation schedules
- Protective or restraining orders
- Emergency motions or custody modifications
- Guardianship or adoption documentation



Without this documentation, we cannot restrict a parent's access to their child. Verbal statements or past history alone are not legally enforceable.

Equal Access Without Court Orders

Unless legal documentation is provided, both parents named on the child's birth certificate are considered to have equal legal rights to access their child, regardless of marital status or past involvement.

We are legally required to release the child to either parent listed on the birth certificate unless a court order limits those rights.

Verifying Legal Parent or Guardian Status

We verify legal parental or guardian rights in one or more of the following ways:

- The individual is named on the child's birth certificate, which is on file at the center.
- The individual provides official court-issued documentation establishing custody, guardianship, or adoption.
- The individual is listed as an authorized pick-up by a verified legal parent or guardian on the child's enrollment paperwork, and their identity is confirmed with a valid photo ID.

If someone arrives claiming to be a parent or guardian and:

- Is not listed on file,
- Is not named on the birth certificate, and
- Does not present valid legal documentation,

We will not release the child and will immediately contact the enrolling parent or guardian for clarification. A child will never be released to an unauthorized individual.

If a Previously "Not-Involved" Parent Arrives

If a parent who was previously described as "not in the picture" arrives, and we have no legal documentation restricting access, but they are:

- Named on the birth certificate, or
- Have a valid court order showing guardianship or custody,

We are legally obligated to release the child to them upon verifying their identity. In this case:

- We will notify the enrolling parent immediately.



- We will document the event thoroughly.
- We will request that updated legal documentation be submitted going forward.

Your Responsibility

To maintain your child's safety and legal protections, we ask that you:

- Provide all current legal documents related to custody or guardianship.
- Immediately inform the Director of any changes in legal status or new court orders.
- Keep your authorized pick-up list up to date in writing.
- Ensure any individual picking up your child is aware that they must show a valid photo ID upon request.

If you are concerned about a particular person attempting to pick up your child, please notify us in writing and provide legal documentation supporting any restrictions.

Late Pick-Up Policy: Children must be picked up by closing time (6:00 PM) or the agreed pickup time in your schedule. If you realize you will be running late, call us as soon as possible. We understand that occasional unavoidable situations occur; however, habitual lateness cannot be accommodated. Our late fee is **\$1 per minute after 6:00 PM**. The fee will be added to your account and must be paid with your next tuition payment. After 30 minutes with no contact from a parent or emergency pickup person, and all contact attempts unsuccessful, we are required to consider it an emergency. In such cases, we may contact **Child Protective Services or local law enforcement** to ensure the child's safety (as per state guidelines for children not picked up). Please have a backup plan to avoid this extreme situation. Repeated lateness (more than 3 incidents) may jeopardize your child's enrollment, as it impacts our staffing and licensing compliance.

Absence Policy: If your child will be absent for any reason (illness, vacation, etc.), please notify the center as soon as possible (preferably by the morning of absence). There is no refund or credit for absences. However, consistent attendance is expected. If a child is absent for **two weeks with no communication**, we will assume withdrawal and may fill the spot. We will attempt to reach you (and emergency contacts) before releasing the slot.

Vacation Absences

Families are eligible for **up to two (2) weeks of vacation time per calendar year** during which they may receive a **50% tuition credit** for their child's regularly scheduled days.

To qualify for this credit:

- Families must submit **written notice to the Director at least two (2) weeks in advance** of the planned vacation.
- The absence must be for **at least 3 consecutive scheduled days**.



- Families may use vacation credits in **one-week or multi-day increments**, not to exceed the annual 2-week cap.
- Vacation credit is **applied to the current or upcoming billing cycle** and **cannot be carried over** to the next year.
- If advance notice is **not provided**, the child's absence may be treated as **unexcused**, and tuition will be charged in full.
- Prolonged unnotified absences may result in **termination of care due to assumed withdrawal**.

Note: No credit or discount is given for single or two-day absences due to travel, family events, or other personal reasons.

Extended Illness or Medical Leave

Bright Minds understands that serious illness or injury may sometimes require a longer absence. In such cases, we offer a **50% tuition credit for up to two (2) weeks per calendar year** for **medically necessary absences** lasting **3 or more consecutive scheduled days**, provided the following conditions are met:

- A **written note from a licensed healthcare provider** is submitted confirming the child's illness and the need for absence.
- The note must be submitted **prior to or within 5 business days** of the child's return to care.
- The absence is due to **illness, recovery from injury, or a public health exclusion** (e.g., isolation or quarantine).
- Families may not exceed a total of 2 weeks of illness credit per calendar year. Additional time off (beyond 2 weeks) may be approved on a case-by-case basis but is not guaranteed.
- Extended absences without documentation or communication may result in the **loss of the child's enrollment spot**.

Note: No tuition discounts or illness credits are given for absences of 1 or 2 days, even if due to minor illness. These days are considered part of normal attendance fluctuations and are charged at the standard rate.

Additional Notes:

- Vacation and illness credits **cannot be combined** or exceed a total of **2 credited weeks per year**.
- This policy applies only to **private-pay families**. Families using **CCCAP** must follow Arapahoe County's absence limits and are not eligible for tuition credit under this policy.
- **All credits must be requested in writing and approved by the Director.**

Excessive Absenteeism: Regular attendance is crucial, especially for **Preschool (UPK)** participants. UPK families are expected to maintain at least a **90% attendance rate** over the program year. This means missing no more than roughly 1 day in 10. If a UPK-funded child



misses more than 10% of classes (without valid excuse), they **may be at risk of losing their UPK slot**. We will work with you if there are special circumstances (illness, etc.), but please commit to consistent attendance for your child's benefit and to comply with the program requirements. CCCAP families also must adhere to attendance rules (see CCCAP section regarding allowed absence days).

CCCAP Absence Allowance

Families using CCCAP should be aware that the child care subsidy covers only a **limited number of absences per month**. As of this writing, **Arapahoe County allows up to 2 paid absences per month** for a child enrolled in CCCAP.

An absence is defined as any day your child is scheduled to attend but does not, regardless of the reason. If your child exceeds this monthly limit:

- **CCCAP will not pay for the additional absent days.**
- You will be **billed the full private daily rate** for each absence beyond the county's allowable limit.

Bright Minds will **make reasonable efforts to notify families** when they are **approaching the monthly absence limit**, based on our internal tracking system. However, it is ultimately the **family's responsibility** to:

- Monitor their CCCAP attendance usage,
- Ensure their child attends as scheduled,
- And stay within the allowable number of absences to maintain eligibility and avoid out-of-pocket costs.

Additionally, families must **use the ELV-based sign-in/out system daily** to log attendance. Missed check-ins or check-outs may be recorded as absences and can result in **non-payment from CCCAP**. Repeated missed log-ins, failure to approve attendance corrections, or unexplained absences may lead to:

- **Loss of CCCAP funding**, and/or
- **Termination of care due to non-compliance with state program requirements.**

If you have any questions about your current absence count, allowable days, or billing responsibility, please speak with the Director as soon as possible.

Withdrawal Procedure: If you decide to discontinue enrollment, we require a **30-day written notice** (as mentioned under Tuition). During that notice period, tuition is still due. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss any issues that might be prompting withdrawal; often we can find a solution. On your child's last day, please ensure you have collected all personal items and said goodbyes. We will ask you to complete a brief exit survey as your feedback helps us improve.

Daily Routine and Classroom Practices



We strive to provide a consistent yet flexible daily schedule that meets children's developmental needs. **Routine** gives children a sense of security, but we also adapt to individual needs (especially for infants). Below is a general outline of a typical day; each classroom posts a detailed schedule:

- **7:00–9:00 AM: Arrival and Free Play/Learning Centers.** Children are greeted warmly. We offer quiet activities, manipulative toys, books, etc., as children arrive. Older children may have table activities or outdoor play if weather permits.
- **9:00 AM: Morning Snack/Breakfast** (for those arriving by 8:30). We serve a light breakfast or morning snack (depending on arrival time) to start the day.
- **9:30 AM: Circle Time / Group Meeting.** Children gather for a short circle time to welcome everyone, sing a morning song, discuss the weather/day, and introduce the day's theme or activities.
- **10:00 AM: Learning Activities.** Teachers lead small-group and individual activities aligned with the curriculum. This may include art projects, sensory play, early literacy and math games, science exploration, etc., tailored to each age group.
- **10:45 AM: Outdoor Play (morning recess).** Children go outside to our playground (weather permitting) for gross motor play, nature exploration, and free play. We have age-appropriate play areas for different groups. (If inclement weather, we do indoor movement games or use indoor gross motor equipment).
- **11:30 AM: Lunch Time.** We serve a healthy lunch, family-style whenever possible. Teachers sit with children and encourage good table manners and self-feeding skills. (See Meals section for details on our menu.)
- **12:15 PM: Nap/Rest Time (for infants, per their own schedule).** After lunch, infants and toddlers have diaper changes and prepare for nap. Preschoolers and younger school-age have a rest period. Children are not required to sleep but must rest quietly for a while. Those who do not sleep after ~30 minutes may engage in quiet activities (books, puzzles) on their cot. Nap generally runs 12:30–2:30 PM for toddlers/preschool. Infants nap on their own individualized schedules in cribs.
- **2:30 PM: Wake-up and Snack.** Children put away cots and have an afternoon snack.
- **3:00 PM: Afternoon Activities.** Depending on age: Outdoor Play (a second recess in afternoon), and/or learning centers, art, music and movement, story time. In nice weather we often go outside again.
- **4:00–5:30 PM: Free Play & Pick-up.** As children depart, we wind down with free play, table toys, or a short video on special days (screen time is minimal and only age-appropriate content). Teachers begin cleaning and prepping for the next day as ratios go down, but children are supervised with engaging activities until parents arrive.
- **6:00 PM: Center Closes.** (Please arrive by closing to pick up.)

Each classroom posts their **daily schedule** and any variations (for example, the infant room runs entirely on infants' individual feeding/sleeping needs rather than a group schedule, though they have planned interactive times too).

Infant Care



Welcoming your baby into our care is a responsibility we take to heart. We understand how deeply personal it is to hand your infant to someone else—and we strive to make Bright Minds feel like an extension of your home.

In our infant room, every moment matters. We follow your baby's natural rhythms for eating, sleeping, and play, and we work closely with you to keep routines aligned with what your child experiences at home. Whether your baby is breastfed, formula-fed, or starting solids, our caregivers respect your feeding preferences and provide nurturing, attentive care at every stage.

We check and change diapers regularly—at least every hour—and track your child's needs with intention and care. Awake time is filled with rich, meaningful experiences: tummy time, songs, mirrors, sensory play, stories, and soft conversation. We believe babies learn through interaction, and every caregiver speaks, sings, and engages with love.

Nap time is calm and consistent. We follow all Safe Sleep practices, ensuring that each infant sleeps on their back in a safety-approved crib with nothing inside. Cribs are individually assigned, spaced according to regulation, and kept cozy, clean, and personal.

Each day at pick-up, your child's caregiver will share a warm, verbal update about your baby's naps, bottles, diapers, and moments of joy. We also keep internal documentation as required by licensing to ensure consistency across caregivers. If you ever want more detailed updates, we're happy to provide them—we love talking about your baby!

We know that leaving your child in someone else's arms can feel overwhelming. Our goal is to give you peace of mind and provide your child with the love, stimulation, and safety they deserve—every moment of every day.

Toddler Care

Toddlers are bursting with energy, emotions, and curiosity—and we absolutely love it! In our toddler room, we create a warm, encouraging space where children can move, explore, and start building their own identities while feeling safe and loved.

Our day follows a consistent rhythm, which helps toddlers feel secure. We balance **structured group activities** with plenty of **free exploration**, offering time for:

- Open-ended play with blocks, books, pretend toys, and sensory materials
- Circle time with songs, stories, finger plays, and puppets
- Sensory experiences like water play, painting, play dough, and sand
- Music and dancing to support expression and body awareness
- Outdoor play twice each day, with space to run, climb, ride, dig, and explore nature

We support toddlers in building **independence and confidence** through routines like:

- Washing hands and learning basic hygiene
- Sitting at the table and using cups, spoons, and napkins



- Helping clean up toys or putting away their own blanket
- Practicing simple communication to express needs and feelings

As your child grows, we work closely with you to identify when they're ready for **toilet training** (see Toilet Training section). Our teachers use encouragement, consistency, and gentle coaching to support each child at their own pace.

After lunch, toddlers nap on their own cot for about 1½–2 hours. We make nap time peaceful and comforting with soft music, dim lighting, and cozy routines like a story or favorite blanket.

Toddlerhood is filled with big feelings, rapid growth, and lots of "firsts." Our teachers are trained in responsive caregiving and help children work through challenges with love, patience, and redirection. Whether your child is learning to share, building two-word sentences, or conquering stairs, we're here to celebrate each step and help them thrive.

Senior Toddler 1 – Transitional Toddler Classroom

(Typical age: 2.5 to 3 years; not yet fully potty-trained)

Senior Toddler 1 is our **toddler-to-preschool transition room**, designed for older toddlers who are starting to embrace routine, group time, and more responsibility—but who may still be working on potty training.

In this classroom, we focus on:

- Introducing **structured group activities** like circle time, calendar, and themed learning
- Building early academic foundations (colors, shapes, numbers, and letter exposure)
- Practicing **classroom jobs** and shared responsibility (line leader, table helper, etc.)
- Supporting **toilet training** with consistent potty breaks, encouraging words, and teamwork with families
- Helping children identify their emotions and express themselves with words, visuals, or signs
- Encouraging cooperative play and simple problem-solving with peers

The daily routine in this classroom mirrors a preschool schedule, but with added patience and flexibility to support toddlers who are still learning how to participate in group settings. Children enjoy art, dramatic play, music, and science activities designed to spark curiosity.

Teachers in this room help children prepare for more independence while still offering plenty of love and support. It's a time of incredible growth, and we are honored to help your child take these exciting steps.

Senior Toddler 2 – Pre-Pre-Kindergarten



(Typical age: 3 to 3.5+ years; fully potty-trained)

Senior Toddler 2 is our **pre-preK classroom**—a bridge between toddler life and preschool. Children in this room are fully potty-trained and developmentally ready to take on more responsibility, structure, and learning challenges.

Here, your child will:

- Participate in **small-group learning centers** that rotate between literacy, math, fine motor, and sensory play
- Follow **multi-step directions** and transition independently between activities
- Strengthen **self-regulation skills**, such as waiting their turn, calming down when upset, and solving social conflicts with teacher support
- Practice skills like writing their name, cutting with scissors, and creating simple patterns or graphs
- Engage in **dramatic play**, journal dictation, and group projects that foster creativity and teamwork

Senior Toddler 2 lays the foundation for school readiness in a way that is still playful, gentle, and focused on the whole child. Children learn how to be part of a classroom community, express their ideas with confidence, and discover their individual strengths.

Pre-K / UPK Classroom

(Typical age: 4 to 5 years; fully potty-trained)

Our Pre-Kindergarten classroom is a **Universal Preschool (UPK)** designated environment, preparing children for kindergarten through intentional teaching, creative exploration, and social-emotional development.

We follow a curriculum aligned with the **Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines** and emphasize:

- **Literacy:** name writing, beginning letter sounds, storytelling, journal writing
- **Math:** patterns, measurement, counting, number recognition, and spatial awareness
- **STEM:** hands-on science experiments, building challenges, gardening, and observation skills
- **Art and music:** opportunities to create, imagine, and express freely
- **Social development:** leadership, emotional awareness, empathy, collaboration, and peer conflict resolution
- **Kindergarten transition:** learning how to work in groups, follow classroom rules, communicate with teachers, and feel confident in new environments

Each child's progress is monitored through informal assessments and shared with families through regular updates and parent-teacher conferences. We work as a team to help your child



enter kindergarten confident, excited, and well-prepared—not only academically, but emotionally and socially too.

Safe Sleep Policy (Infants)

The safety of infants during sleep is of utmost importance. We strictly follow Colorado’s Safe Sleep regulations to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related dangers. Our **safe sleep policy** is as follows:

- **Back to Sleep:** All infants under 12 months are placed on their **backs to sleep**, in a crib, for every nap and bedtime. If an infant rolls over on their own, we will allow them to remain in their comfortable position, but we will initially lay every baby on their back.
- **Approved Sleep Equipment:** Infants sleep in **individual, safety-approved cribs** with firm mattresses and tight-fitting sheets (provided by the center). Cribs meet Consumer Product Safety Commission standards. Each infant has their own crib assigned (no sharing, and spacing per regulations). We do **not use any inclined sleepers, rockers, or car seats** for routine sleep. If a baby falls asleep in a swing, bouncer, or car seat, we will gently transfer them to a crib immediately.
- **Nothing in the Crib:** Crib environments are kept free of hazards. **No blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, crib bumpers, or soft bedding** is allowed in the crib with a sleeping infant. Soft items and loose bedding pose suffocation risks. We do allow pacifiers (without any attachment cords) as they can reduce SIDS risk; the pacifier will be removed if it falls out after baby sleeps. We encourage sleep sacks or one-piece sleepers for warmth instead of blankets. Light **sleep sacks** are allowed as long as they fit properly and do not restrict the infant’s movement. We ensure infants are comfortably clothed for sleep (not overheated – the room is kept at a safe temperature). **Swaddling** is generally **not** practiced at our center unless absolutely necessary and only for very young infants with a doctor’s written health plan. State rules prohibit swaddling or restrictive devices without a physician’s authorization. If an infant must be swaddled per doctor, we will follow that plan exactly, and stop swaddling as soon as the infant shows signs of rolling or as recommended.
- **Supervision of Sleeping Infants:** Our infant teachers closely monitor sleeping babies. We maintain sight and sound of sleeping infants at all times. A certified staff member will **physically check on each sleeping infant at least every 10 minutes**, looking for regular breathing, proper position, and temperature (not overheated). We document these checks. We also use baby monitors if infants are sleeping in a separate nap room, but even with monitors, staff will perform the required periodic **physical checks in person**. If any infant appears in distress or has difficulty breathing, staff will immediately intervene and seek medical attention if needed.
- **Crib Environment:** Cribs are placed to allow visibility and airflow. We do not cover cribs with blankets or bedding for darkness – the room may be dimmed but we never drape anything over a crib. Mobiles or gyms attached to cribs are not used for infants who can push up or crawl. Once a child is 12 months and in our older infant/toddler group, they may transition to a cot for nap if developmentally appropriate, but only when they’re ready.



- **Tummy Time:** While infants always sleep on their backs, we do give them **supervised tummy time** when awake to strengthen muscles and prevent flat spots on the head. Starting from around 1-2 months old, infants have short periods of tummy time (3-5 minutes, gradually increasing) at least twice a day when alert and happy. A caregiver is always right there interacting during tummy time.
- **Pacifiers:** If you allow a pacifier for sleep, we will ensure it has no cords or attachments. We will not reinsert it once baby is asleep, unless they wake and need it. If a pacifier falls on the floor, we clean it before giving back.
- **Parent Education:** We will discuss safe sleep practices with you at enrollment. All our infant caregivers have completed **annual Safe Sleep training**. We encourage families to follow similar safe sleep habits at home for consistency.

This Safe Sleep Policy is posted in the infant room and provided to all infant parents as required. By enrolling an infant, you acknowledge that we will adhere to these practices. If you have any questions or special circumstances (e.g. your baby has a medical condition requiring alternate sleep position), please provide a physician's note and discuss with the Director so we can develop an approved health care plan.

Health, Safety, and Wellness Policies

Bright Minds Children Academy prioritizes children's health and safety. We follow stringent guidelines from state child care licensing and public health authorities (CDPHE) to maintain a clean, safe environment and to respond appropriately to any health concerns. Below are our key health and safety policies:

Immunizations

Immunization Requirements: In accordance with Colorado law, **all children must have up-to-date immunizations** (or a valid exemption) to attend child care. You must provide us with your child's official immunization record (signed by a healthcare provider) before their first day. We will review records and let you know if any shots are due. If your child is on a delayed schedule or "in process," we need documentation of that from the doctor. We audit immunization records annually. If a child is **not appropriately vaccinated for age and not exempt, we are required to deny attendance** until immunizations are brought current.

Exemptions: The state allows for medical or non-medical exemptions. A medical exemption must be signed by a doctor (indicating a vaccine is contraindicated). A non-medical (personal or religious) exemption must be submitted on the Colorado state form and signed as required (these must be renewed annually for ages under 18). We keep these on file as required. **Note:** if there is an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease (like measles, pertussis, etc.), any child who is not fully immunized (and lacks immunity) will be **excluded** from the center for the duration of the outbreak, per public health orders. This is for the safety of your child and others.

We support immunization efforts and can provide resources if you need information on local vaccine clinics. Please update us whenever your child receives new immunizations so we can update their record.



Illness and Exclusion Policy

To protect all children and staff, we strictly enforce illness exclusion guidelines in line with state child care licensing rules and health department recommendations assets.bouldercounty.gov/douglas.co.us. In other words, children who are ill must stay home; if a child becomes ill while at the center, they will need to be picked up. **Please do not bring your child to the center if they exhibit any of the following symptoms or signs of illness, as they will not be admitted (or will be sent home):**

- **Fever:** A temperature over 100.4°F (38°C) by any method. A fever is often a sign of contagious illness, and children must be fever-free (under 100.4°F) for a full 24 hours *without* the use of fever-reducing medicine before returning coloradocollege.edu/coloradocollege.edu. (Example: if your child had a fever last night, they should not attend the next day.)
- **Vomiting or Diarrhea:** Any episodes of vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours are cause for exclusion dchealth.dc.gov. Your child may return after **24 hours** with no vomiting **and** no diarrhea, **and** once they are able to keep food down. For instance, if a child vomits in the afternoon, they cannot attend the next day. This rule helps prevent highly contagious stomach viruses from spreading dchealth.dc.gov.
- **Undiagnosed Rash or Skin Infection:** Any rash *with* fever or behavior changes, or any suspicious unexplained rash, must be evaluated by a doctor to determine if it is contagious dchealth.dc.gov. Skin infections (like impetigo or unexplained sores) should be assumed contagious until cleared by a physician. We may require a doctor's note stating the rash or skin condition is not contagious before the child returns.
- **Contagious Diseases:** If your child is *diagnosed* with a communicable illness (examples include strep throat, influenza (flu), hand-foot-and-mouth disease, conjunctivitis/**pinkeye**, COVID-19, chickenpox, etc.), they **must stay home** for the recommended exclusion period. Typically, children may return **after at least 24 hours of appropriate treatment** or as advised by a healthcare provider. For example, with strep throat, children can return after **24 hours on antibiotics** and no fever harborchildcare.org/harborchildcare.org; with bacterial conjunctivitis, at least **24 hours after starting eye drops** harborchildcare.org; with chickenpox, once all lesions have crusted (usually ~6 days) dchealth.dc.gov. We will follow current public health guidelines for illnesses like COVID-19 (which may require a minimum isolation period or a negative test, per health authorities at that time). Always inform the center if your child has a confirmed contagious illness so we can take appropriate measures.
- **Severe Coughing or Difficulty Breathing:** Children with severe, uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, or rapid/difficult breathing (especially if new or getting worse) should stay home coloradocollege.edu. This could indicate a serious respiratory infection. If a child arrives with severe cough or develops breathing trouble, they will be sent home. (If the cough is mild or lingering but the child is otherwise well and it's due to a known non-contagious condition like asthma, discuss with us beforehand.)
- **Eye Discharge (Conjunctivitis):** Thick mucus or pus draining from the eye, or red/pink eyes with pain or swelling of the eyelids, are signs of conjunctivitis and possible infection. We will exclude a child with these symptoms until they have been **evaluated**



by a doctor. If the conjunctivitis is bacterial, the child may return after 24 hours of prescribed eye-drop treatment. If viral, they may return when a doctor confirms they are not contagious dchealth.dc.gov. Eyes should be clear of heavy discharge before returning.

- **Lethargy or Extreme Irritability:** If a child is unusually drowsy, limp, irritable, or just “not themselves” to the point that they cannot participate comfortably in activities or require one-on-one attention, they need to stay home dchealth.dc.gov. This could be a sign of a developing illness even without a fever. A child who is persistently crying, in obvious discomfort, or extremely irritable should rest at home. We rely on your judgment to not bring a child who is too unwell to engage in normal play.
- **Other Concerning Signs:** Any other symptom that suggests a serious illness – for example, a **sore throat** (especially with fever or swollen glands in the neck), **mouth sores with drooling** (could indicate something like herpes or coxsackie virus) dchealth.dc.gov, an intense earache, a severe headache, or any unusual pain – should be evaluated and the child kept home. If your child has **mouth sores** and is drooling, they should be seen by a doctor to ensure the sores are not from a contagious illness dchealth.dc.gov. In general, **if you would take your child to a doctor because of their symptoms, they should not be in daycare.**

Important: Please do **not** attempt to mask symptoms with medication and send your child to the center. For example, giving fever-reducing medicine (Tylenol/Advil) and bringing them in is unsafe – as soon as the medication wears off, the fever (and contagious condition) may return, and we will have to send your child home anyway. Keeping a sick child home from the start helps protect all the children and staff.

If a Child Becomes Ill at the Center

Despite our best precautions, children may sometimes become sick during the day. If your child develops any exclusion symptoms while in our care (for example, fever, vomiting, rash, difficulty breathing, etc.), we will **immediately isolate them** from the other children for their comfort and to prevent spread of illness [law.cornell.edu](https://www.law.cornell.edu). A staff member will stay with your child, keeping them comfortable and reassuring them, in a quiet area away from the group (we have a designated cot/area for ill children as required [law.cornell.edu](https://www.law.cornell.edu)). We will **contact you right away** to pick up your child. **Parents (or an authorized emergency pick-up person) are expected to arrive within 1 hour** of being notified that their child is ill. It is essential that we have up-to-date phone numbers for you and at least one emergency contact at all times, in case we need to reach someone urgently during the day. We will document the illness incident in our illness log and note the time you were contacted and when the child was picked up, as required by health regulations [assets.bouldercounty.gov](https://assets.bouldercounty.gov/assets.bouldercounty.gov).

We understand that an unexpected call to pick up a sick child can be very inconvenient. However, quick pickup is important for your child’s well-being and to reduce exposure to others. Please have a plan in place (such as a backup caregiver or relative) if you personally are unable to leave work within an hour.

24-Hour Symptom-Free Rule for Return



In general, **children must be completely symptom-free for at least 24 hours before returning to the center.** This means 24 hours with **no fever, no vomiting, and no diarrhea, without the aid of medication**coloradocollege.edu. Additionally, your child should be **improving overall** – with energy and appetite back to normal – before coming back. For example, if your child was sent home Wednesday afternoon with vomiting or a fever, the soonest they may return is Friday, *provided* they have been symptom-free all day Thursday. If a child still seems unwell or unable to participate, we may ask for them to stay home longer even if 24 hours have passed.

In some cases, we may require a **doctor’s note** before your child returns. Situations that could require a physician’s clearance include: hospitalization or ER visits, a contagious disease that required medical treatment, uncertain rashes, or if we feel we need confirmation that your child is no longer contagious and is well enough to return. For instance, if your child had a severe respiratory illness or was out for more than a few days on antibiotics, a note from the doctor stating they are OK to return to group care might be requested. Likewise, if your child was diagnosed with an illness like pertussis or measles, public health may require a doctor’s clearance or a minimum exclusion period. We will let you know when a doctor’s note is necessary. This policy is in line with public health guidance that children may return when they meet criteria **or** have a provider’s approval assets.bouldercounty.gov/harborchildcare.org.

Please remember: The 24-hour rule is the *minimum*. If your child is still feeling sick or not back to their usual self after 24 hours, keep them home an extra day if possible. A child should be fully ready to participate in our program’s routine before coming back.

Communicable Disease Reporting and Notification

If your child is **diagnosed** with a communicable disease (such as chickenpox, COVID-19, influenza, strep throat, hand-foot-and-mouth, RSV, whooping cough/pertussis, measles, etc.), **please inform us immediately.** We are required by regulations to report certain communicable illnesses to the local health department law.cornell.edu, and we will follow any guidance they provide on exclusion and notification. “Reportable” illnesses typically include serious diseases like measles, whooping cough, salmonella, COVID-19, and others that public health tracks. In the event of a confirmed case in our center or an **unusual outbreak** of illness (for example, more children than normal with the same symptoms), we will contact the health department for advice assets.bouldercounty.gov. The health department may instruct us on specific steps, such as additional cleaning measures, broader notifications, or how long to exclude individuals.

We also believe in transparent communication with our families (while respecting privacy). If a contagious illness has been reported in your child’s classroom, we will **notify all affected families** by posting a notice and/or sending a message. For example, we might put up a sign like: “*Notice: A case of chickenpox was reported in the Preschool Room (date). Please monitor your child for symptoms.*” We **do not** disclose the identity of the child or staff member who is ill – just the information needed for you to be alert. This allows other parents to watch for signs in their own children and, if needed, seek preventative advice from their pediatrician (for instance, if a child in the class has whooping cough or COVID-19, others might need to know so they can test or take precautions).



All illness notifications will maintain confidentiality in accordance with privacy laws. We take disease reporting seriously and maintain documentation of any notifications and health department communications.

Chronic Conditions and Individual Health Plans

Not all health-related absences are due to acute illness. If your child has a **chronic health condition** (such as asthma, severe allergies, diabetes, seizures, etc.), please inform us upon enrollment (or as soon as diagnosed). A child with well-managed chronic conditions who is **symptom-free** (or only exhibiting normal baseline symptoms of their condition) is **not** considered “sick” for the purposes of this illness policy coloradocollege.edu. For example, a child with asthma might have an occasional cough; or a child with mild eczema may have a rash that is not contagious – these children can attend as usual. We do **not** want to exclude a child for a condition that is not contagious and is under medical management.

We will work with you to develop a written **Health Care Plan** for any chronic conditions or special healthcare needs. This plan will detail what symptoms or situations would warrant extra care or exclusion, any medications (like inhalers or EpiPens) that might be needed, and emergency steps to take if the condition worsens. Our staff will be trained on your child’s care plan. If your child’s chronic condition flares up or they show signs that deviate from their normal baseline (e.g. more frequent asthma attacks, new concerning symptoms), we may contact you and, if necessary, advise keeping the child home or seeking medical advice. Your child’s health and safety are our top priority, and we want to ensure we can accommodate their needs while also protecting others.

Please note that **well-controlled chronic conditions are not a reason for exclusion** coloradocollege.edu. We simply need to know how to best support your child and recognize the difference between their normal symptoms and signs of a separate illness.

Mild Illness vs. Attendance

We understand that **mild illnesses** are very common in young children, and having a minor cold or sniffles is not unusual. Children do **not** need to be excluded for every runny nose or minor cough dchealth.dc.gov. If your child has **mild cold symptoms** (e.g. a slight runny nose or an occasional cough) but is **fever-free, energetic, eating and sleeping normally**, and otherwise acting like themselves, they can attend daycare. We ask that you use your best judgment and err on the side of caution: if your child is very uncomfortable, extremely congested, has a persistent heavy cough, or is not sleeping well due to illness, even without a fever, it may be better to keep them home an extra day to rest. Often, a day of rest at the start of a cold can help them recover faster.

Key point: a child **should be able to participate** in normal activities. If they are too tired, in need of constant one-on-one comfort, or just miserable, that’s a sign they should stay home (even if the technical exclusion criteria like fever are not met) dchealth.dc.gov. We will monitor all



children and if a mild illness seems to be getting worse or your child becomes too uncomfortable here, we will call you.

Common **non-exclusion** examples include: mild allergies, a light cough with no fever and no breathing trouble, a single episode of loose stool that you know is from a new food (and the child is fine otherwise), or a little extra tiredness after a poor night of sleep. These situations are okay for attendance. On the other hand, things like uncontrolled coughing, constant green nasal discharge plus fatigue, or a child just lying down and not engaging are red flags – those children likely need to be home.

Always inform us of any symptoms we should watch, even if you believe it's mild (for instance, "he had a runny nose this morning but no fever, just so you know"). This helps our teachers give a bit of extra TLC and also be alert.

Illness Log and Health Monitoring

Our center maintains an **Illness Log** to record cases of illness among children (and staff) as required by health regulations douglas.co.us. Whenever a child is sent home due to illness or has notable symptoms at school, we document it in our log, including the date, symptoms, and when they returned to care [assets.bouldercounty.gov](http://assets.bouldercounty.gov/assets.bouldercounty.gov). This log helps us track patterns (for example, if several children develop similar symptoms we might detect an outbreak early). It is also a tool for the health department: if needed, we can share the illness log with them to assist in public health investigations or to demonstrate our compliance with exclusion policies.

Additionally, our staff performs daily health checks in a subtle way – observing children at drop-off and throughout the day for any signs of illness (such as lethargy, rash, unusual cough, etc.) assets.bouldercounty.gov. These are not medical exams, just attentive caregiving. If we notice anything of concern, we will communicate with you. By staying vigilant, we can often catch illnesses early and minimize exposure.

All cleaning and disinfection protocols will be followed in the event of illness (for example, we clean and sanitize toys, bedding, and surfaces that a sick child has used assets.bouldercounty.gov). Our goal is to maintain a healthy environment.

Sick Day Credit Policy (Tuition)

Please **refer to our Sick Day Credit Policy** (see the Tuition and Fees section of the Parent Handbook) regarding how illnesses impact tuition charges. In general, we do **not** provide refunds or credits for sporadic sick days or short-term absences due to illness – this is a standard practice in childcare, as our operational costs remain the same when a spot is reserved for your child forums.daycare.comstpaulcelc.org. However, we understand that extended illnesses can be a financial strain, so our center has provisions for **extended sick leave** with proper documentation. Typically, if a child has a doctor-documented illness that keeps them out for an extended period (as defined in our sick credit policy), you may be eligible for a partial credit or waived tuition for



those days stpaulcelec.org. The exact details (such as how many days, the required documentation, and any limits per year) are outlined in the Sick Day Credit Policy.

Examples: If your child is out for just a day or two with a cold, tuition is still due for those days. But if your child is hospitalized or has a serious illness requiring, say, a full week or more at home, and you provide a doctor's note, our policy may allow an illness credit or pause in tuition after a certain number of consecutive missed days. This ensures your child's spot is held while providing some financial relief during longer illnesses. **Please review the Sick Day Credit Policy for full details**, or ask the office if you have questions about how it works.

(Note: Sick day credits, if applicable, typically require advance notice or documentation. They are generally not granted for brief illnesses or without a physician's note. This is to prevent misuse and ensure that credits are reserved for legitimate extended health issues.)

By following this Illness Policy, we aim to keep all children, families, and staff as healthy as possible. We appreciate your cooperation in observing these guidelines. Young children share germs easily, so prompt exclusion for illness and careful return-to-care rules help everyone in our community. If you ever have questions about whether your child should come to the center or stay home due to illness, please call us – we are happy to discuss and make a plan. Your child's health and comfort, and the well-being of all our children, are our top priorities. Thank you for helping us maintain a safe and healthy environment! dchealth.dc.gov

Medication Administration

We are happy to administer necessary medications to your child during the day in compliance with state rules and with strict procedures for safety. **All medication (prescription or over-the-counter) requires a signed permission and instructions from the parent AND a prescribing health care provider.** We have a Medication Authorization form for the doctor to complete for any meds that need to be given regularly (or you can provide a doctor's note or care plan with the required information).

Medication Policies:

- **Prescription Medications:** Must be in the **original pharmacy container** labeled with the child's name, medication name, dosage, and clear administration instructions (when and how to give). The prescription label will suffice as physician instructions if it's a current prescription. We cannot accept any medication intended for another person. The medication must not be expired and ideally have at least 30 days before expiration.
- **Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medications:** We require a doctor's note or completed medication authorization for OTC meds as well, stating the medication, dosage, and when to give, **especially for any OTC given longer than 3 days or not age-standard.** This includes things like fever reducers (acetaminophen/ibuprofen), cough syrup, allergy meds, etc. Many pediatricians will provide a standing authorization for common OTC items if needed. We also need parental written consent of course. OTC meds must be in their **original packaging** with manufacturer's instructions visible.



- **Dosage and Timing:** We will follow the **exact instructions** given by the healthcare provider. If a med says “give every 4 hours as needed for cough,” we’ll only do so if symptoms warrant and at least 4 hours apart. We will not exceed recommended doses.
- **Authorization Form:** Parents must fill out and sign our Medication Administration Permission form, specifying the medication, dose, time, and reason. A doctor’s signature or separate physician order is required for any long-term meds or if the label does not cover the situation (for example, giving Benadryl for a severe allergy – we’d need a care plan).
- **Storage:** All medications are stored securely **out of children’s reach**, either in a locked medicine box/cabinet or refrigerated as needed (meds like antibiotics that require refrigeration). Emergency rescue meds (like EpiPens or inhalers) are kept accessible to staff (not locked during program hours, per regulations) but out of child reach. They are stored with the child’s name and care plan. We **do not** leave any medication in a child’s backpack; everything must be handed to a staff member.
- **Administration:** Medications are administered by staff who have been specifically **trained and delegated by our Nurse Consultant** in medication administration. (All lead teaching staff complete a state-approved 4-hour Medication Administration Training and are annually evaluated by our Nurse.) The staff giving the med will check the instructions, proper child, proper med, dose, time, and route (the “6 rights” of medication). They will log it in our medication log immediately after giving. Two staff double-check certain high-risk meds (like insulin or an EpiPen injection if ever needed).
- **Medication Record:** We maintain a medication log with date, time, dose given, and the staff signature for each dose. We will inform you (usually via daily report or verbally) of when we gave the last dose.
- **Course of Treatment:** For short-term meds (like a 10-day antibiotic), please pick up the medicine when finished. For ongoing meds (like inhalers), we will periodically ask if dosage has changed, etc. All meds must have a valid expiration date; expired or unused meds will be returned to you or properly disposed (we cannot give expired medicine).
- **Self-Carry Emergency Meds:** If you have an older child (generally school-age) who you and the doctor feel can self-carry and self-administer an emergency medication (like a rescue inhaler or EpiPen), we need a **written order from the healthcare provider** stating the child may carry and self-administer. Even then, staff must be aware and any use must be reported to staff. Typically, we prefer to hold onto emergency meds and directly supervise their use, but we respect older children’s ability if authorized (for example, some 10-12 year olds manage their inhalers). This will be handled case by case with a plan approved by our Nurse.
- **Types of Meds we give:** We will administer necessary prescription meds (antibiotics, inhalers, epi-pens, etc.) and OTC meds as described. We also will apply topical products like diaper cream, sunscreen, or lotion with parent permission (some of these don’t need a doctor’s note if over-the-counter and used per label – see Sunscreen section). We cannot administer any medication or supplement that is not FDA-approved or not age-appropriate without a doctor’s direction (this includes essential oils, herbal remedies, etc. – please discuss with the Director and provide a doctor’s note if you want something like that to be used).



Health Care Plans: If your child has a chronic condition like asthma, severe allergy, diabetes, or seizures, we require a detailed **Health Care Plan** from your doctor. This plan should outline symptoms to watch for, steps to take (like using an inhaler or EpiPen), any dietary or activity restrictions, etc. Our Nurse Consultant will review these plans and ensure staff are trained to follow them. For example, if your child has an allergy with potential anaphylaxis, we must have an EpiPen on site and the plan from the doctor. All staff will be informed confidentially of children who have emergency medications or special health needs so they can respond quickly if needed.

Nurse Consultant: Bright Minds has a **Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC)**, who is a registered nurse, that **visits the center monthly** to review our health practices, train/delegate staff for medications, and be a resource for health concerns. The nurse signs off on all our medication delegation. If any new medical need arises for a child, we notify our nurse immediately to get staff properly trained. You might occasionally see our nurse at the center; she/he may contact you if needed to clarify a care plan.

Rest assured that we comply with the **Colorado Nurse Practice Act** regarding medication administration in child care. We have robust systems in place to keep your child safe when giving medications. If you ever have questions about how we handle a specific medication or condition, please ask the Director or our nurse consultant.

Allergies and Dietary Restrictions

We take allergies very seriously. During enrollment, you will fill out a health history noting any **food allergies, medication allergies, or other environmental allergies** your child has. If your child has a documented severe allergy (especially to any food, insect, etc.), please provide us with an Allergy Action Plan from your doctor, and any emergency medication like an EpiPen (see Medication section). We will post an allergy alert (with child's photo and allergens) in the classroom and kitchen (confidentially, not with full name visible to others) so that all staff are aware of what to avoid.

Bright Minds is **not an absolutely nut-free facility** (like many centers, we cannot guarantee the complete absence of any allergen). However, we do **not serve peanuts or tree nuts in our menu** as a general practice to reduce risk. We work with families individually: for instance, if a child has a severe dairy allergy, we will provide a dairy-free alternative for them at meals, or parents can supply special substitutes. We will take all reasonable precautions to prevent exposure (children are taught not to share food, we clean surfaces diligently, and we carefully monitor allergy children during meal times). Despite our best efforts, we cannot 100% guarantee that some trace of an allergen might not be present (e.g. an ingredient manufactured in a facility that also processes nuts). If your child has a **very high-contact sensitivity**, let's discuss additional safeguards.

For less common allergies (gluten, specific fruits, etc.), we will modify their meals accordingly. We may ask you to provide specialty items if needed (like gluten-free bread), but we handle most substitutions. We want all children to enjoy safe meals and for parents to feel confident.



If your child has a **food intolerance or dietary preference** (e.g. lactose intolerance, vegetarian diet), please inform us and we will accommodate those needs as well, though these might not require a doctor’s note, just clear communication.

Meals and Nutrition

Proper nutrition is vital for children’s growth. As mentioned, Bright Minds **provides all meals and snacks**. We participate in the USDA **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)** guidelines to ensure balanced, healthy offerings (even if not officially on CACFP, we follow their meal pattern).

Meal Schedule:

Age Group	Breakfast	Lunch	PM Snack	Notes
Infants	On Demand	On Demand	On Demand	Follows individualized CACFP Infant Meal Pattern
Junior Toddlers	7:30–9:00 AM	11:15–11:45 AM	2:15–2:45 PM	Maintains 2+ hours between all meals
Senior Toddler I	7:30–9:00 AM	11:15–11:45 AM	2:15–2:45 PM	Meets CACFP spacing and portion requirements
Senior Toddler II	7:00–9:00 AM	11:00–11:45 AM	2:00–2:30 PM	Adjusted lunch time for age group; meets CACFP meal timing
Preschool	7:30–9:00 AM	11:20–11:50 AM	2:00–2:30 PM	Aligned with CACFP minimum spacing requirements
School Age	7:00–9:00 AM	12:00–12:30 PM	2:30–3:00 PM	Lunch-to-snack gap ensures minimum 2-hour interval per CACFP guidelines

Menu: We post a **weekly menu** on the parent board and can email it out as well. A typical lunch might include: a protein (chicken, beans, etc.), a grain (whole grain pasta, bread, etc.), a fruit and a vegetable, and milk. Snacks often include two food groups, like carrots with hummus, or yogurt and fruit. We cook on-site in our licensed kitchen; our cook follows safe food handling practices per health regulations (our kitchen is inspected by the health department). We emphasize fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and limit sugars. We do not serve any soda or candy. We use **water and milk** as the primary beverages (100% juice occasionally and in limited quantities).

Infant Feeding: For infants, parents must supply breast milk or formula. We have a refrigerator to store bottles and a bottle warmer for heating (we do not microwave bottles). **Label all bottles** with the child’s name and date each day. Unused milk is sent home or discarded at day’s end (per guidelines, we cannot reuse breast milk beyond recommended times). As infants start solids (usually ~6 months), we coordinate with parents on introduction of baby foods. We can provide basic infant cereals and pureed fruits/veggies, or parents can provide preferred baby foods – this will be discussed individually. We ensure all infant feeding is done safely: infants



are always held or sitting up when bottle-feeding (no bottle propping, ever), and older infants are transitioned to high chairs for solids. We clean and sanitize all bottles and feeding utensils daily. If a mother is breastfeeding and wants to come nurse during the day, you are absolutely welcome to do so (we have a cozy chair for nursing moms). We also support providing breast milk; talk with us about any storage or preparation questions.

Toddler/Preschooler Meals: Toddlers and preschoolers eat together with staff, learning social skills at meal times. We supervise closely (especially with toddlers) to prevent choking and to encourage trying foods. We cut food into appropriate small pieces. We never force a child to eat; we encourage tasting but respect when they say they are done. We also won't withhold food as punishment or use food as a bribe. Second helpings of healthy options are usually available if a child is still hungry.

Special Diets: If your child requires a special diet for medical reasons (e.g. gluten-free, allergy, diabetes), we must have that on the health form or a note from your doctor. We will accommodate as much as possible. If it's extremely specialized, the parent might need to provide certain specialty foods, but we can handle routine substitutions (like soy milk for dairy allergy, etc.). For religious or personal dietary needs (no pork, vegetarian, etc.), inform us and we will respect those restrictions and provide alternatives.

Celebrations and Treats: We love to celebrate birthdays and special events, but we have guidelines. If you wish to bring a treat for your child's birthday, it must be **store-bought with ingredient labels** (for allergy safety) and something simple (like mini cupcakes or fruit pops). No home-baked goodies can be served to children per health rules. Please coordinate with the teacher in advance. We will also sometimes have cooking activities or special snacks (like making fruit salad) as part of curriculum.

Hydration: Water is available to children throughout the day. We have child-accessible water fountains or provide cups of water in the classroom. During outdoor play in warm weather, teachers do water breaks to keep kids hydrated. Infants are given formula/breast milk on demand and small amounts of water only if appropriate (per pediatric guidelines).

Water Bottles and Drinking Cups Policy

To support proper hydration, health, and hygiene, Bright Minds provides **individualized reusable water cups** for each child in our care.

- Each cup is **labeled with the child's name** and used **exclusively by that child**.
- Cups are **stored on-site** and washed and sanitized by staff on a **weekly basis** (or more often if needed).
- These cups are **not to be taken home** unless specifically requested by staff.

If a cup is **accidentally taken home**, please **return it immediately the next day** to ensure your child has a clean, safe drinking option at the center.



If a child's cup **goes missing repeatedly** or is not returned promptly, we may require the family to **provide a reusable cup from home**, clearly labeled with the child's name. In this case:

- The cup must be **taken home on the last day of the week** for washing
OR
- Taken home and returned **daily** in a clean condition

This policy ensures that every child has safe access to drinking water throughout the day and helps us maintain compliance with licensing and sanitation requirements. Your cooperation supports a healthy environment for all children.

Nap and Rest Time

Adequate rest is important for young children. As noted in the schedule, we have a **daily rest period** after lunch for toddlers and preschoolers. We provide each child with a cot or mat (labeled with their name). The center provides a clean sheet for each child; parents are asked to provide a small blanket and perhaps a travel-size pillow if desired for comfort. We send blankets home on Fridays to be washed and ask you to return them on Monday. We wash center-owned sheets weekly (or more often if soiled).

Rest Expectations: Children are not required to sleep, but they must have a quiet **rest time** to recharge. Typically, many toddlers and preschoolers will nap during this time (1-2 hours). For those who do not sleep after a reasonable period (~30 minutes of quiet time), we will offer quiet activities (like books on their cot or a puzzle at the table) so as not to disturb the others. We begin rousing children by around 2:30 PM; no child is forced to nap longer than they need. We also won't prevent a tired child from sleeping – if a child falls asleep outside of scheduled nap (because they are unusually tired or not feeling well), we will let them sleep for a bit and adjust, while monitoring them.

Infants nap on individual schedules (not a fixed nap time). We follow safe sleep and their cues – some infants take multiple short naps, others longer ones. Over time, older infants may settle into a morning and afternoon nap pattern.

Crib/Cot Sanitization: Cribs are assigned and sheets laundered often (infant crib sheets are washed daily or whenever soiled). Toddler/preschool mats are wiped and sanitized at least weekly and after illness; bedding is kept separate.

If you have specific requests regarding your child's nap (e.g. you don't want them to sleep past a certain hour because of bedtime, or you want them woken after 1 hour), let us know and we will try to accommodate within reason. We cannot force a child to stay awake, but we can gently wake them or adjust timing as needed. Keep in mind **all children under 5 are required by licensing to have a rest period** if attending a full day.

Hygiene Practices

We maintain rigorous hygiene practices to keep everyone healthy:



- **Hand Washing:** Staff and children wash hands frequently with soap and water: upon arrival, before and after eating, after using the toilet or diaper change, after wiping noses or handling bodily fluids, after playing outside, and any other appropriate times. We teach children proper handwashing (20 seconds, scrubbing all over) as a habit.
- **Diapering:** As mentioned, staff wear gloves and use changing paper on the table. Each diaper change, the area is cleaned and then disinfected. Soiled diapers are disposed of in a covered diaper pail which is emptied and sanitized daily. Staff wash their hands and the child's hands after each change.
- **Toileting:** Child-size toilets and sinks are available. They are cleaned and sanitized multiple times daily. We help children with wiping if needed (wearing gloves for any contact with bodily fluids). We encourage potty-trained children to wipe themselves (front to back for girls) and then staff check/assist as needed to ensure cleanliness. Toilets are promptly cleaned if any accidents occur.
- **Cleaning and Sanitizing:** Toys and surfaces are cleaned regularly. Items that children put in their mouths (infant toys, etc.) are removed after use and sanitized before return to play. We use child-safe EPA-registered disinfectants as recommended by health authorities. Tables are cleaned and sanitized before and after meals. Floors are swept/vacuumed daily and mopped frequently. We have a cleaning checklist for daily and weekly tasks to ensure all areas (including doorknobs, light switches) are disinfected to reduce germ spread.
- **Bedding and personal items:** Each child's bedding is stored separately (e.g. mats not touching, blankets kept in individual cubbies). Crib sheets, as noted, are washed weekly or when soiled. We ask parents to launder blankets weekly.
- **Mouthed toys:** We vigilantly remove toys that get mouthed by infants/toddlers, place them in a "to be washed" bin, and sanitize them before returning to circulation.
- **Illness containment:** If a child sneezes or coughs on a toy or surface, staff clean it promptly. During any contagious outbreak, we increase frequency of sanitization (e.g. extra cleaning of all surfaces, professional deep cleaning if needed). We adhere to CDPHE guidelines in outbreak situations.
- **Staff health:** Staff are also expected to stay home if they are ill with something contagious. We have health policies for staff similar to children's policies. You can be assured we won't have a teacher with the flu handling your child.
- **Smoking/Vaping:** Our center and grounds are **non-smoking** at all times (this includes e-cigarettes/vaping). No one is allowed to smoke or vape inside the facility, in the outdoor play areas, or near the entrances. If we find any staff member violating this, it's grounds for termination. We also ask parents and visitors to refrain from smoking on the property (including the parking lot). This ensures a healthy environment and compliance with state law. Additionally, we educate staff on not carrying thirdhand smoke (residue on clothing) around infants.

Safety and Security

Your child's safety is our top priority. We have numerous safety policies:

- **Facility Security:** Our main entrance is kept **locked** during operating hours. Families will be given a door code or buzz-in procedure to enter. Please do not hold the door for



strangers behind you every visitor should be acknowledged by staff. All visitors must sign in. We have surveillance cameras in public areas as an added security measure.

- **Arrival/Departure Supervision:** Until you have signed your child in and handed them to a teacher, **you are responsible for your child.** Likewise, when picking up, once you take over and sign out, please supervise your child closely in the parking lot. Do not let children run ahead of you. Parking lot safety is critical hold hands and watch for moving cars.
- **Authorized Pick-ups:** (As covered above) – we won't release to unauthorized people. This prevents abductions or mistakes.
- **Child Accountability:** Teachers **track attendance throughout the day**, especially during transitions (moving from classroom to playground, etc.). We do name-to-face headcounts whenever we leave an area and arrive at a new area. This ensures no child is ever left behind. Our procedure for transitions includes one teacher leading and one following up the line, checking all children.
- **Supervision:** Children are **actively supervised at all times.** We maintain ratios and often exceed them. No child is ever left alone or unsupervised, even for a moment. Staff position themselves to see all areas of the play space. For bathroom breaks, preschoolers might be allowed some privacy in the stall but a teacher is in the restroom area and monitoring. We have open sight lines in classrooms; interior doors (like bathroom doors) are either open or staff are present just outside listening.
- **Emergency Drills:** We conduct regular **fire and emergency drills** so that children and staff know what to do. A **fire drill** is held **once a month** as required. We practice other emergency drills (lockdown for intruder, tornado, etc.) on a **quarterly basis.** During drills, staff act seriously but calmly to lead children through the routines. We use these as teachable moments without causing fear. We keep a log of all drills (date, time, how many people, etc.) for licensing compliance. Fire alarm equipment is used for fire drills so children recognize the sound. Tornado drills are typically done in spring/summer (peak storm season) monthly. Lockdown drills involve explaining that sometimes we stay quiet and out of sight inside (for example, "to practice being safe if there was a big doggy outside" or similar non-frightening explanation for little ones). In any real emergency, our staff will implement our Emergency Operations Plan swiftly.

Emergency Preparedness: Our center has a written **Emergency Plan** covering various scenarios: fire, severe weather (tornado/flood), evacuation, lockdown, **active shooter**, shelter-in-place, lost child, etc.. This plan is available for review upon request. Key elements:

- **Evacuation (Fire):** In a fire or if the building must be evacuated, we will exit according to our posted routes to our safe meeting spot outside (far corner of playground fence or the parking lot by the big tree). Teachers bring attendance sheets, emergency contact info, and first aid kits. We take attendance immediately outside and ensure all children are accounted for. If the building is unsafe to re-enter, our **designated evacuation relocation site** is the **Aurora Community Church at 1234 Main St.**, two blocks away. We have an agreement that we can shelter there. We would walk there if possible or, if needed, transport by staff cars (with car seats) or emergency vehicles. Parents would be notified via phone/text to pick up from that location in such case.



- **Lockdown:** In case of a threat in the vicinity or an intruder, we announce a lockdown. Staff will quickly gather children into a secure area, lock doors, turn off lights, and keep children quiet and calm in a hidden spot (away from windows). We have practiced this. Children will be reassured softly. We will remain in lockdown until police or authorities signal all-clear. We will communicate with parents as soon as possible, but during an active lockdown our focus is on safety (phones silenced). Please understand if you cannot reach us immediately; updates will be sent once it's safe.
- **Shelter-in-Place:** For hazards like a tornado or chemical spill outside, we shelter inside the building (in interior rooms away from windows for tornado, or seal the room for environmental hazard). We have supplies of water, flashlights, radio, first aid, etc. to sustain in place until safe.

Reunification Procedures (Emergency Pick-Up at Alternate Location)

- In the event of a building evacuation where it is unsafe to re-enter the center, all children and staff will relocate to our designated off-site reunification location:
 - The Forge Christian Church
14444 E Evans Ave, Aurora, CO 80014
(Located one block west of Bright Minds)
- At this site, staff will supervise children in assigned groups with all emergency supplies, child records, and contact forms. We will notify families via Bright Minds App, text message, and phone call as soon as possible.
- To pick up your child during a reunification event:
 - Bring a valid photo ID
 - Be listed as an authorized pick-up contact
 - Follow posted signage or instructions from staff on where to check in
- For the safety of all children, we will not release any child to someone not listed on the authorized pickup list, or without proper identification, even during an emergency.
- Please ensure your child's emergency contact list remains up to date. We strongly recommend that local emergency contacts be within 20–30 minutes of the center.
- **Lost/Missing Child:** We have never lost a child due to our strict supervision, but we have a plan. If a child cannot be accounted for (e.g. in a scenario outside), staff will **immediately search** high-risk areas (play structures, gates, hiding spots) and **notify the Director**. If the child is not found within a very brief time (a few minutes), we will call 911 **and then notify parents**. Staff will continue searching until authorities arrive. We educate children on staying with their group and not wandering off, but toddlers can be quick, hence our vigilance.
- **Emergency Contacts:** We require at least two local emergency contacts on your enrollment form. In any emergency, if we cannot reach a parent, we will call those contacts. Make sure they are folks who could pick up your child if needed.
- **Injury Prevention:** We baby-proof and safety-check the environment daily. All electrical outlets are covered. Furniture is secured. Toys are age-appropriate and in good repair. We regularly inspect the playground for hazards (like broken equipment, etc.). Cleaning supplies and any hazardous materials are stored out of reach in locked cabinets. We do **monthly safety audits** of the facility.



- **Staff Training:** All staff are certified in **Pediatric CPR, First Aid, and Universal Precautions** (infection control). At least one staff trained in CPR/First Aid is present at all times (in practice, most of our staff are trained). Staff also train on our emergency procedures (fire, etc.) and FEMA disaster response basics. We have at least one staff on site at all times who has completed the state's **Emergency Preparedness** training module. We often run through scenarios at staff meetings to keep skills fresh.

Accidents and Injuries

Despite precautions, children can sometimes get hurt (minor bumps and scrapes, etc.) during play – it's part of learning. We handle accidents with care and transparency:

- **First Aid:** For any **minor injuries** (small scrapes, bumps, insect bites, etc.), our staff will administer appropriate first aid. We have first aid kits in each room and with our outdoor packs. This may include cleansing a wound with soap and water, applying a bandage, providing ice for a bump, etc.
- **Incident Reports:** We will complete a written **Incident/Accident Report** for any notable injury or incident (even minor ones like a scraped knee). This will describe what happened, what first aid was given, and the outcome. We will ask you to sign the report when you pick up (and you get a copy) as acknowledgment. If someone else picks up, we may call or send a copy electronically to ensure you're informed.
- **Parent Notification:** If the injury is more than a very minor bump, we will attempt to **call you immediately**. For example, any head bump, a bite that breaks skin, a hard fall, etc., we will phone the parent to alert you (even if not urgent enough for pickup, we want you informed). If it is something like a light scratch, we may just inform you at pick-up with the incident form. Use your judgment if you'd like a call for every small thing – we will certainly call for anything beyond trivial.
- **When a Child Needs More Than First Aid:** If a child has an injury that might require medical attention beyond basic first aid (like a deep cut, possible sprain, etc.), we will **contact you right away** to discuss next steps. We might suggest you come evaluate and possibly take the child to the doctor. If it's potentially serious (like a cut needing stitches), we will keep the child comfortable and may even start arranging for someone to take them to urgent care if you're far away – but typically we wait for the parent to transport if possible.
- **Emergencies:** In the event of a **serious injury or medical emergency**, we will call **911 immediately** before calling you. Serious cases include if the child is unconscious, having difficulty breathing, a possible broken bone with deformity, a bad allergic reaction, seizure (if first time or prolonged), etc. We will ensure the child gets prompt medical care. If an ambulance is needed, a staff member (likely the Director or an admin) will accompany the child if a parent hasn't arrived yet, and we will bring the child's emergency medical forms. We will contact you as soon as possible to inform you where your child is being taken. It's vital we have your consent forms and insurance info on file in case of such emergencies. Rest assured, we will do everything in our power to stabilize and comfort your child until you or medical help arrives.
- **Reporting:** If a child's injury requires a **doctor's or hospital visit, we are required to report it to the state licensing office within 24 hours**. This is part of maintaining

transparency and safety oversight. We will also inform our nurse consultant. Reporting is not to assign blame; it's to ensure proper follow-up and that licensing can see if there are any facility issues to address. We will let you know that we need to file this report. Typically, licensing may contact you as well to inquire about the incident.

Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting

Prevention: Bright Minds has a comprehensive approach to keep children safe from abuse. We ensure that no staff is ever left alone with a single child in an isolated area – there are always others around or doors open. We train staff on appropriate professional boundaries and positive discipline (no physical punishment, no harsh language). We also teach children about personal safety in appropriate ways (like teaching them that their body is their own, how to say no, and to tell a trusted adult if someone hurts them). We maintain a culture of openness, where parents are welcome at any time (transparency helps prevent abuse).

All staff undergo **background checks**, including fingerprinting through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation and FBI, and checks of the Colorado Child Abuse Registry, before they can work with children. We do not hire anyone with disqualifying criminal history.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

Bright Minds Children Academy complies with the **Colorado Mandatory Reporting Law** (§19-3-304, C.R.S.). All staff are **mandatory reporters** and are trained annually to identify and report any form of child abuse or neglect.

If a staff member has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect — or observes circumstances that may result in abuse or neglect — they are **legally required to report** immediately to:

- **Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline:** 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437)
- Or the **Arapahoe County Department of Human Services**

Bright Minds will not investigate suspected abuse internally but will cooperate fully with all official investigations. Our goal is to ensure every child's health, safety, and emotional well-being is protected.

A copy of our full child abuse reporting protocol is available upon request.

Parental Abuse/Neglect: If a child comes in with unusual injuries, or discloses something concerning, or if we have reason to suspect neglect (e.g. consistent lack of basic needs being met), we are mandated to report that. We do not want to break trust with families, but our overriding obligation is the child's safety. In some cases, we might consult with the child care health consultant or other professional for guidance, but by law any suspicion goes to the hotline. Know that our intention is to help – child protective services can also offer supports to families in need.



Child Abuse Hotline: As mentioned, Colorado’s statewide hotline is **844-CO-4-KIDS (844-264-5437)** available 24/7. We have that number posted on our parent bulletin board. If you as a parent ever suspect a child (yours or others) is being abused or neglected, you too can call this hotline.

Discipline vs. Abuse: Be assured that Bright Minds never uses physical punishment or any humiliating or frightening discipline. **Corporal punishment is prohibited** by licensing and by our philosophy. We do not spank, hit, shake, or yell at children. We use only positive guidance techniques (see Guidance & Discipline section). If you ever witness or hear of a staff acting inappropriately, please inform the Director immediately.

All staff are trained in recognizing and preventing **Shaken Baby Syndrome and abusive head trauma** for infants. We have policies for staff to take a break if feeling frustrated, etc., to prevent any loss of control.

Your child’s well-being is our paramount concern. Working together with trust and communication, we can ensure a safe and happy environment for all children.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

Our approach to guidance and discipline is rooted in **positive guidance, patience, and understanding** of child development. We aim to teach children self-control, responsibility, and empathy, rather than simply punishing misbehavior. Here are the key points of our discipline policy (which aligns with Colorado’s rules on guidance):

Positive Guidance Techniques:

- **Setting Clear Expectations:** We establish simple, consistent rules in each classroom (e.g. “We use gentle hands,” “Walking feet inside,” “Listen to the teacher,” “Be kind to friends”). These rules are phrased positively when possible.
- **Modeling:** Teachers model the behaviors we want to see – speaking kindly, sharing, cooperating, etc. Children learn a lot by imitation.
- **Reinforcement:** We praise and reinforce good behavior and effort specifically (“Thank you for waiting your turn!” “I love how you helped your friend.”). Positive attention often prevents negative behaviors.
- **Redirection:** For toddlers and preschoolers, **redirection** is a primary strategy. If a child is doing something inappropriate, we gently guide them to a different activity or way to do it. For example, if a child is throwing blocks, we might redirect them to throw soft balls or go outside to throw, thereby meeting their need in an acceptable way.
- **Choices:** We give children choices to empower them within appropriate limits (e.g. “You can either tidy up the blocks or the art corner, which do you choose?”).
- **Natural & Logical Consequences:** We use consequences as learning opportunities. Natural consequences (if you spill, you help clean it up) and logical ones (if a child is misusing a toy, that toy might be put away for a short time) are employed in a fair manner. The goal is for the consequence to relate to the behavior.



- **Cool Down and Problem-Solving:** If a child becomes very upset or angry, we help them cool down. This is not “timeout” in a punitive sense, but rather a moment to calm (perhaps reading quietly with a teacher or sitting in a cozy corner until ready to join the group). Once calm, teachers will help the child **problem-solve** the situation – discussing what went wrong and how to handle it better next time. For older preschoolers, we might do conflict resolution by having each child talk about their feelings and finding a solution together (with teacher guidance).
- **No Corporal Punishment:** We never use physical punishment, shame, or harsh language. Spanking, hitting, pinching, shaking, or grabbing is **forbidden**. We do not humiliate or threaten children. We do not impose food denial or bathroom denial as punishment. Discipline is always handled in a caring, respectful manner focused on teaching.
- **Challenging Behaviors:** Many young children will display challenging behaviors at times (biting, tantrums, aggression, defiance) as they learn to regulate emotions. We address these by:
 - **Observing** to understand what may be causing the behavior (e.g. over-stimulation? frustration because they can’t verbalize? sensory needs?).
 - **Working with you, the parent**, to be consistent in our approach. Communication is key – we will let you know if behaviors arise, and we welcome insight into strategies that work at home.
 - **Using age-appropriate interventions:** For example, **biting** (common in toddlers) will be met with immediate attention – comforting the child on the receiving end, firmly telling the biter “biting hurts, teeth are not for biting people,” redirecting to a teether, shadowing the child closely to prevent recurrences, and teaching other ways to express needs. We have a separate Biting Policy handout that goes into detail since it’s a frequent toddler issue.
 - **Emotional Support:** We acknowledge children’s feelings (“I see you are mad that you can’t have that toy”) and teach them to express themselves in words or safe ways. We might create a quiet calm-down space in the classroom where a child can go with a comfort object to settle.
 - **Consistency and Routines:** Many behaviors improve when children know what to expect. We keep routines consistent and give warnings for transitions (“5 minutes until clean-up”) to help them adjust.
- **Prevention of Suspension/Expulsion:** We are committed to **not expelling or suspending children** due to behavioral issues except as a very last resort. Colorado Shines Level 5 standards and state guidance emphasize working with children and families to avoid expulsions. If a child is exhibiting persistent, serious challenging behavior that puts themselves or others at risk, we will initiate a plan:
 - **Family Meeting:** We’ll meet with you to discuss concerns and jointly develop strategies. We may ask for your written consent to involve specialists (like an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant or have the child observed by our Nurse or a behavior specialist).
 - **Behavior Support Plan:** We will create an individualized support plan with specific techniques (maybe a sticker chart, or a sensory diet of more outdoor time, or one-on-one time at transitions) aimed at helping the child. Teachers will document incidents to track patterns and improvement.



- **Consultation:** We can access an **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant** through our quality initiatives to observe the child in class and give us strategies. Often an outside perspective and expertise can make a huge difference.
- **Adaptive Strategies:** For some children, simple changes like providing a visual schedule, using picture cues, offering fidget tools, or adjusting how we give instructions can reduce challenging behaviors. We aim to meet children where they are.
- **Reduction of Potential Expulsion:** As required, before considering asking a family to withdraw, we will document all steps taken, ensure we have provided reasonable accommodations, and explore every resource (including possibly reduced schedule as a temporary measure, or having a parent shadow for a day, etc.). Only if a child's behavior is consistently and severely unsafe (e.g. violent outbursts causing injury to others, or running away constantly putting themselves in danger) and all interventions have failed would we consider advising that a different setting might be needed. Even then, we would assist the family in finding appropriate services or alternative care, and ideally transition them rather than an abrupt termination.
- **No Discrimination in Discipline:** We approach each child as an individual. Culture, language, and ability differences are respected – we adapt our guidance methods to each child's needs. For instance, a child with a communication delay might get frustrated more; we'll use picture cards or sign language as needed to help them communicate instead of becoming upset. Inclusion is paramount; we do not expel for disability or special needs, and we follow guidance on minimizing suspensions/expulsions in early childhood settings in pursuit of equity.

If you have any concerns about how we handle discipline or if your child reports something that worries you, please let us know immediately. Similarly, we will communicate with you if we are having ongoing challenges with your child so we can partner on solutions.

Family Engagement and Communication

Families are our essential partners. We maintain an **open-door policy** for parents/guardians – you are welcome to visit or observe your child's class at any time, unannounced. (We just ask that you use discretion during nap time or if a visit might upset your child's transition, but you have the right to access whenever your child is in care.)

Daily Communication: We provide updates on your child's day in several ways:

Infant/Toddler Daily Reports

For infants and toddlers, teachers provide a **brief daily report at pick-up**, sharing important details about your child's day—including naps, meals, diaper changes, mood, and activities. If you'd like a written summary, we're happy to provide a paper daily sheet upon request.

Verbal Check-ins

Our teachers communicate with families **daily at drop-off and pick-up**. You'll hear updates like "He loved painting today!" or "She was extra tired after nap." These conversations help us build



trust and keep you in the loop. Please feel free to ask questions or share anything we should know about your child's night or morning—we value your input.

Classroom & Lobby Bulletin Boards

Each classroom has a **parent communication board** that displays:

- Weekly lesson plans
- Classroom schedules
- Menus
- Announcements and reminders

We also post important center-wide updates, licensing documents, and required notices near the **main check-in/lobby area**. Please check these boards regularly to stay informed about events, policy updates, closures, or special activities.

Monthly Email Announcements

While we do not use a parent communication app, we send **monthly center-wide emails** with updates, announcements, and reminders. If your email changes, please update your contact information with the office to ensure you don't miss important messages.

Language Support

We primarily communicate in **English**, but we welcome and celebrate multilingual families. If you or a family member prefers another language, let us know—we will do our best to:

- Provide translated written materials
- Use a staff member or trusted parent translator when needed
- Utilize professional translation tools to support important conversations

We want every family to feel respected, heard, and empowered to participate fully in your child's experience here.

Parent-Teacher Conferences: We offer **formal conferences** twice a year (typically fall and spring). These are chances to discuss your child's development, review any assessments or observations we've made, set goals, and hear your insights. We'll show you samples of their work or photos of them in action. You will receive a written progress report. Conferences are scheduled with flexibility to accommodate working parents' schedules (we can do late afternoons or an occasional Saturday if needed). We strongly encourage at least one parent to attend these conferences, as it's a great way to stay aligned on your child's needs and celebrate their growth. Families participating in UPK are **required** to attend family conferences as part of the program expectations.



Outside of formal conferences, you can always request a meeting with your child’s teacher or the Director to discuss any concerns or questions. We can arrange phone calls or extra check-ins as well. Communication is key to a successful partnership.

Family Activities and Events: Being a part of Bright Minds means you join a community. We host a variety of **family events** throughout the year to build connections:

- **Open House / Orientation Night:** Each fall we invite families to meet the teachers, see the classroom, and learn about the curriculum for the year. This is a great time to ask questions and meet other parents.
- **Family Fun Events:** We plan events such as a Fall Festival, Winter Holiday Program (the children might sing songs or do a small performance), Spring Picnic, etc. We also celebrate Week of the Young Child with special activities involving families.
- **Workshops/Meetings:** Occasionally, we offer parenting workshops or informational sessions (like “Kindergarten Readiness Night” or “Positive Discipline at Home” with a guest speaker). If there’s interest, we’ll organize these.
- **Volunteering:** We welcome family volunteers! You might read a story to the class, share about your culture or job, help with a class project, or assist on a field trip (when we have them). If you have a special talent or hobby (music, cooking, etc.) and want to do an activity with the kids, let us know. Regular volunteers will need to undergo a background check per state rules; one-time visitors under supervision do not, but will always be with staff. We also sometimes need help for prep tasks (cutting art materials at home, etc.) if you’re willing.

Family Feedback: We value your input. We conduct **annual satisfaction surveys** to get feedback on what we’re doing well and what could improve. We also have a suggestion box (or via email) open at all times. Parent feedback is included in our **program’s continuous improvement plan** for Colorado Shines. We may have a **Parent Advisory Committee** if enough parents are interested, which could meet quarterly to discuss program ideas, fundraisers, etc. This is optional, but it’s a chance to have a voice in center activities.

Communication with Non-Custodial Parents: If both parents are involved in the child’s life but living separately, we will make efforts to communicate with both (assuming no legal restrictions). Both can receive school info, attend events, etc. Please provide contact info for both if applicable.

Transitions: When your child is ready to transition to the next classroom (e.g., infant to toddler room, or preschool to kindergarten), we have a process to make it smooth. We’ll notify you in advance and discuss the timing. We do gradual visits to the new room, introducing the child to the new teachers and routines while still anchored in their current class. For kindergarten transitions, we may coordinate with local schools (and help with that process if needed). We often host a “Preschool Graduation” for kids leaving for Kindergarten to celebrate their achievements.

Open Communication: We strive to maintain open, two-way communication. Please let us know about changes at home that might affect your child (move, new sibling, loss, etc.), so we



can provide extra support or understanding. Conversely, we'll inform you if we notice any changes or issues with your child at school (mood, behavior, etc.). Working together helps your child have continuity between home and school.

Remember, you can reach out anytime:

- Call the center phone during hours for immediate concerns.
- Email the Director for non-urgent questions (response within 1 business day generally).
- Catch us at drop-off/pick-up (if it's busy, we can schedule a longer chat later).

We deeply respect that you entrust us with your precious child. We see parents as the **most important influence** in the child's life; our role is to support and supplement what you do. So never hesitate to communicate your expectations, cultural practices, or any worry – we want to provide the care that aligns with your family's values and needs.

Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) Policies

Bright Minds is proud to accept the **Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)**, which helps income-eligible families pay for child care. We have many CCCAP-enrolled families, and we want to ensure clarity on how the program works within our center. If you are a CCCAP family, please review these specific policies:

- **Authorization & Marking Attendance:** Before starting, you must have an active CCCAP authorization for Bright Minds Children Academy (provider number) from Arapahoe County. It should specify days and hours of care approved. You will receive a swipe card or access to the **Attendance Tracking System (ATS)**. All CCCAP parents (or their designees) must record attendance in ATS every day, at drop-off and pick-up. This is absolutely essential because it's how the state knows to pay us. The machine will indicate if the swipe was accepted. If you forget to swipe, you have a short window to back-swipe, otherwise it counts as absence/unmarked and could affect payment. We will remind you if we notice a missed swipe. Repeated failure to use the ATS could jeopardize your CCCAP subsidy and thus your child's spot – the YMCA policy states that care can be terminated for continual failure to use ATS due to risk of incorrect payments. We echo that: if a family persistently does not comply with ATS and it causes non-payment, we may have to discontinue care. So please prioritize those swipes!
- **Parent Fees:** CCCAP assigns you a **monthly parent fee (copayment)** based on your income and family size. This is your portion to pay directly to us. We will inform you of the amount and due date (generally **due by the 1st of each month, in advance**). Pay this like regular tuition; if not paid by the 1st, our late fee policy applies and we may terminate care for non-payment. CCCAP covers the rest of tuition up to the authorized amount/hours. Remember, you pay the parent fee **even if your child is absent** or if there are holidays – it's a monthly fee, not per day. If your income changes or you think your



parent fee should change, contact your county worker; until they adjust it, we must collect the assigned amount.

- **Coverage and Absences:** CCCAP will pay for care during the authorized days/hours. If your child attends outside of those authorized times (e.g. you bring them an extra day that's not authorized, or early/late beyond authorized hours), you will be responsible for private pay for that additional time. Typically, CCCAP authorizations are full-time (up to 5 days) or part-time (e.g. 3 days or certain hours). Check your notice.
- **Allowed Absences:** As mentioned earlier, Arapahoe County CCCAP allows only **2 paid absence days per month**. "Absence" means your child was scheduled (authorized) for that day but did not attend. We track attendance and will inform you if you hit those 2 days. If your child misses more than 2 of their scheduled days in a month, you will be **charged for the extra days** at the CCCAP daily rate or our private rate, depending on county policy. We will invoice you for those days by the next billing cycle. It's important to keep absences minimal not only to avoid charges but also because too many absences could alert the county and they might re-evaluate your need for care.
- **Holidays/Center Closures:** CCCAP generally pays for up to 6 holidays if the center is closed on those days (like Thanksgiving, etc.), as they are included in our calendar. We will not charge you anything extra for holidays we're closed if CCCAP doesn't pay; we just won't bill for that day. Your parent fee remains the same monthly regardless of holiday closures.
- **Reporting to County:** If you have changes (job changes, income changes, address, etc.), you must report those to your CCCAP caseworker within their required timeframe. That ensures your authorization stays correct. We also have an obligation to report if you fail to pay parent fees or have excessive unexplained absences. For instance, CCCAP policy says providers must report unpaid parent fees after 60 days. We really don't want to escalate anything, so please pay your portion on time and talk to us if there's an issue.
- **CCCAP Termination:** If your CCCAP authorization lapses (due to missing redetermination, etc.) or is terminated by the county, you will become responsible for full tuition to keep your child's slot. We will try to give a grace period of up to 2 weeks for you to resolve your CCCAP status, but we cannot hold a spot long-term without payment. Keep on top of your redetermination dates and paperwork with the county to avoid interruptions. If we receive notice that your case closed, we will notify you. If you plan to withdraw because you lost assistance, please talk with us – we may be able to work something out for a short term or refer you to other resources.
- **CCCAP Only Covers Full-Time?** Our policy is to accept CCCAP for both full-time and part-time care as authorized by the county. Some centers limit to full-time only, but we understand some families' work schedules vary. However, do note that if your CCCAP authorization is for part-time but you actually need more hours, you must get the authorization adjusted or pay the difference. We cannot allow a child to regularly attend more than authorized without addressing payment.
- **Late Pick-Up / Other Fees for CCCAP:** CCCAP does **not pay for late pick-up fees**, damages, or other non-standard fees. You are personally responsible for any late pick-up fines (as described earlier, \$1/minute) or things like if your child loses a key fob (if we had a deposit) etc. Also, CCCAP does not pay registration fees, but we have waived the registration fee for CCCAP families (since the county forbids charging it to them). We do not charge supply fees to CCCAP families either, to keep it fair.



- **Communication with Caseworker/ATS Issues:** We know ATS can sometimes have glitches. If you have any trouble with your swipe card or the machine, let us know immediately. We might direct you to contact the CCCAP help line or your caseworker to resolve technical issues. We also keep an eye on attendance records and will alert you if something didn't log properly so you can correct it (there is usually a 9-day correction window in ATS for missed swipes). We aim to avoid any non-payment scenarios by being proactive.
- **Cooperation:** By using CCCAP at our center, you agree to abide by these policies. Likewise, we agree to uphold the provider requirements of CCCAP, like not charging you the difference between CCCAP rate and private rate (co-payment) beyond your parent fee and any absent day charges allowed by rule. We won't double-bill or do anything against the rules. Our relationship is a partnership: you, us, and the county, all working to provide stable care for your child.

Universal Preschool (UPK) Colorado Program Policies

Bright Minds Children Academy is a participating provider in **Universal Preschool (UPK) Colorado**. This state program (launched in 2023) provides **free preschool** for children in the year before they enter kindergarten, and some funding for qualifying 3-year-olds. We are excited to offer UPK to families and are committed to meeting the program's high quality standards and family engagement requirements. The following outlines what UPK means for you if your child is enrolled as a UPK participant:

- **Eligibility:** All children who are **4 years old by October 1** of the current school year are eligible for UPK funding (15 hours per week of preschool) regardless of income. Some **3-year-olds** are eligible for part-time funding (10 hours/week) if they have certain qualifying factors (such as low income, dual language learner, in foster care, or have a disability). We can help determine if your 3-year-old qualifies. Generally, UPK is for the school year before kindergarten. Note: a child who is 5 and kindergarten-eligible would not get UPK (they should go to kindergarten or choose to wait a year but then wouldn't get UPK because they'd be age-eligible for kinder).
- **Application Process:** To receive UPK funding, families must apply through the state's online portal at <http://upk.colorado.gov>. You will rank provider choices – if you're already enrolled here, you should still select Bright Minds on that portal to link the funding. Once matched and approved, we will complete the enrollment on our end. *In addition* to the state application, you must complete our regular enrollment packet (all the forms for Bright Minds) just like any family.
- **UPK Hours and Schedule:** UPK provides **15 hours per week** of preschool for 4-year-olds (and 10 hours for qualifying 3-year-olds). Typically, we offer this as **3 hours per day, 5 days a week** (Monday-Friday) following roughly the school district calendar (about 36 weeks). Our standard approach is to integrate those hours into our full-day program. For example, if your child is full-time with us, the state covers 3 hours of their day (like 8:30–11:30am as "UPK instructional time") and the rest of the day is covered by you or CCCAP. If your child only attends for the free portion, then they would attend a **half-day** (morning or afternoon) Monday–Friday during the school year. We can accommodate different needs, but generally, the expectation for UPK is consistent



attendance, 5 days a week, half-day. We will communicate and agree on your child's **UPK schedule** at enrollment.

- **No Cost for UPK Hours:** The 15 weekly hours of core preschool are **free to you** (covered by the state). If your child is only doing those 15 hours and nothing more, you pay nothing to us (no tuition or parent fee, just perhaps a supply fee if any – but currently we don't charge UPK families extra fees either, to keep it truly free). If your child attends more than 15 hours (which at our full-day program they likely will), the additional hours are charged at our normal rate or via CCCAP if applicable. We will clearly outline the combination for you. For example:
 - A family without CCCAP might owe partial tuition for the wrap-around hours (e.g. if full day is 9 hours, 3 are free, you pay for 6 hours worth of care daily).
 - A family with CCCAP could have CCCAP cover the wrap hours if their work schedule qualifies, etc. We coordinate with the state so funding sources don't overlap improperly (UPK will be primary for those 15 hours, CCCAP can cover the rest).
- **Attendance Expectations:** The UPK program places high importance on consistent attendance to maximize children's learning. Families participating in UPK are expected to ensure their child attends at least **90%** of the scheduled UPK hours. In practical terms, this means minimal unexcused absences. Of course, children get sick or emergencies happen – those are excused. But regular no-shows or extended vacations outside of normal breaks can undermine the purpose of UPK. If a child **misses more than 10%** of UPK days, they could potentially be **dropped from the program** per state guidelines. We absolutely do not want that to happen, so we will monitor attendance and will reach out if absenteeism becomes an issue. If you know your child will miss days (illness, etc.), please inform us as usual. For extended planned absences, please discuss with us; if it's too long, the UPK slot might have to be released to someone else per policy. The idea is that UPK slots are valuable and should be utilized fully. We appreciate your cooperation in bringing your child daily and on time. Regular attendance helps your child prepare for kindergarten and allows them to fully benefit from our curriculum.
- **Family Commitments:** As part of UPK, families are asked to engage with the preschool program. Specifically, families must sign a UPK agreement/contract which includes commitments to:
 - **Attend family-teacher conferences** (at least the two offered per year).
 - **Participate in at least two family engagement or learning opportunities** provided by the program during the year. (Examples might be attending a parent workshop, family fun night, or volunteering at an event, etc. We will offer a variety of ways to fulfill this.) The goal is to involve you in your child's education, which research shows benefits school readiness.
 - **Abide by the program's policies and procedures** (essentially everything in this handbook). We will have you sign a UPK Family Agreement form outlining these expectations.

An involved family + high-quality preschool = the best outcome for your child!

- **UPK Program Year:** UPK funding typically covers the **school year (9 months)**, not summer (exact dates to be determined by the state each year, usually aligns with district calendars roughly August/September to May). For the summer months, your child can



certainly continue at Bright Minds, but normal tuition or CCCAP would apply since UPK funds won't be in effect then (unless future expansions include summer, but currently it's school year only). We will remind you as the end of UPK year approaches about summer arrangements.

- **Quality and Curriculum:** Because we are part of UPK, we meet all **program quality standards** set by the state. This means a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum addressing all learning domains, qualified teachers, low ratios, inclusive practices, and ongoing assessment of children's progress (which we share with you). We likely will do a preschool assessment tool (like GOLD or COR) to track your child's growth and inform our teaching. UPK providers also emphasize **kindergarten transition** – we will help you and your child get ready for the big step to kindergarten through activities and info in spring.
- **Transition to Kindergarten:** If your child is going to kindergarten next year, we will assist with that process. For instance, we'll send home information on local school registration dates and perhaps arrange a kindergarten teacher to speak at our parent night. Some school districts have kindergarten visit days – we'll let you know. We provide a **Transition Summary** for each UPK child to the family and if requested, to the kindergarten (with your consent), describing the child's strengths and any support they may need, which helps continuity.
- **Communication with LCO/State:** The UPK program in each area is coordinated by a **Local Coordinating Organization (LCO)** – for Aurora/Arapahoe, it might be the Early Childhood Council or similar. We handle most communication with the LCO about enrollment and attendance. But you may get surveys or communication from the state or LCO asking about your experience. Your responses help improve the program. We encourage you to participate.
- **Grievances:** If you have any **grievance or concern specifically about UPK** (like you feel your child isn't receiving the quality promised or any discrimination in the program), you can bring it to us and/or contact the LCO or state UPK administrators. We can provide contact info if needed. We aim to fully meet the UPK standards, which align with Colorado Shines Level 5 criteria.

In summary, UPK is a wonderful opportunity for your child to attend high-quality preschool at low/no cost. We ask that you commit to the attendance and involvement expectations so that your child – and all children in the program – can reap the benefits. We're excited to have you as part of the inaugural UPK cohorts and look forward to a year of growth and learning!

Inclusion, Diversity, and Non-Discrimination

Bright Minds Children Academy is an **inclusive** program that values diversity and strives to ensure **equity** in all aspects of our services. Here's how we put that into practice:

Non-Discrimination: As stated earlier, our enrollment and employment policies do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, family composition, or socioeconomic status. Every child and family will be treated with equal respect and consideration. We endeavor to create a preschool community that reflects the rich diversity of our larger community.



Cultural Competence: We respect and celebrate each family’s cultural, linguistic, and religious background. We encourage families to share traditions or special holidays with the class – for example, if your family celebrates Diwali, Chinese New Year, Eid, etc., let us know and we can incorporate age-appropriate activities or storybooks to acknowledge it. In the classroom, we use multicultural materials (dolls of various races, books showing diverse families, music from around the world). We celebrate differences and teach children about many cultures to broaden their understanding.

If your family has specific cultural practices (dietary restrictions, clothing, greetings, etc.) that you want us to be aware of, please inform us so we can honor them. For instance, if you prefer your child not to participate in certain holiday activities for personal beliefs, we will provide an alternative – we respect those choices.

Language Inclusivity: Many of our children may speak languages other than English at home. We value bilingualism. While our primary instruction is in English, we incorporate key words from children’s home languages to make them feel included (like learning to say hello, thank you in Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese, Amharic – whatever languages our kids have!). If a child is not yet fluent in English, we use visual cues, gestures, and buddy systems to help them. We do not view a language barrier as a problem – it’s an opportunity for all kids to learn new words and for us to support the child’s English acquisition gently. We do not require children to speak only English; they can use their home language when comfortable, and we will work to understand and connect. (If needed, we might seek translation help for important discussions with family, as mentioned.)

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities: We welcome children of all abilities. If your child has a diagnosed disability or developmental delay, we will collaborate with you and any specialists (early intervention, therapists, school district special ed, etc.) to ensure they are included and supported. We will follow any IFSP/IEP goals in our setting and allow outside therapists to provide services on-site (with proper clearances) if you wish. Our staff are trained in basic inclusion strategies and are eager to learn more specific techniques as needed. We make **reasonable accommodations** as required by ADA – for example, making space for a walker or wheelchair, adapting activities so everyone can participate, using picture schedules or sensory supports for children on the autism spectrum, etc.

Our building is wheelchair accessible (ramps at entrance, wide doors, an accessible restroom). If a needed accommodation is something we aren’t currently equipped for, we will work with you to get it. We leverage support from our Nurse Consultant and referrals to early childhood specialists to best serve each child. We do not tolerate any bullying or ostracism; all children learn from us that everyone is unique and valuable.

Behavioral and Emotional Inclusion: Some children may have behavioral or mental health challenges (ADHD, anxiety, trauma, etc.). We approach these with understanding and partnership rather than exclusion. As described in the discipline section, we will seek outside consultation and involve you to create support plans rather than label a child “bad.” We aim to prevent **suspension/expulsion** and have written policies for how we do everything possible to keep a child in care. This is part of being an inclusive, equitable program – studies show



expulsion disproportionately affects boys of color and children with disabilities nationwide. We are aware of these disparities and commit to fair, unbiased practices.

Our staff receive training on **anti-bias education** and **cultural responsiveness**. This includes reflecting on our own biases, learning about our families, and ensuring our curriculum doesn't perpetuate stereotypes. For example, we encourage all children to explore all activities (no "boy toys" or "girl toys" labeling), we use stories that show diverse family structures (single parents, grandparents raising kids, two moms, two dads, etc.), and we intervene if we hear any biased language among children, using it as a teaching moment about kindness and respect.

Equity in Discipline: We monitor that our discipline approach is applied fairly. If any teacher unconsciously is harsher on one demographic, we address and correct that. We strive for consistency and compassion for each individual.

ADA Compliance: As an ADA-compliant center, if a child has a specific need, we may modify policies. For instance, our usual policy might be "all children must be toilet trained by 3 to be in preschool," but for a child with a developmental delay or medical condition, we will waive that and provide needed toileting assistance at older ages – that is a reasonable accommodation. Or if a child needs an inhaler on their person, we accommodate that. We also train staff on things like recognizing seizure signs if applicable, how to use an EpiPen, etc. The law and our moral compass align: **no child will be excluded solely due to a disability** if we can reasonably handle their needs (and we will do a lot to make it reasonable).

Family Inclusion: Inclusion isn't just about the child; it's about making families feel welcome. We aim to create a sense of belonging for you as well. This might mean hosting multicultural potlucks, having a family bulletin board where you can share family photos, or inviting family members to share talents. It also means being sensitive: families come in many forms (single parent, blended, grandparents, LGBTQ+ parents, etc.) – we use inclusive language (like saying "grown-ups" or "families" instead of always "Mom and Dad," assuming everyone has one of each). On forms, we allow space for various guardian types. We welcome all and want you to see yourself reflected in our program.

If you ever feel something in our program is not inclusive or respectful, please bring it up. Perhaps we mispronounced your child's name or were unaware of a cultural custom – we **want** to be corrected so we can do better. We're all learning together in a community of respect.

Additional Operational Policies

Personal Items from Home: Other than the necessary items (diapers, change of clothes, etc.), we ask that toys and electronics from home are left at home. This prevents loss and conflict. If a child arrives with a toy, we might place it in their cubby until pickup. **Exception:** A comfort item (blanket or small stuffed toy) for nap is fine, and transitional objects for toddlers are okay (we'll work with the child to gradually rely on them less in class). School-agers should keep personal devices (phones, games) in their backpacks, not out during program, unless we have a special permission for something.



Dress Code for Children: Dress your child in **comfortable, play-friendly clothing**. We do messy art and outdoor play – paint smocks are used but spills happen, so don't send them in fancy or white clothes you'd be upset to get dirty. Closed-toe shoes are strongly recommended (no flip-flops, please; sandals should have heel straps). Sneakers are ideal for running and climbing. In warm weather, apply sunscreen in the morning or we can (see Sunscreen policy). In cold weather, provide a warm coat, hat, gloves, and boots if snow – we will go outside if at all feasible (above freezing and not severe). We follow “dress appropriately for weather” guidelines. Label all outerwear.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent: We provide sunscreen for outdoor play (Rocky Mountain SPF 30, broad spectrum). We will apply sunscreen to children's exposed skin (with gloves or clean hands) before morning and afternoon outside time, typically April–Sept or as needed. If you prefer to supply your own brand (or if child has allergies), you may. We'll label it for your child and keep it out of reach. If you do **not** want us to assist your child in applying sunscreen, you must provide a written note stating that (then you would need to apply it yourself before school, but we can't guarantee it lasts all day). Otherwise, by enrolling, you give permission for sunscreen application. Similarly, if in summer mosquitoes are an issue, we might apply a child-safe insect repellent (with parent permission). We will send a form if we plan to use bug spray.

Transportation and Field Trips: As noted, we do not routinely transport children. In the rare event of a field trip where transportation is involved, we will either contract a school bus or require parent drivers. We will obtain separate permission for any trip off-site. During any outing (even a walk to the park), we bring first aid and emergency contacts. We use a rope or walking rope for little ones to stay together, high supervision, and often ask for parent volunteers to have low adult:child ratio. If you do not want your child to participate in a particular field trip, we will respect that and arrange for them to stay with another class if possible that day.

Visitors: All visitors (therapists, observers, prospective families, etc.) must sign in at the office and show ID. They will be supervised by staff while on premises. We do allow unscheduled visits by parents (as said, open door), but we monitor any unfamiliar person. We also have occasional visits from licensing specialists or health inspectors – they will identify themselves and also sign in.

Emergency Contacts/Early Release: If you need to have someone else pick up your child unexpectedly, ensure they are on the authorized list or you have given permission. If you have an emergency and can't reach us by phone, you could also email or use the Bright Minds app to send a message specifying the change. We will require that person to show ID.

Custody and Court Orders: Provide any relevant documents. We cannot keep a parent from their child unless we have a court order on file. If a non-custodial parent is allowed visits but not pick-ups per your arrangement, let us know clearly. We will try to enforce your wishes, but without a court order, we cannot legally refuse a parent who comes for pickup. Communication is key – if you have restraining orders or safety concerns, we must be informed with documentation to act accordingly.



Photography/Media: We often take photographs or short videos of children engaged in activities to share with parents and for crafts/documentation. We have a Photo/Media Release in your enrollment packet. Please indicate your preference. We typically use photos internally (like in daily reports, or a bulletin board collage). We may occasionally use photos on our center's private Facebook page or website for promotional purposes – but only if you've consented. We never identify children by full name in any public way. If you do **not** want your child's image used, we will ensure to exclude them from photos that leave the classroom. We respect privacy. Also, we ask parents not to photograph other children without permission during events, etc., and not to post other kids' images on social media without those parents' okay, to be courteous.

Social Media: Our center might have a social media presence (e.g., a closed Facebook group for enrolled families). If so, we'll invite you. We use it for updates and community building. We expect respectful communication on those platforms. If you have a grievance, it's better to handle it directly than venting in a public forum. Protecting everyone's privacy and dignity is important.

Confidentiality: All child records and personal information you provide are kept confidential. We only share information with those who have a need to know (e.g., teachers, administration, or specialists working with your child). We will not release your information to external parties without consent, except as required by law (like to CPS if there's a report, or to health department for immunization audits without names attached). Our staff also sign confidentiality agreements.

All records regarding your child, including enrollment, health, behavior, and assessments, are stored securely and treated as confidential. Access is limited to parents/guardians, center leadership, your child's lead teacher, and authorized regulatory entities such as the Colorado Department of Early Childhood or CDPHE. These protections follow Rule 2.129 of the Child Care Licensing Rules. We do not release your child's information to other parties without written permission unless required by law.

Babysitting: Sometimes parents ask teachers for outside babysitting. Our policy is that any arrangements for childcare outside of center hours are strictly between you and the staff member, not connected to Bright Minds (we don't endorse or take liability). We do caution that it can complicate professional boundaries. By policy, staff are not allowed to transport children in their private vehicles outside of work for liability reasons (except in a true emergency). So if you do hire a teacher to babysit, it must be off-hours and off-site, and it's your private arrangement. We cannot be responsible for any issues arising from that.

Policy Changes: This handbook may be updated periodically (typically annually or if regulations change). We will give you written notice of any significant changes and ask you to sign an acknowledgment of the new policies. We welcome feedback at any time if you feel a policy is unclear or could be improved.

Communication and Resolving Concerns



We truly believe in open communication. If you have any **concerns, questions, or issues**, please bring them to us so we can address them. Here's how to handle different types of concerns:

- **Classroom or Minor Issues:** For day-to-day or minor concerns (e.g., you think your child's naptime blanket is not being used, or you have a question about a note that came home), you can talk to your child's teacher at pick-up or drop-off (briefly), or send a message via the app. Our teachers are happy to clarify things and they will also bring concerns to you if they have any. For a more detailed conversation, you can request a meeting or phone call during the teacher's planning time.
- **Bigger Concerns or Sensitive Issues:** If something is bothering you that the teacher hasn't resolved or that you're not comfortable discussing with them, please contact the **Director**. You can call, email, or request an in-person meeting. We will listen respectfully and work on a solution. We want you and your child to be happy here. Common issues might be: you're worried your child isn't eating enough at lunch, you feel another child is picking on yours, you have concerns about a staff member's approach, etc. Whatever it is, we will investigate or observe as needed and follow up with you. We will keep conversations professional and as confidential as possible.
- **Chain of Command:** Our director/owner is always accessible. If for some reason you feel your concern isn't addressed by the teacher or director, and if we had an assistant director or owner above the director, you could escalate. But since we are a single-site center, the Director likely is the final in-house authority. That said, you always have the right to contact state licensing or other authorities if it's about a serious issue (see below).
- **Complaint Procedure:** We have a formal **procedure for filing a complaint about child care** as required by state rules. If you have a complaint about our center – perhaps something you feel violates licensing regulations or you believe your child's rights were not respected – you can do any or all of the following:
 1. **Talk to the Director** to attempt to resolve it internally.
 2. **Contact the Colorado Department of Early Childhood, Division of Early Learning Licensing** to report a licensing complaint. The **child care complaint line is 1-800-799-5876**. You can call this number to report health or safety violations, improper ratios, etc. You may also call our local licensing office at 303-866-5958 (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm). They will take your complaint and likely assign a licensing specialist to investigate. We are required to provide you this information by regulation.
 3. **Contact the Local Public Health Department** if it's a health issue (though licensing covers most, but for things like if you think we're not handling sanitation properly).
 4. **Contact Universal Preschool Program administrators** if it's specifically about UPK obligations not being met (the LCO or state UPK office).
 5. **Contact ADA or Civil Rights offices** if you feel there's discrimination or lack of accommodation for a disability.

We hope none of our parents ever feel the need to report a complaint, but we absolutely want you to know your rights. We will post the contact info on our parent board as well. Filing a complaint does not mean you have to leave – many issues can be corrected and licensing encourages providers to fix any non-compliance. We will never retaliate against a family for



raising concerns or making a report. Our goal is to be fully compliant and to provide the highest quality care, and if we fall short, we want to know and improve.

External Oversight:

- Our **State License** number is 1788813; you can look up our inspection reports at the state website or ask us for the file. We're transparent with those.
- Our **Colorado Shines rating** process also gives us feedback; parents can view our quality rating on Colorado Shines website.
- The **Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE)** also inspects our kitchen and sanitation as needed.

Feedback and Suggestions: Not all feedback is a “complaint” – we welcome suggestions for improvement or program ideas (like “Could you maybe open 15 minutes earlier?” or “Another center did a weekly music class, could we do that?”). While we can't do everything, your input is how we grow. Drop suggestions in our box or email any time.

We consider parents our valued partners. By working together and communicating, we can ensure a positive experience for everyone.

Conclusion and Acknowledgment

Thank you for entrusting Bright Minds Children Academy with the care and early education of your child. We take this responsibility seriously and approach our work with love, professionalism, and a commitment to excellence. This Parent Handbook is intended to clarify our policies and expectations so that we are all on the same page in providing a safe, healthy, and stimulating environment for your little one.

We ask that you please sign the acknowledgment below indicating that you have received, read, and agree to abide by the policies in this handbook. We are required to have this on file for each family. If you have any questions or need clarification on any policy, let us know before signing – we're happy to discuss.

We truly believe that **communication and cooperation** between home and school is the foundation of a successful early childhood experience. We look forward to a wonderful partnership with your family. Here's to many bright days of learning and growing together at Bright Minds!

Once again, welcome to our community let's make it shine!



Parent/Guardian Handbook Acknowledgment Form:

I, the undersigned parent/guardian, have received the Bright Minds Children Academy Parent Handbook (revised April 2025). I have read and understand the policies and procedures contained therein, including but not limited to policies on admissions, fees, attendance, health and safety, discipline, CCCAP/UPK (if applicable), and emergency procedures. I agree to follow these policies and understand that they are designed for the safety and well-being of my child and all children at the center. I understand that if I ever have questions or concerns, I can contact the Director for clarification.

By signing below, I also give my permission for my child to participate in all regular activities of the program, both on-site and walking trips off-site, under supervision, as outlined in the handbook. (Separate permissions will be obtained for special field trips or specific activities as needed.)

I acknowledge my responsibilities (such as timely payment of fees, adhering to drop-off/pick-up times, reporting absences, and providing required documentation) as a partner in my child's care and education. I also acknowledge the center's responsibilities to provide a safe, nurturing environment and to communicate with me regarding my child.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the handbook's content and all my questions have been addressed. I understand that these policies are subject to change with notice, and I will be informed of any updates.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ Signature: _____
Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ Signature: _____
Date: _____

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____

Center Director Signature: _____ Date: _____



(Please sign and return this page to the office; you may keep the handbook for your reference.)