

2019-2020



Sheltering Arms

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Bright beginnings start here.



www.shelteringarmsforkids.com

#EmbraceEarly

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2019 VIP Parent Leaders Celebration

Dear Parent,

Thank you for choosing Sheltering Arms Early Childhood Education and Family Centers. As we celebrate 131 years of service and success, I am honored to lead this respected and high-quality organization into the future.

Sheltering Arms is committed to providing you and your child with world-class early learning and comprehensive family support services. We are also committed to our role as a leader in early childhood education. In our ongoing quest for excellence, Sheltering Arms works with local community partners such as The Rollins Center at the Atlanta Speech School and United Way to deliver cutting-edge education and family services. We are also members of two national networks known for innovation in early learning. As part of the Educare Schools network, we collaborate with 23 early learning centers across the country to share our best work and influence the field as a whole. We are also part of the Ascend Network of The Aspen Institute, a renowned educational and policy studies organization. These opportunities allow Sheltering Arms to share and receive the best thinking and approaches to educating young children and supporting their families.

As a result of our partnerships and curriculum, our children continually score in the 90th percentile, exceeding developmental milestones for language and literacy. This is important in that these milestones translate into indicators that help predict a child's future achievement in school and in life. Trust that we will make every effort to deliver quality early learning and family support services that will help your child thrive now and in the future.

It is an exciting time to be in the field of early childhood education. It is equally exciting to serve families who understand the promise and possibilities of embracing early learning. Again, thank you for choosing Sheltering Arms.

Sincerely,



Blythe Keeler Robinson
President and CEO



Section 1: About Sheltering Arms

Introduction

Sheltering Arms is Georgia's largest nonprofit early education and child care organization. We are a network of 14 neighborhood early learning and family support centers located in five metropolitan Atlanta counties: Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton and Gwinnett. Our child care and family support services include Head Start (both Early and Preschool) and the Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Pre-Kindergarten program.

Our administrative office is located in downtown Atlanta and houses the administrative support staff as well as the Georgia Training Institute. All child care staff must actively participate in extensive child development training. Lead Teachers must have a BA or BS in Early Childhood Education. Center management positions require a BA or Master's degree. Parents are encouraged to apply for positions for which they qualify and to participate in staff training.

Sheltering Arms Early Education & Family Centers is a national leader in defining and delivering quality early childhood education and comprehensive family support services to young children and their families. To learn more, please visit our web site at: www.shelteringarmsforkids.com.

Mission

Sheltering Arms transforms the lives of children, their families and communities through model early childhood education and leadership in the field.

Vision

Sheltering Arms sees thriving communities where all families hold the power to create opportunity for themselves and their children.

Our Work

Sheltering Arms provides:

- High-quality early care and education that prepares young children to succeed in school and that is accessible to all, regardless of family income.
- Comprehensive support services for families that promote healthy self-reliance.
- Professional development, based on core competencies for early education and family services practitioners that improves the effectiveness of service delivery.
- Community partnerships and collaborations that create a more synergistic and seamless system of support for children and families.

Ages of Children Served

Sheltering Arms serves children ages six weeks to five years old.

Days and Hours of Operation, Monday-Friday, Year Round

The centers are open Monday-Friday, year round, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The first day and last day of the Pre-K school year is aligned as much as possible with the public school systems.

Governing Bodies

The Board of Directors, comprised of community leaders, governs the organization, sets policy, creates short and long range strategic plans and has fiduciary responsibility. The Policy Council, comprised of 51% Head Start parents and 49% community representatives, provides leadership for the Head Start program.

Accreditation

Since 1946, Sheltering Arms has been accredited by organizations such as the Child Welfare League of America, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Quality Rated. To be a nationally accredited program means that our organization has demonstrated a strong commitment to providing high quality programs for young children and their families.

Volunteers

Sheltering Arms enjoys a positive reputation in the community and is a popular place to volunteer. We receive volunteers from corporate and community partners, and the Senior Services Foster Grandparent program. Visit www.shelteringarmsforkids.com to become a volunteer.

We welcome and encourage parent volunteers to occasionally assist in a classroom, chaperone or accompany a group of children on a field trip or assist in other center activities. A Parent that is this type of occasional assistant is not required to obtain a criminal records check determination. No Parent shall be solely responsible for children other than their own and must be under continuous direct supervision of a Center Employee while in the presence of children in care other than their own. **(DECAL Licensing)**

When volunteers enter the center, they must log on to the Sheltering Arms web site at www.shelteringarmsforkids.com.

Smoke and Drug Free Environment

Each center is a smoke and drug free environment. There is no smoking or use of tobacco or drugs on the premises. No alcohol products are permitted in the centers where children are being cared for.

Non-Discrimination

Services are provided to children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, economic status, sex, or ability.

Holidays – Center Closed

The center will be closed on nine holidays during the year: New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King’s Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the Friday After, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

Staff Professional Development Days

Centers will be closed for ten staff professional development days during the year:

- August 2, October 14, November 11, January 3, February 14, February 17, March 13, March 16, April 10 and May 22.

Inclement Weather

For information about center closings or late openings tune in to Channel 11 (WXIA), check Sheltering Arms’ web site and Facebook page. Also, parents may receive a calling post message from Sheltering Arms, so it is imperative that parents keep up to date contact numbers on file. On the first day of an inclement weather event, Sheltering Arms will be closed if the public school district in the county where the center is located is closed. Thereafter, the center will make every effort to open if safe travel is possible.

Section 2: Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance (ERSEA) requirements

Enrollment Requirements

All families must complete an initial inquiry for child care by visiting our website www.shelteringarmsforkids.com and completing the Potential Family Form. This application places families on the list to be considered for enrollment into the appropriate program based on their needs. Families who complete the pre-application process will be notified about the application process for other programs at the appropriate time. Parents are responsible for supplying and maintaining accurate information for enrollment purposes including: current phone numbers, emergency contact information, a list of authorized people for pick-up and other documentation required by Sheltering Arms.

Eligibility for Preschool Head Start and Early Head Start

Children are eligible for Early Head Start if they are under three years of age by or on September 1 of the current school year. Children are eligible for Preschool Head Start if they are three (3) or four (4) years old on or by September 1 of the current school year. In addition, household income must meet Federal Income Guidelines based on the number

of family members. Families must apply for Early and Preschool Head Start at designated application times during the year to verify their eligibility for these programs.

Verification of the following is required to apply: Proof of age for the child (e.g. birth certificate/confirmation of birth/passport); **Family Income** (TANF/SSI statements/tax return/letter from employer on letterhead/child support, etc); **Residency** (utility bill/lease/notarized letter if no bill or lease in parent's name). Eligible children are then selected for enrollment based on the Selection Criteria approved by the Early and Preschool Head Start Policy Council, considering such priorities such as foster children, homeless families, children with special needs, and other family needs. Children who are not selected are placed on the waiting list for available openings during the school year. Children remain on the waiting list for that school year and families must reapply for the following year. There are no fees for the six and a half hour core day for Early/Preschool Head Start (8:00am through 2:30pm). Parents who need extended day may enroll in After School care (2:30pm through 6:30pm)

Pre-Kindergarten

A child must be four (4) years of age on or before September 1 of the current school year to enroll in the Pre-K Program. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) coordinates a statewide recruitment in April for classes beginning in the fall. Families must apply for Pre-K at designated application times during the year. Families on the waiting list will be notified about application dates and will be invited to apply first. Pre-K enrollment is based on a first-come, first served basis. Families who have complete applications will be accepted first, regardless of position on the waiting list. Tuition is assessed for After School, non-Pre-K days, and Summer Enrichment. Verification of residence (utility bill, mortgage or lease in the parent's name) and age verification (copies of birth certificates, passports, official medical documents, or official documents from other countries) are required.

Child Care Program

A child is eligible for enrollment in our early learning program if their age is less than four (4) years on or before September 1 of the current school year. Families who complete the pre-application process will be notified of available space when it becomes available. Applications are considered based on the date of the initial inquiry and priority for services. The waiting list is depends upon the age of the child, the amount of scholarship needed, and the time of year. Tuition is based on a scholarship plan for families with incomes under \$100,000. Families must provide documentation of family income if a scholarship is needed. Eligibility for scholarships will be reevaluated every year.

Attendance

Children benefit from regular attendance year round, including the summer. When your child is absent, staff will contact parents within 1 hour of a child's expected arrival and document the reasons as required by our licensing, funding, and accrediting entities.

Pre-K and Early/Preschool Head Start children are required to attend the core instructional day (8:00am – 2:30pm). Pre-K children who are late or absent without an excuse may be dismissed from the program according to the Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) Standards. Pre-K parents may refer to the Pre-K Family Handbook.

We will use child attendance data to identify children with patterns of absence that put them at risk of missing ten percent of program days per year or multiple unexplained absences (such as two consecutive unexplained absences). We will develop appropriate strategies to improve individual attendance among identified children, such as direct contact with parents or intensive case management, as necessary. If the child's attendance does not improve or resume, then the program must consider that slot vacant. Parents will be informed in writing that the child will be dis-enrolled on a specified date. We cannot grant extended periods of absence if a child is enrolled in Early/Preschool Head Start or Pre-K. We will immediately begin the process to enroll a child in the vacated space from the waiting list.

Arrival and Departure

Parents or authorized adults (18 years or older) must accompany each child inside the center, clock in, sign in and take them to the appropriate classroom. If the child is late arriving, the person bringing the child must also inform the teacher or a member of the management team of the reason for late arrival.

Parents or authorized adults must make the classroom staff aware of the child's presence before leaving the child. Parents or guardians should wash their hands when entering the classroom during arrival and departure.

Time of Arrival

We urge all children to arrive in time for breakfast, which is served between 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.

Children enrolled in **Pre-Kindergarten MUST** be in their classroom by 8:00 a.m. After 8:00 a.m., they are considered tardy and can be dismissed from the Pre-K program. Please read the Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) Pre-K Family Handbook for more information.

Early and Preschool Head Start

Children enrolled in Early and Preschool Head Start are encouraged to be in their classroom by 8:00 a.m. in order to benefit from the E/PHS core day. Our staff will work with parents of children with patterns of tardiness that put them at risk of missing a percentage of the program day.

Child Departure

Children will only be released to those persons whose name appears on the "Permission to Pick Up" list authorized by parents.

- Photo identification will be required from any authorized person who is unknown to staff when that person requests to pick up a child.
- Parents or other persons must use the check-out system when picking up the child. If a child is picked up early (before 2:30 p.m.), the person requesting the child's release must also notify staff of the reason for early pickup from the core day for E/PHS or Pre-K.
- No child will be released to any person suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Changes to the "Permission to Pick Up" must be made in writing.
- Children enrolled in Pre-K or E/PHS must be picked up by 2:30 pm unless they are enrolled in the After School Program. Children who stay past 2:30 pm will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute beginning at 2:31 pm. The late fee will be charged to the parent's account and will be due by Friday of the week it was charged.
- Children that stay past the center closing time of 6:30 pm will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute beginning at 6:31 pm). The late fee will be charged to the parent's account. This late fee will be due by Friday of the week it was charged. If not paid, the child will not be able to return to the center on the following Monday. Multiple (chronic) late pick-ups may lead to disenrollment from the program.
- Multiple (chronic) pick-ups are defined as a child being picked up late 2 or more times within a week and 5 late pick-ups in a month. Child Protective Services will be notified about children not picked up within one hour of closing unless a parent has made contact with the center and presented a reasonable reason for late pick up.

Dis-enrolling

Every effort will be made to work with children and parents in our program. However, there are instances when it may become necessary to dis-enroll a child. In the unlikely event this occurs, parents will be notified in writing that the child will be dis-enrolled on a specific date and officially withdrawn from the program. Instances that may result in dis-enrollment include:

- Disruptive behavior - children who demonstrate behavior that is harmful to themselves or others. All incidents of disruptive behavior will be documented and all resources and techniques to improve the behavior will be exhausted. Parents will be fully informed and involved in all efforts to correct the disruptive behavior prior to dis-enrollment. Documents on disruptive children will be reviewed by the School Readiness Specialists in order to develop a plan of action.
- A child's day may be modified due to disruptive behavior to prevent dis-enrolling, however, this will be carefully monitored by the School Readiness Specialist to determine the effectiveness of the modified day strategy.
- Poor attendance -all absences will be documented and discussed to try to improve the situation.
- Delinquent payments – payment is due on Friday, in advance of service. Payments are delinquent at closing time on Friday.
- Late pickup - leaving children in the center after closing hours or after their program day ends. A late fee will be assessed and if fee is not paid after more than two late pick ups, could result in dis-enrollment.
- Late arrival - Pre-K children who do not come on time as required by the BRIGHT FROM THE START: GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CARE AND LEARNING.
- Failure to provide necessary documents – parents who do not provide the required documentation within the proper timelines.
- Parent disruption of the program – abusive, profane or loud inappropriate language and threatening behavior by adults that are harmful to children, staff, other parents, volunteers, self, or the center.
- Non-compliance with the Agreements signed at enrollment.

Section 3: Tuition, Fees and Scholarships

Tuition (Fees)

There is an annual registration fee for enrollment in the early learning program at Sheltering Arms. Tuition is charged for Child Care, After School, Summer Enrichment, non-Pre-K days, and school holidays. Scholarships are based on income and the availability of funding. Tuition is payable in accordance with the Parent Understandings, Permissions and Agreements form signed by parents at the time of enrollment. Tuition is due on Friday in advance of service. If tuition is not paid by Friday, parents will receive a late notice stating that the child will not be permitted to return to the center until tuition is paid in full. All payments must be received in advance in weekly or bi-weekly increments based on the special circumstances of the parent such as their pay period. Payments must be paid by money order, debit, or credit card only. Tuition will not be adjusted when the center is closed due to inclement weather, holidays, teacher work days or other circumstances beyond our control.

In order to maintain your child’s slot in the center, all tuition must be paid in full even when your child is out due to vacation or for any other extended period of time, such as illness.

When tuition is paid in advance and the child withdraws from the program, all unused tuition will be refunded by check from the Administrative Office.

Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded based on the date of initial inquiry, verification of income, priority for services and availability of funding. They are reviewed annually. Scholarship applications are confidential. Income must be verified to determine eligibility for scholarships. Parents must be employed or enrolled in school or job training to remain eligible – single parents = 25 hours per week; two parents = 35 hours each. Scholarships are subject to change based on the availability of funding. Funds generated from center-based fundraising help support scholarships.

Section 4: Early Childhood Education (Curriculum and Classrooms)

Curriculum

We use *The Creative Curriculum*, a developmentally appropriate, comprehensive curriculum for programs serving children from birth through age five. It is based on knowledge of child development theory and careful consideration of the latest research in the field of early childhood education. It is based on five fundamental principles:

- Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning.
- Social-emotional competence is a significant factor in school success.
- Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning.
- The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions.
- Teacher—family partnerships promote development and learning.

Through the curriculum, teachers are provided the tools and knowledge for working with all learners. This includes working with English- and dual-language learners as well as advanced learners and children with disabilities. Our main focus is on creating high-quality learning environments that will enable every child to reach his/her full potential.

Infants, Toddlers, and Twos

The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, helps teachers understand developmentally appropriate practice and how to implement daily routines and create meaningful experiences that respond to children’s strengths, interests, and needs. We focus on responsive care while incorporating learning objectives that enable teachers to

plan and implement developmentally appropriate experiences for children from birth to age three.

During this time, each child is assigned a primary caregiver and a small bonding group within their classroom. This helps teachers to get to know each child well. Primary caregivers stay with the same children during their first three years until they move to the preschool classroom.

Preschool

The Creative Curriculum System for Preschool features daily resources to guide teachers in facilitating learning experiences for three and four year old children. Teachers provide playful and engaging activities and learning opportunities that intentionally promote language, literacy, math, science, social studies, and physical skills. Individualized instruction is a priority for every child. Using exploration and discovery as a way of learning, teachers work with each child to foster confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills.

Pre-Kindergarten

The Creative Curriculum Study Starters are used in our Pre-K classrooms to support development and learning. Studies are one of the most effective ways for children to learn science and social studies content while developing skills in literacy, math, the arts, and technology. Through Studies, we capitalize on children's wonderful ability to become totally engaged in topics and activities that interest them, and then gently challenge children to extend their thinking to higher levels. Children engage in direct observation and experimentation and then link new ideas to what they already know. Teachers facilitate children's ability to think, organize information, construct understandings, and develop problem solving skills. Each day's learning builds upon what was studied before, and each new study provides opportunities for children to extend skills acquired in previous work.

Parent Involvement

We view parents as their child's first teacher and an essential partner in the education process. We invite families to be engaged in their child's educational experience. We look to parents to provide information about their child's interests and strengths as well as input into the goals they have for their children. We strive to create a learning environment that includes materials, activities, and interactions that will meet the individual needs of each child as well as the group as a whole. Lesson plans, developed weekly, address the needs identified through ongoing assessment, daily teacher observations, and curricular objectives.

Rest Time

All children will have the advantage of an afternoon rest period (between 12:00 - 2:00). The rest time for Preschool and Pre-K is generally 1 hour. Infants nap according to their own schedule. Cribs, cots and blankets are provided. Sheltering Arms' Safe Sleep Practices Policy is followed by staff.

Outdoor Play Requirements

Children need fresh air every day. Each child will be provided at least 1.5 hours of outdoor activity per day, weather permitting. Even in cold weather, children will go outside for fresh air (weather permitting). When children return to the center after an illness, staff assumes that they are well enough to go outside and participate in all activities. A child may be excused from outdoor activities for a limited period of time if there is medical documentation that outdoor activity is medically contraindicated. We also monitor outdoor play based on recommendations from the Clean Air Campaign.

Guidance and Discipline

Children learn what they live. Our example of honest and fair action with all children, loving and calming words, and gentle hugs of encouragement are the most powerful ways we teach children how to live in the world. Teachers provide a positive environment where the rules are clear and consistent. Teachers encourage positive behavior by being well-prepared with age-appropriate learning activities:

- Redirecting children whose behavior is inappropriate to another activity
- Praising and encouraging specific behavior.

Biting

Infants, toddlers and two-year olds are often unable to communicate effectively with words and may sometimes bite another child. Staff makes every attempt to prevent this from happening. However, at some point your child may be bitten or bite another child. Staff will treat the wound and notify you on the Incident Report form and on the biting form. Biting incidents are confidential. Parents may decide to have the bite checked by their doctor if the skin was penetrated and bleeding occurred.

Toilet Learning and Healthy Sexual Development

Staff uses correct names for body parts and bodily functions with children of all ages. When your child shows signs of readiness for using the toilet, our staff will be happy to assist you. Please carefully read our Toilet Training Readiness handout.

Children learn about their bodies and sexual differences in the same way they learn other information – in a simple, gradual, natural way. We gently and clearly redirect typical sexual behavior (playing “doctor,” removing clothing, masturbation) and involve the children in more appropriate activities. We never use shame, guilt, or punishment to stop children from exploring sexual behaviors or language. We teach children the differences between “good touch” and “bad touch” as appropriate.

Individual Needs of Children

The goal of the Sheltering Arms curriculum is to provide children with an environment that is conducive to learning, encourages curiosity, exploration, problem solving, and self-expression, and assists children in developing a positive self-image. Each child in an infant, toddler or two-year old classroom is assigned a primary caregiver and a small bonding group within their classroom. This helps teachers to get to know each child well. Primary caregivers stay with the same infants/toddlers/twos until they turn three and move to the preschool classroom.

Developmental Assessment

Sheltering Arms uses the Teaching Strategies GOLD ongoing observational assessment tool for children from birth through kindergarten. It is a research-based tool grounded in 38 objectives for development and learning that are predictors of school success and aligned to Georgia Early Learning Standards. The assessment is used to identify the skill levels of each child upon entering the program and to track progress throughout the year.

Developmental assessment reports are produced in the fall, winter, and spring, to share the information with parents. Arrangements are made, in partnership with parents, when the assessment indicates a possible need for further testing or evaluation. Our goal is for each child to meet their developmental milestones and to receive immediate interventions when they do not.

In addition, our Pre-K teachers use the Work Sampling System to collect child assessment information. This information is shared with parents twice a year, in the winter and spring.

Inclusive Environment

Every effort will be made to include children with special needs in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Our goal is to enroll infants, toddlers and young children with and without disabilities who will play, develop, and learn together in our center-based settings. Children suspected and/or diagnosed with special needs will be accepted into the center based on their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP). Children must be linked to Babies Can't Wait Program (children under age 3) or to the local public school special needs program (children over age 3) for services. Linkage to Babies Can't Wait and/or the local public school is necessary for a child to be enrolled and remain enrolled. In addition, there will be a meeting to plan for the child's enrollment to determine if center-based care is the appropriate placement for the family, taking into consideration classroom group sizes and ratios.

Parents may also choose their own services providers whether private therapists (Speech & Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, behavioral health, etc.), psychologists, specialists, and/diagnosticians; however, children will also be assessed by the Sheltering Arms School Readiness Specialists and/or Health and Nutrition

Specialists based on their needs. School Readiness Specialists will assess the impact of a child's disability on involvement and progress in our general education curriculum.

Sheltering Arms practices principles of inclusion, the integration of children with disabilities with typically developing children in the same classroom setting. The severity of each child's disability and the availability of other community services are taken into account when recruiting and enrolling children with special needs. Sheltering Arms will always focus on the best interest of all children.

Parents are encouraged to disclose all information regarding their child's disabilities or special needs in order for Sheltering Arms to determine the most appropriate method to accommodate their needs. Parents who withhold pertinent information regarding a child's special needs may create a liability risk for health and safety concerns. In conjunction with the IEP or IFSP, if needed, a Special Care Plan is developed to document the special accommodations that must occur to best support a child in their natural learning environment. On rare occasions, a child may require accommodations that are NOT considered to be *within reasonable means* for Sheltering Arms in the least restrictive environment. What is reasonable will vary among programs. However, there are three most important variables that are generally taken in consideration: (1) the needs of a child with a disability, (2) the accommodations requested, and (3) the resources available to the program. All accommodations must be based on the individualized assessments of the child's needs and the program's ability to make the necessary modifications.

Transitions

Each child will have a transition plan to encourage the successful transition from class to class, into kindergarten, and to other child care programs. Transition activities are designed to prepare all partners (children, families, schools, and communities) to develop knowledge, skills, and relationships that help children move from one educational setting to another.

Transportation (field trips)

Transportation is provided for scheduled field trips. Field trips are an important part of our educational program for three and four-year old children. Field trips are subject to cancellation due to unforeseen circumstances beyond our control. Outings into the community, nature walks, and other such activities help enhance the classroom activities. Parents are encouraged to go with the class whenever possible. Parents will be notified about trips and outings and must provide written permission. We try to plan trips that do not require an additional fee from the parents. Parents of three and four-year-olds will be notified in advance of field trips or special activities away from the center. Parents must sign a written authorization for their child to participate in each trip.

There are no water related activities or field trips that will occur in water that is more than two feet deep.

Diapers and Pull-Ups

Parents of children in diapers are urged to provide enough diapers for the week. During toilet training, parents are urged to bring a minimum of six pairs of plastic covered training pants or pull-ups. Be sure the outer pants are large enough for the child to manage. Diapers will be provided for children in the Early Head Start program.

Clothing and Personal Belongings

Teachers plan a variety of educational, hands-on learning activities for your child. Sometimes your child's clothing may become soiled or dirty so please consider this when dressing your child for school. We recommend comfortable, inexpensive clothing.

The center is **NOT** responsible for lost or damaged clothing, shoes, earrings, or other jewelry. Necklaces and small beads are a safety risk for young children and may not be worn at the center.

Please label your child's clothing with your child's name or initials. In cold weather, send a cap and mittens. Mittens attached to a yarn that runs through the coat sleeves are helpful.

Each child must have an extra change of clothing, including underwear in his/her cubby for emergencies. Parents should check their child's change of clothes frequently so that appropriate clothing based on the seasons is available as needed. Children who are toilet training must have 2-3 changes of clothes, especially underwear. Please wash and return center clothing as soon as possible.

Children must wear shoes with a heel strap. Rubber soled shoes are best for running and climbing. Open toe shoes, sandals, flip-flops, wedges, shoes with high heels, or rollers may not be worn.

Child Security Items

Children may bring a security item or pacifier, if needed, for a smooth home to center transition, but PLEASE do not allow children to bring toys, games, or other items to the center. The center is not responsible for lost or broken items.

Hazardous Items

Children **are not** permitted to wear scarves, necklaces, pacifiers, or other items around their necks. In addition, pacifiers may not be attached to clothing. **Beads, small rubber bands and small hair bows cannot be worn for hair adornment** because they pose a choking threat if they become loose. Balloons are not allowed in the center.

Section 5: Health and Safety

Immunizations

ALL children are required to have a current immunization record from either the Health Department or family physician within 30 days of enrollment. All child care centers are required by law (O.C.G.A. Chapter 20-2-771) to have current immunization records on file for each child. An official affidavit must be on file if immunizations conflict with the religious beliefs of the parent or guardian.

Preventive and Primary Medical and Oral Health Care

Within 90 days of enrollment all children are required to have documentation from health care and oral health care professionals as to whether or not the child is up-to-date on a schedule of age appropriate preventive and primary medical and oral health care, based on: the well-child visits and dental periodicity schedules as prescribed by the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program in Georgia. Documentation must be updated based on the age of the child.

Within 45 calendar days after the child first attends, we will either obtain or perform evidence-based vision and hearing screenings.

Oral Hygiene

Children are required to brush their teeth at least once a day while at the center using toothpaste approved by the American Dental Association. All infant gums are swabbed after each bottle feeding.

Ear, Eye, Dental Exam and Nutrition Screening (Form 3300)

ALL children age four on or before September 1st are required to have an Ear, Eye, Dental Exam and Nutrition Screening within 30 days of enrollment.

If needed, parents are expected to follow-up with further exams or treatment. Family Support Coaches are available for assistance.

Symptoms that Require Exclusion from the Center

A child shall not be accepted nor allowed to remain at the center if the child has the equivalent of a one hundred and one (101) degrees Fahrenheit or higher oral temperature and accompanied by another contagious symptom, such as but not limited to; a rash like appearance (i.e. ringworm), two or more loose stools that cannot be contained in a diaper (diarrhea), or sore throat symptoms. The Center must follow the Common Infectious Illnesses Chart of recommendations for exclusion of sick children from the center and their readmission. A child cannot return to the center until they have been symptom free for 24 hours from the time they are picked up. Please see the chart posted in the center for more information.

Requirement to Report Communicable Disease

The center is required to report any suspected cases of notifiable communicable disease to the local county health department. Parents of all children enrolled shall be notified in writing of the occurrence of any of the illnesses on the communicable disease chart within 24 hours after the center becomes aware of the illness or the next business day. If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, please notify the center so that we can notify families.

Policy Regarding Blood Borne Pathogens

Sheltering Arms makes every effort to protect its children, parents, and employees from any communicable disease. Sheltering Arms also does not discriminate in its hiring, enrollment, or dismissal practices based on physical disability.

Blood borne viruses have not been found to be transmitted by casual contact. Wiping noses, sharing mouthed toys, hugging, coughing, sneezing, using common utensils, or touching common surfaces used by someone infected with a blood borne pathogen does not spread them.

Routine precautions will be taken when dealing with incidents where there is blood or body fluid involvement (i.e. rubber gloves, proper handwashing and careful sanitizing and disinfecting of all surfaces, etc.) If the carrier of a blood borne virus is in a stage where open lesions occur in the mouth or other parts of the body, and/or displays a biting behavior, they will be considered too high risk to participate in our program.

Sheltering Arms will provide printed material and educational information to help alleviate any concerns from staff or parents.

Any employee who discriminates against or breeches confidentiality regarding anyone with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), or Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) or other blood borne pathogens will be disciplined.

Parental Notification (illness, injury, communicable disease)

Parents will be notified immediately by phone when professional medical attention is required or the child experiences symptoms of moderate discomfort such as elevated temperature, vomiting, or diarrhea. Staff will contact parents to obtain specific instructions until the parents can arrange to pick up the child. Parents will be notified at the time of pick up when further professional medical attention is required.

Sheltering Arms must report to the center's licensing agency any serious illness or injury requiring hospitalization or professional medical attention other than first aid. Center staff will document these incidents on an incident form.

Procedure for Medication Authorization

The Medication Authorization Form must be filled out completely for ALL medicine, prescription and over-the-counter, on a weekly basis.

The medications must:

- *Be in the original container that must be child-proof*
- *Labeled with the following information*
 - Child's first and last name clearly marked*
 - Name of the health professional that prescribed or recommended the medication*
 - Date prescription was filled, if prescription medicine*
 - Expiration date*
- *Have specific instructions for giving, storing, and disposing of medication from the health professional for prescription and over-the-counter medications (instructions for over-the-counter medications may be faxed into the center by the health professional)*
- *Authorization for medicine is for one week only. A new form must be submitted every Monday*
- *Medication will be administered at 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.*
- *In case of adverse medical reactions, parents will be notified immediately*
- *If parents cannot be reached, staff will call the emergency numbers listed by parents on the enrollment application. If the situation is critical, we will call 911*

Emergency Medication

All children who require the use of rescue medications (medications only used in emergencies, such as Epipens, rescue inhalers, seizure medication) are required to have supporting documentation (treatment plan) from a physician in order to leave medication at the center.

All rescue medications must remain at the center anytime a child is present or the child will not be allowed in the center.

NOTE: *We encourage parents to ask their doctor to prescribe medicines that can be given in 12 hour cycles, if possible, so that medicine can be administered at home and not at the center. If the child must receive medication at the center, ask the pharmacist to divide the medication so that a portion can be left at the center.*

Staffing of Children with Special Conditions

For children with special conditions such as seizures, asthma and food allergies, a staffing will need to take place at the center before the child can begin school. Staffings will require parents to provide supporting documentation from a physician or nutritionist. If medication is required to be administered at school, it must be brought to the staffing. On occasions, children with exceptionalities may also require staffings (refer to page 14- Inclusive Environment)

Requirement to Report Suspected Child Abuse

Each child will be observed daily, upon arrival, by the teachers to check for and document early symptoms of illness, suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or deprivation. If abuse, neglect, exploitation, or deprivation is suspected, a member of the center management team will make a report to the local Department of Family and Children's Services as required by law. (GA. Code 19-7-5)

Medical or Other Emergencies

When a medical emergency arises involving a child, either at the center or on a field trip, the center staff will seek prompt emergency medical treatment and provide any certified or licensed emergency medical personnel with immediate access to the child. In the case of a SERIOUS accident, the closest staff member with first aid training will render first aid and a member of the Center Management Team will contact the parent. If neither parents nor the family physician can be reached, a member of the Center Management Team or designated staff member will call 911. The designated hospital for each location is posted in the center. If a child is allergic or requires an anaphylactic device, it is the responsibility of the parent to make sure that all medication is properly labeled and on site. This medication must be on site before a child can begin school. In the event of a lost child, either at the center or on a field trip, the center staff will initiate a search; designate a teacher to be in charge of the group, and then notify the center management team, who will take any other necessary steps to locate the child.

Staff Training in Emergency Procedures

Center staff is trained in emergency first aid procedures and CPR. When minor incidents (bumps, scrapes, and scratches) occur, we will treat the injury. A written incident report form will be sent home on the day of the incident, filed in the incident log, and noted in the child's contact log. Parents will be notified of head injuries.

Child Accident Insurance

Insurance coverage is provided to all children enrolled at Sheltering Arms while they are at the center or involved in any center-related activity. If a child is involved in an accident and requires medical attention, parents will be notified immediately. If the center is unable to reach parents or the emergency release names given by parents, and the situation warrants medical attention, the staff will obtain the medical attention. Parents will then be notified as soon as possible. If medical attention is required, claim forms can be obtained from the center management team. It is the parent's responsibility to have the claim forms completed by the attending physician or medical facility and to return it to the center with the bill. The staff will send it to the insurance company.

Fire and Storm Evacuation

Fire and storm evacuation routes are posted in each classroom. Fire and storm drills are conducted monthly and posted on the center bulletin board. In the event the center must be evacuated, the staff will take the children to the designated evacuation site

determined for each center. The evacuation site is posted in the center. Staff will contact parents as soon as possible to alert them of the evacuation and to provide instructions on picking up their children from the designated location.

Handling other emergencies

In case of severe weather, loss of electrical power or water, death or serious injury at the center, staff will contact parents immediately and follow operational procedures. No center personnel will impede in any way the delivery of emergency care or services to a child by licensed or certified emergency health care professionals.

Child Safety Reminders

- No children shall be left unattended in vehicles while on Sheltering Arms' property.
- All children must be securely buckled in the proper safety seats when arriving and departing on Sheltering Arms' property.

Section 6: Nutrition

Meals and Snacks

Sheltering Arms provides breakfast, lunch, and a snack. We provide food that helps to meet over two-thirds of the child's daily nutritional requirements. **No outside food is allowed in centers unless special permission is granted by the Center Director or Nutrition Manager.** Weekly menus are posted in each center and parents may submit suggestions for the menus. As a program participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), our agency ensures that children are receiving a variety of healthy meals and snacks, and Family Style Dining is a daily practice in the classrooms during mealtimes. Children are encouraged to taste each new food. Parents are welcome to have lunch with their child at any time. Please give the center advance notice so the food service manager can prepare enough food. Special consideration is given to those children requiring special diets and feeding equipment. Parents with children that require special diets, must have their pediatrician complete an Individual Nutrition Care Plan and submit to their Family Support Coach. Notify the Family Support Coach if your child has any known food allergies or special dietary requirements. If your child has severe food allergies and/or requires an Epi-pen, parents are required to meet with staff prior to the child's first day of school. We serve whole milk to one (1) year old children and 1% milk to children two (2) and older.

Infant Formula and Baby Food

Parents of infants must complete the Infant Affidavit form which states the kind of formula and cereal we will serve. We will provide ready to use Enfamil Infant with iron (milk-based), Enfamil ProSobee with iron and Gerber rice cereal. However, if a child requires formula other than the ones that we provide, the parent must provide us with a

doctor's note. In this case, Sheltering Arms will provide formula for Head Start/Early Head Start children only. Also, Parents of Infants must sign and date an Individual Feeding Plan for children under age one. The plan includes the formula to be given, instructions for introducing solid foods, the amount to be given, and notations about food allergies.

Food is never used as a punishment or a reward.

Breastfeeding

Mothers are encouraged and supported to breastfeed. A designated area is set aside at each center for breastfeeding mothers to breastfeed. Any breast milk remaining one hour from the beginning of the feeding shall be discarded or returned to parents.

Section 7: Parent Engagement

Parent Responsibilities

- Meet personally with an Enrollment Specialist or Family Support Coach to complete the enrollment application and agreements.
- Pay tuition as agreed upon in a timely manner. Tuition Express is highly recommended as the method of payment.
- Notify the center of any change of address, employment, income, family status, home or business telephone number as soon as possible. Emergency numbers must always be current.
- Dress appropriately while in the center – in such a manner that is a good role model for children. i.e. shoes must be worn, day-time clothing (no bathrobes, pajamas or bedroom slippers), no slang or profanity on t-shirts, hair should be groomed (no hair curlers).

Documents

- Comply with requirements for immunizations, health checks, and other screenings as mandated by funders.
- Provide court documents regarding visitation rights if you are separated or divorced. Staff cannot refuse a parent the right to visit or pick up their child from the center without documentation.

Parent Involvement

- Attend parent meetings and center events as often as possible.
- Read and respond to posted information and correspondence from the center.
- Collaborate with the staff in meeting the readiness requirements for success in school.

- Volunteer as often as possible: supervise sleeping children while teachers attend staff meetings, assist teachers during program times/outside play, and assist with field trips and in many other ways.
- Advocate for Sheltering Arms, Head Start, and quality child care for all children.

Communication

- Refrain from using your cell phone in the center during drop off and pick-up.
- Communicate with staff and other parents in a professional manner and in a manner that sets a good example for children. Examples: no profanity, shouting, name calling, or threatening words or gestures.

Parent/Teacher Conference and Personal/Home Visits

- Parents are required to attend parent/teacher conferences at least twice a year.
- Head Start parents are invited to also participate in a home visit twice each year scheduled at their convenience. Staff are happy to talk with parents about their children; however, it is best not to discuss a child's behavior in his/her presence. ALL parents are encouraged to ask for a conference at any time.

Confidentiality

All family information is confidential and is not provided to any other agency or individual without written parental consent. Access to a child's file is limited in order to protect the privacy of children and parents. Relevant documentation may be released to state and federal licensing agencies upon request. Relevant information may also be released to a hospital and/or physician in an emergency. Parents are asked to sign a release authorizing the center to obtain medical assistance in an emergency when parents cannot be reached.

Parent Notification of Center Policies

Each center maintains a Parent Notification Bulletin Board in the hallway or center lobby area that includes the License, copy of rules, review of evaluation report, communicable disease chart, statement of parental access, names of persons in charge, current weekly menu, emergency plans for severe weather and fire, and statement for visitors.

Parent Communication

Messages may be:

- Displayed on the computer during the check in/out procedure when dropping off and picking up children.
- Posted on classroom bulletin boards.
- Shared on Parent Curriculum Involvement forms.
- Posted in newsletters for parents that may be distributed each month.
- Shared with staff by talking on a daily basis.

- Discussed during a scheduled appointment with staff. We encourage parents to sign-up for our monthly e-newsletter and to follow us on social media. Links can be found at www.shelteringarmsforkids.com
- Phoned, faxed, texted or emailed.
- Communicated through calling posts.

NOTE: Notes placed on center bulletin boards, cubbies, or lockers, or distributed at parent events or meetings must have the prior approval of the center director. The director has the right and responsibility to deny solicitations of any kind.

Corporal Punishment

Physical punishment or verbal abuse by any adult, including parents, is not allowed on center property.

The goal of discipline is to help children learn inner control over their own behavior. Helping children express emotions using words rather than physical force is the best way to help them do this.

Staff may schedule conferences with parents to discuss concerns about a child's behavior in order to gain their understanding and support of ways to work better with the child. Our goal is to work in partnership with parents.

When persistent behaviors make it difficult for a child or other children to benefit from classroom activities, staff will develop a written plan to help the child. The plan will involve parents, teachers, management team staff, and community resources. If after diligent efforts to include the child in group care, the child poses a threat to him/herself or others it may be necessary to dis-enroll the child.

Mental Health

Positive self-concepts are developed in children through the mastery of age appropriate skills, the establishment of warm and caring relationships with teachers, peers, and the opportunity to make many choices for themselves.

We have staff available to provide training for staff and parents, to observe children in the classroom setting, to provide individual consultation and technical assistance for staff and parents, and to make recommendations for intervention for children with special needs.

Mental Health means that young children are growing in their ability to:

- understand and share feelings
- have close and positive relationships
- explore and learn

Early Childhood Mental Health (birth-5 years) is a child's growing capacity to do these things, all in the cultural context of family and community (adapted from ZERO TO THREE):

- experience, regulate, and express emotions
- develop close, secure relationships
- explore the surroundings and learn

Early Childhood Mental Health is the same as Social Emotional Development.

Family-Centered Practice

Every child and family deserves Sheltering Arms. Without family involvement, the care and education we offer children is not as effective or long lasting. Quality child care must include family engagement and support or it cannot be quality. In the first five years of a child's life, the personality develops and the child learns patterns of behavior that follow them throughout life. By caring for the child in the context of their family, we influence the home environment, strengthening and building a strong family unit. We believe that parents are the child's first and most important teachers and our goal is to arm you with the best information and resources possible.

Building Protective Factors to Promote Strong Families

Each Center has a full-time Family Support Coach to work with families to build strong foundations. Coaches are available to assist families with information on a variety of interests and needs, especially in the areas of health, career, postsecondary education, child development and parenting.

We fully support and strive to embed the five research-based Protective Factors into our services and supports for children and their families:

1. Parental Resilience
2. Social Connections
3. Knowledge of Child Development
4. Concrete Support in Times of Need
5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Parent's Participation in Policymaking and Planning

Parents are directly involved in program policy-making and planning through the center's Parent Leadership Organization (PLO). The Parent Leadership Organization meets monthly and is open to all family members. Parents have the opportunity to be elected to leadership positions and to participate in committees, or focus groups, and for Early and Preschool Head Start parents, the Policy Council. Each meeting offers parents the opportunity to give their opinions, and to participate in advocacy actions and event planning.

Staff helps parents understand their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Parent leaders and committee members are required to sign a code of conduct agreement as a representative of Sheltering Arms. Each year some parents may be appointed to a self-

assessment team to assess the effectiveness of the program. In addition, each year parents give their input in a parent questionnaire and the results are used in program planning and evaluation.

Process for Expressing Concerns

Enrollment at Sheltering Arms is voluntary and we are very glad you have chosen us! We are committed to providing you with a high quality program. Policies and procedures are in place to meet the requirements of those that fund or regulate our program. We want you to be involved with your child's care and education. We welcome your ideas and believe concerns are best handled informally and expediently between the involved parties. At Sheltering Arms, we foster respect and appreciation for the diverse ways and ideas of other people.

We want to teach our children that respect for differences is the key to diverse people living in a world of peace. We believe it is okay to "agree to disagree" but to do so respectfully. At all times it is important to respect each other's emotional and physical space. Any person who verbally or physically threatens another person will be asked to leave immediately. Formal steps to express concerns include:

1. If you have a concern about your child, please address the concern with your child's teacher first (not in the presence of the child). If the concern is not addressed to your satisfaction, then discuss your concern with the Curriculum Specialist and/or Family Support Coach. If you are still unsatisfied, discuss the concern with the Center Director. It is best to schedule a conference with the teacher or director so that adequate time can be arranged to hear your concern.
2. If you have a concern about our policies and procedures, please feel free to discuss any aspect with the Center Director. It is best to schedule a conference so that proper time can be arranged to hear your concerns.
3. If your concern about your child or the policies and procedures are not resolved with the Center Director, you may ask the Center Director to arrange a meeting within five days with the Sr. Director of Site Leadership.
4. If the concern is not resolved in a meeting with the Sr. Director of Site Leadership, the next step is to put your concern in writing to the Vice President of Operations at the administrative office within five days of the meeting with the Senior Director of Site Leadership.
5. The VP of Operations will review the concern and make a recommendation for resolution within five days of the receipt of the concern.
6. If step five fails to resolve the concern, it may be referred to the President/CEO of Sheltering Arms for review within five days of the Vice President of Operations' recommendation. The determination of the President/CEO will be final.

Birthdays and Other Special Events

Parents are encouraged to celebrate their child's birthday or other significant days at the center. Please talk with the staff to plan the celebration in such a way that all children are included in a fun, learning experience. Balloons are hazardous to children according to

Child Care Licensing and are not allowed in classrooms or at center events. Parents are encouraged to bring healthy snacks, limiting sugar. Food brought from home for sharing must be pre-packaged. **All invitations must be approved by the Center Director before distribution to the other parents.**

Parents are encouraged to develop strong community linkages for meeting their basic needs for food, housing, and health-care as well as education, recreation, leisure, employment, culture, and the arts. We strive to connect people to people. Parents and staff work together in planning formal and informal opportunities for linking with community resources.



Family Support Team



Father/Daughter Dance



Father Involvement



Community Partners

Section 8: Resources

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (families web site)
<http://families.naeyc.org>
- Babies Can't Wait
www.bcw-bibs.com
- All Pro Dad
www.allprodad.com
- IMOM
www.imom.com
- Strengthening Families Georgia
www.strengtheningfamilies.net
- Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)
www.decals.ga.gov
- Great Start Georgia
www.GreatStartGeorgia.org
- Prevent Child Abuse Georgia Helpline
1-800-244-5373
- Cox Campus GA. Partners (free, video-based courses and resources)
www.coxcampus.org
- United Way First Call for Help
www.unitedwayatlanta.org; 2-1-1
- Center for Disease Control (CDC) Learn the Signs. Act Early.
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly

TO CONTACT THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM, WRITE OR CALL:

**385 Centennial Olympic Park Drive, NW
Atlanta, GA 30313
(404) 523-2767 or (404) 523-9952 (fax)**

**Blythe Keeler Robinson, President and CEO
Michele Schmitt, Vice President, Operations
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Sheltering Arms

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