

# DAY-STAR CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

## DAY-STAR CHRISTIAN ACADEMY, INC. FAMILY HANDBOOK

**“Building Children for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”**

2299 Godby Road, College Park, GA 30349



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DAY-STAR CHRISTIAN  
ACADEMY

# Day-Star Christian Academy

## FAMILY HANDBOOK

Summer/Fall 2024

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## Day-Star Christian Academy, Inc.

# WELCOME

Dear Family,

Welcome to Day-Star Christian Academy. We are glad to have you aboard. We will make every effort to assure the experience of you and your child is most rewarding by providing you the best service possible in customer service, a clean environment, and a variety of quality educational programs and services.

We share a small but significant amount of your child's life in these critical years of development and we take such a privilege seriously. Our goal is to positively impact your child's life educationally, spiritually, emotionally, and socially so they are provided with a strong foundation for their educational journey. We look forward to working with you and your child to help reach developmental milestones and help them thrive. We strive not only to provide a challenging academic program but a secure, personal environment of care for each child. We hope that we can exceed your expectations and want to take this time to personally welcome you to Day-Star Christian Academy.

Our Family Handbook has been written to describe our program, philosophy, policies, and all the practical details that go into making each day as smooth and successful as possible. Please carefully read this handbook and save it for future reference. The management at Day-Star would be glad to answer any of your questions. Once again, welcome!

Thank you for choosing us. May God bless you and work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Sincerely,

Pastor Carolyn A. Kelly  
Founder & CEO

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## ABOUT US

### *Philosophy*

*We believe...*

- That children are precious and must receive care from adults who are competent and caring--whose values enable them to be excellent role models.
- That children should experience numerous positive learning interactions, leading to an increased sense of competence, self-worth, and independence.
- That children's play and exploration is extremely vital to healthy physical development, acceptable social skills, and cognitive growth.
- That teachers, drawing upon their training and experience, must create an appropriate educational environment which carefully guides children from one developmental level to another.
- That parents significantly contribute to and enhance the quality of care offered at Day-Star Christian Academy.

### *Mission*

The mission of Day-Star Christian Academy is to help your child reach his/her maximum potential in their learning and development. The staff and administration of the Academy carry a professional and positive attitude towards the parent and child. Whether infant, toddler, preschooler, or school age, our curriculum provides lessons that help develop the whole child spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially.

We believe our educational programs provide a well-balanced approach to success that is fundamentally Christian, constructively disciplined, and structurally sound in a loving environment – vital keys to “Building Children for the 21st Century.”

### *Certification*

Licensed (current), *Bright from the Start – Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning*

Quality Rated (expires Jan. 2024), *Bright from the Start – Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning*

### *Definition of Family*

In this handbook we refer to family as the parent (biological, non-biological, or adopted), legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest and responsibility of the child in our care.

### *Hours of Operation*

Childcare services are provided from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday through Friday.

The center is closed on weekends and most national holidays. See “Holidays” section to learn more about what holidays the center is closed.

**For non-GA Pre-K children only, the cutoff drop-off time is 12:00 pm for. Non-GA Pre-K children will not be permitted after 12:00 p.m.**

**For GA Pre-K only, the cutoff time is 8:30 a.m. GA Pre-K children will not be permitted after 8:30 am unless they have a doctor’s note.**

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## Holidays

We are closed for the following holidays:

Christmas Day & Day After	Memorial Day
Christmas Eve	MLK, Jr. Day
Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day	New Year's Day
Independence Day (Fourth of July)	New Year's Eve
Juneteenth/Freedom Day	President's Day
Labor Day	Thanksgiving Day & Day After
	Veterans' Day

There will be early closings on Thanksgiving eve (the day before Thanksgiving) where the center will either be closed or closed early and at the end of the GA Pre-K school year for commencement activities (date/time TBA).

## Admission & Enrollment

A completed enrollment application with all required supporting documents must be submitted for each child enrolled and the enrollment fee and first week's tuition payment paid prior to your child's first day of attendance.

**An enrollment fee of \$75.00 is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is non-refundable.**

Based on the availability and openings, our facility admits children from 6 weeks to 12 years of age.

Our process for introducing children to our program is providing a tour of the facility and classroom for the family and introducing the child's teacher to him or her prior to their first day. Parents are allowed to stay briefly with their child (no more than 30 minutes) to soothe him or her on the first day if the child experiences detachment anxiety.

The individual(s) who newly enrolled a child must complete a New Parent orientation upon enrollment.

**While we are a faith-based organization, children are admitted without regard to race culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided (see our "Inclusion" section).**

## Inclusion

**Day-Star Christian Academy** believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

An inclusive environment that accommodates children of different ability levels is important to us. In addition to requiring staff to complete professional development around inclusive classrooms, all instructional activities are designed to be developmentally appropriate and inclusive. If your child has an IEP/ISP and is already working with a specialist, we allow them to come to our center to work with your child. We also work with partner organizations to help test and/or identify developmental differences. A copy of your child's IEP/ISP will need to be provided and kept on file.



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## Non-Discrimination

At **Day-Star Christian Academy** equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

## Family Activities

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved at the center by providing parents with several activities throughout the year to participate in. We also encourage active volunteering in and out of your child's classroom, participating in Day-Star sponsored events, and providing feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

Please see the list of Family Activities at the end of this handbook.

## Confidentiality

We respect our families' right to the privacy of their personal information. Therefore, we will never share, sell, or release any information personally tied to you or your child with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. However, we will make every effort to inform you when such information is requested by an agency. An in-person and written consent must be requested by the primary caregiver to provide an authorized person to obtain a child's personal information. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

## Staff Qualifications

Our teaching staff is hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Typical staff certifications are as follows:

Position Title	Education/Certification	Experience
Lead Teacher	At least Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education	1 year
Teacher Assistant/Aide	Child Development Associate Credential	6 months

Caregivers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

We strongly discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (i.e. babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by Day-Star Christian Academy. *Such an arrangement could result in the termination of the staff member.*

## Child to Staff Ratios

Children are supervised at all times. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

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We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:

Age	Child to Staff	Maximum Group Size
≤ 12 months	6:1	12
13-35 months	8:1	16
3 year-olds	15:1	30
4 year-olds	18:1	36
5 year-olds	20:1	40
6 to 8 year-olds	25:1	50
9 to 12 year olds	25:1	50

Source: Department of Early Care and Learning Rules and Regulations for Childcare Learning Centers..

### **Communication & Family Partnership**

**Daily Communications.** We use a myriad of ways to communicate with families regularly. Using ClassDojo, Procure Solutions, email campaigns, and phone calls, we update our parents about their children throughout the day.

**Bulletin Boards.** Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, upcoming events, meal and nutrition information, holiday closing dates, announcements, and more.

**Newsletters.** Monthly newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters are available electronically and at the sign-in/sign-out desk for your taking.

**Email.** We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

**Parent Resource Area.** Our parent resource area provides a learning environment for parents to provide feedback, ideas and experiences and increase their understanding of early childhood learning and development.

**Family Visits.** Family participation is encouraged. Visit our classrooms, volunteer, come along on a field trip, or attend for special events. Signing in is required for the safety and protection of our children. Each visitor must wear a visitor's badge while on premises and sign-out upon leaving. ***Classroom visitations cannot be for longer than 30 minutes when not actively volunteering or attending a special event.***

**Parent & Family Involvement.** We are working tirelessly to find new and effective ways to involve our parents and families in the learning and development of their children. Parental and familial involvement is critical, and we see it as a partnership. Currently, we provide a resource handbook which provides social, mental, and financial services our family's may need. We will provide onsite parenting classes in the future.

**Conferences.** Formal family & teacher conferences occur twice a year for Georgia's Pre-K program and more informal conferences throughout the year for non-GA Pre-K enrollees. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's developmental progress and work together to set goals for your child's continued growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

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## *Open Door Policy*

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants. We ask nursing mothers to please use a breastfeeding cover when nursing.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked at all times.

Our team will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.

## *Publicity*

Occasionally, photos and videos of activities and events will be taken of the children at the center for use within the center, on our website, and social media. Written permission will be obtained prior to use of photographs and videos.

Unless the family indicates that they do not want their child to participate, we will use pictures and videos of children for publicity.

## **CURRICULA & LEARNING**

### *Learning Environment*

We provide a rich learning environment using The Creative Curriculum, which provides a holistic, developmentally appropriate approach to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a structured daily routine that allows children ample time to explore and play throughout the course of the day. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas based on the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (aka GELDS): physical development and motor skills, social and emotional development, approaches to play and learning, communication, language and literacy, and cognitive development. These areas are explored through creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

### *Curricula & Assessment*

**Day-Star Christian Academy** uses Teaching Strategies' The Creative Curriculum for Preschool and Pre-K as the curricula of choice for its educational programs. The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool and The Creative Curriculum® for Pre-K are comprehensive, research-based curricula that promote exploration and discovery as a way of learning, enabling children to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills. As part of these curricula, we gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress so we can modify and adjust what we are doing in our classroom so as to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. This evaluation is communicated to families periodically during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources.

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For information about your child's day, please see copies of daily schedules and lessons plans posted in each classroom.

### ***Developmental Screening***

**Day-Star Christian Academy** uses the Work Sampling Online (WSO) system to screen, assess, and track the development of each child. To coincide with curricula-based assessment(s), we monitor each child's achievement of developmental milestones, share observations with parents/guardians, and provide resource information as needed for further screenings, evaluations, and early intervention and treatment. The developmental screening process is a collaborative one, involving parents/guardians and done in conjunction with the child's primary care provider and health, education, and early intervention consultants. Developmental screenings are the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian. Day-Star does not provide developmental screening services but may provide recommendations for such services when needed.

### ***Outings and Field Trips***

Weather permitting, we conduct at least 60 minutes of supervised outdoor playtime each day for all children. Children are accounted for at all times.

From time to time, there will be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child on the trip. *Permission Slips, Liability Waivers, and Vehicle Emergency forms* for each trip must be signed by the child's legal parent/guardian.

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season and activity. Walking shoes are a must. Open-toed shoes like sandals and flip-flops may not be appropriate for walking or standing for long periods of time and may make it difficult for your child.

The safety of children and staff is a priority in all activities of childcare programs. Proper restraint systems such as seat belts and car/booster seats and the correct use of them are critically important during travel to/from the childcare program as well as during field trips.

Georgia's state does not have a rule that prohibits children under a certain age from participating in field trips or outings. However, the minimum age for field trips and outings at Day-Star is three (4) years or older. We do our best to provide enriching experiences on site for children enrolled in our programs.

### ***Transitions***

Your child's transition in child care should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced and to acclimate your child to the structured learning environment and routines.

#### ***Transition from home to center***

Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and receive a new family orientation where you can communicate any anticipated concerns. During this time please share the best communication methods that we may use to reach you.

#### ***Transition between learning programs***

Children are transitioned to the next program based primarily on age. However, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability do play a factor in the child's

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transition to the next program. During the transition, the director and future teacher will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program.

### ***Transition to elementary school***

Transition activities such as a field trip to a local elementary school, an end-of-the-year promotion ceremony, and special activities at our center will be part of your child's education at our center. We will provide you with information on local schools, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary school.

### ***Transition for before/after school care***

Children who are of school age may continue with after school care at our center. The center will provide staff to ensure that your child is picked up from school (after school) in a timely manner. The Transportation Agreement and Vehicle Emergency forms must be completed and on file with the center to be eligible for our after-school service.

### ***Electronic Media***

Our normal daily routine does include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computer use but only what is recommended by the state: no more than 60 minutes daily for children ages two and older. Our use of media as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator is in accordance with the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) for the age groups viewing/using media. All Electronic Media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world. Electronic Media will be offered only as a free choice, used to meet a developmental goal, and limited to no more than 60 minutes per day per child.

The state of Georgia prohibits the use of electronic media for children younger than age two.

### ***Multiculturalism***

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, visual representations, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

### ***Celebrations***

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures of children, families, staff and communities.

**Day-Star Christian Academy** welcomes families to celebrate birthdays and join us in observing and celebrating certain holidays. These celebrations will be announced and posted at the center. (See our "Outside Food" policy for birthday and holiday celebrations).

### ***Rest Time (aka Quiet Time)***

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Caregivers/teachers directly observe infants by sight and sound at all times and check on sleeping infants every 10 minutes.

After lunch, all children less than six (6) years of age, participate in a quiet or rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities.

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School age children, although not required, shall be provided an opportunity for a regular rest period if the child desires. For children who do not want to rest, a space and time for quiet play will be made available.

Children under age two (2) are not allowed to rest with objects including but not limited to pacifiers, blankets, stuffed animals or toys, pillows, jackets, bibs, or any other object that could cause choking and/or suffocation.

### ***Toilet Training***

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

Children are trained on an "adult-sized" toilet rather than a training toilet or potty. There is always adult supervision during active toileting. However, if a child is advanced in their toilet training, the teacher does not assist the child with the toileting process unless needed.

## **GUIDANCE**

### ***General Procedure***

**Day-Star Christian Academy** is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

### ***Discipline Policy***

We have created a discipline policy that reflects our philosophy of positive guidance with children. A copy of the discipline policy is included in your enrollment package for you to review and sign.

### ***Challenging Behavior***

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness through modeling, redirection, positive reinforcement and praise, and rewards and recognition.

Each student at **Day-Star Christian Academy** has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place

- 
- Be treated with respect
  - Receive the help and support of caring adults

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behavior is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent and understandable to the child. We maintain a zero tolerance for bullying and physical violence. If you have any concerns about this at any time, please report it to the center director.

### ***Physical Restraint***

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others and we may restrain a child by gently holding her or him only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

### ***Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families***

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

## **TUITION AND FEES**

### ***Important Notice***

All payment and fee processing will be completed by the site director with regular audits conducted by another member of the leadership team. The site director will be in charge of collecting tuition and other fees and contacting families regarding payment issues. If you have a question or concern regarding a payment or fee, please contact our main office at (404) 559-8099 or email [info@day-starchristianacademy.com](mailto:info@day-starchristianacademy.com).

### ***Tuition Rates***

Full-time rates per child (4-5 days):

\$170.00\* per week for **infants to 36 months**      \$110.00\* per week for **afterschool care**

\$160.00\* per week for **37 months to 5 years old**      \$150.00\* per week for **summer camp**

\$75.00\* **Registration Fee** (one time, non-refundable)

*\*Scholarships or discounts may be available for families.*

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Part-time rate per child (2-3 days):  
\$40.00\* per day for **all ages**  
\$75.00\* **Registration Fee** (one time, non-refundable)

*\*Scholarships or discounts may be available for families.*

Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as indicated on the *Enrollment Agreement* form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether or not your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather or public health emergency.

### ***Tuition Deposit***

While a tuition deposit is not required, we do ask families to notify us immediately when their child will not be returning to the center. If a balance is due, Day-Star will attempt to collect this balance by different means including but not limited to reporting to credit bureaus and the Child and Parent Services (CAPS) office.

### ***Overtime Rates or Adding Extra Days***

Overtime rates apply only to part-time families and are contingent on prior agreement of days of care needed. When your family surpasses 3 days of childcare per week, the amount paid is subject to the full-time weekly rate and will be charged to your account for each overtime week of care.

### ***Payment***

Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, public health emergencies, or other situations beyond our control. Payment is due the Friday prior to the week of service by 6:30 PM on every Friday, as outlined in the *Enrollment Agreement*.

A one-time, non-refundable registration fee of \$75.00 per child is due at the time of enrollment and must be repaid if a child is absent from our program six months or longer and must be reenrolled at our center for any reason. This fee will not be pro-rated. A discount will be given to families enrolling multiple children.

### ***Methods of Payment***

Several methods of payment are available for families' convenience. Families can pay by cash, check, money order, automatic electronic funds transfer, and debit or credit card. To set up automatic, recurring payments, please contact the center director at [info@day-starchristianacademy.com](mailto:info@day-starchristianacademy.com) or visit MyProcure.

### ***Late Payment Charges***

Late payments can pose serious problems for our programs and as a result, the business does not have the latitude to allow families to accrue a balance for childcare services. Timely payments are required for the continuation of service. **Late payments will result in the imposition of a late payment fee. Failure to pay**



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**childcare payments will result in childcare services being terminated.**

If payment is not received on the day that it is due, a late fee of \$25.00 will be added to the tuition payment for each week that it is late. Repeated late payments will result in your family being required to set up automatic payments or dismissal from our program.

Any payments made will be applied to the oldest charges and late fees may still apply if the account is not paid in full by the next tuition due date.

If payment is more than 30 business days past due, we may attempt to recover payment in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

***Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges***

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions will be charged a fee of \$30.00 per returned check. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on “cash only” status.

***Late Pick-up Fees***

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will not be given any consideration for extenuating circumstances. All families must pick up on time. Late fees of \$1.00 per minute will be charged beginning at 6:31 PM and will be due upon arrival. **Repeated late pick up and/or refusal to pay late pick-up fees may result in childcare services being terminated.**

***Other Fees***

- From time-to-time there will be additional fees associated with special activities or field trips. These fees are due prior to the event, activity or trip.
- A non-refundable enrollment/ registration fee of \$75.00 per child is due at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment. A discount is given to families enrolling multiple children.

***Payment Credits & No Credits***

- **Families contract for a specific weekly schedule** as completed on the *Enrollment Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether or not your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather.
- **Credit may be given for Serious Illness/Injury** – In the unfortunate event of extenuating circumstances such as your child is hospitalized, absent due to a

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serious contagious disease or serious illness or injury, credit may be issued. A written doctor's note is required to receive a credit.

## **ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL**

### ***Absence***

If your child is going to be absent or arrive after the established drop off times, please contact us at (404) 559-8099 or email us at [info@day-starchristianacademy.com](mailto:info@day-starchristianacademy.com). We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you and will attempt to reach out if an absence is longer than three days.

If a school age child will not be attending after school care, families must notify us in advance by calling (404) 559-8099.

### ***Vacation***

While we recognize the value of family vacations, the center does not provide credit for vacation days. Tuition payments are still due for your child to maintain his or her spot in our program.

### ***Withdrawal***

A written notice, two weeks in advance, is required by the center when a child is being withdrawn. Failure to notify will result in forfeiture of any credits or refunds due to you.

### ***Transfer of Records***

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required. For electronic records through our assessment provider Work Sampling Online (WSO), a request must be made directly to the state.

### ***Closing Due to Extreme Weather***

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on various local news stations and via emails and phone calls.

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

**Please be sure to keep updated contact information on file.**

## **DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP**

### ***General Procedure***

We open at 6:30 AM for non-GA Pre-K and 7:30 AM for GA Pre-K. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. Parents or guardians are required to accompany their children and sign them in at drop off and sign them out at pick up.

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We close at 6:30 PM except for Georgia's Pre-K program which closes at 2:30 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time. Families will be charged \$1.00 per minute after closing times. Excessive tardiness and/or refusal to pay late pick-up fees will result in a child's withdrawal from our program.

### ***Cell Phone Usage***

The times you spend dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with you about your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center.

### ***Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up***

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

In order to safeguard your child we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after two (2) hours we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

### ***Right to Refuse Child Release***

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the withdrawal of your child from the program.

## **PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

### ***What to Bring***

- **Infants:** Extra-large Ziploc bag with enough clean bottles for a day's use with pre-filled formula (**the staff is not allowed to make infants' bottles**), at least 6 diapers per day, and at least 2 changes of clothes per day. Everything must be labeled with child's name including all bottles labeled and dated.
- **Toddlers:** Extra-large Ziploc bag with 1 to 2 clean bottles/sippy cups (if applicable), six diapers and at least two changes of clothes per day. Everything must be labeled with child's name including all bottles labeled and dated.

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- **Older Toddlers:** Extra-large Ziploc bag with at least two changes of clothes or more per day including underwear if going through the toilet training process, at least 4 pull-ups per day.
  - **Preschoolers:** Extra-large Ziploc bag with at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
  - **Kindergarteners:** Extra-large Ziploc bag with at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
  - **After School Care Children:** books for homework, appropriate play clothes, closed-toe shoes

Please label the Ziploc bag and **all** items brought from home with your child's name to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items. We are prohibited from laundering any clothing containing fecal matter. Therefore, soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering.

**Children are prohibited from bringing the following items: electronic devices, i.e. cameras, cellular phones, tablets/iPads, gaming devices, music players, headphones, video recorders etc., book bags, diaper bags, locker bags, luggage/suitcases, toys, expensive jewelry, money (especially loose change), slime/goo, candy, gum, and food and beverages.**

If these items are found with the child, they will be confiscated and held until a family member arrives to claim it or discarded. Day-Star Christian Academy will not be responsible for discarded, lost, stolen, or damaged items.

### ***Cubbies***

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with your child's name and photo. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

### ***Lost & Found***

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-Found box located at the entrance door near the GA Pre-K classroom. Please note that we are not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal property.

### ***Toys from Home***

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity.

If the toy is for a show-and-tell activity, the item will be stored in a locked closet until it is time for the activity to begin and then re-stored in the locked closet until the child departs from the center.

## **NUTRITION**

### ***Foods Brought from Home***

In order to protect children with various food allergies, we prohibit outside food from being brought into our center.

If a child has special dietary restrictions that we cannot accommodate with our nutritious meal plans, we may permit food prepared and brought from home. However, a doctor's note must be

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presented to allow such exceptions. Foods should be in labeled storage containers with the child's name, date, and type of food.

Other exceptions for foods brought from home include:

- For celebrations/holidays: (non)perishable food must be store-bought and in its original, unopened package with a list of the ingredients intact.
- For center-sponsored events/activities: (non)perishable food must be store-bought and in its original, unopened package with a list of the ingredients intact.
- For food donations/care packages for families: (non)perishable food must be store-bought and in its original, unopened package with a list of the ingredients intact.

Children will not be allowed to share food provided by the child's family unless the food is intended for sharing with all the children. *Homemade goods/foods are not allowed.* All foods for sharing must be store-bought and in its original, unopened package with a list of the ingredients intact. Leftover food will be discarded except for foods that do not require refrigeration and/or come in a commercially-wrapped package that was never opened.

### ***Food Prepared for or at the Center***

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service. A menu of planned meals will be presented weekly on-site and may be requested via email.

### ***Food Allergies***

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually.

Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician. A copy of this plan will need to be on file for your child.

### ***Meal Time***

Due to COVID-19, family-style dining, where children serve themselves from food passed around each table, has been suspended. Rather at meal time, children are served plated food in disposable plates with silverware. Children are encouraged to discuss what they are eating and learn about the nutritional value of the foods they eat. Children are also encouraged to discard plates and clean up their lunch area. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Weekly menus are posted on the parent boards in each classroom for viewing by parents/caregivers.

A staff member who is trained in first-aid for choking is present at all meals.

### ***Infant Feedings***

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding until able to hold his or her own bottle. Bottles will never be propped.
- Infants are fed based on the family's preferences outlined on the Infant Feeding Plan or "on cue" to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly) and by a consistent staff member/teacher.

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- Breastfeeding is supported, however, our center is not designed to provide a designated and private place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. We will do our best to accommodate nursing mothers and ask if nursing mothers can use a cover when breastfeeding. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. All breast milk and formula shall be returned to the child's home or discarded at the end of each day. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to one day (up to 24 hours).
  - Breast milk and formula brought from home must be dated and labeled with the child's name.
  - Labels on all milk/formula containers should be resistant to loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling.
  - Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child's family and an updated written plan (aka Infant Feeding Plan).

### ***Children 24 Months and Older***

- No child shall go more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted. These foods include but are not limited to: hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, thickly spread peanut butter and hard candy.

### ***School Aged Participants***

- After school childcare participants will be offered a light snack and supper. The snack is not a meal and will be served to the child upon arrival to the center. If your child will be in care after 5:00 PM, he or she will be able to eat supper.

## **HEALTH**

### ***Immunizations***

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). Every six months (twice a year), we check with the public health department or the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates of the recommended immunization schedule. Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department. A copy of the child's up-to-date immunization should be on file before he or she begins the program but must be received no later than thirty (30) days in the program.

All caregivers, teachers, and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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## Physicals

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). A copy of your child's physical should be received before but must be received no later than thirty (30) days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program (Form 3300).

## Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children, you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher
- Diarrhea including gastroenteritis (aka stomach flu) – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting including gastroenteritis (aka stomach flu) – green or bloody, and/or more than once during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores on exterior or interior of mouth/lips.
- Rash with fever including ring worm (aka dermatophytosis or tineas), until rash clears and fever goes down and/or a physician determines condition is not contagious/communicable.
- Pink or red conjunctiva (aka pink eye) with white or yellow eye discharge, until given antibiotics for a full 24 hours (or 1 day).
- Impetigo, until a full 24 hours (or 1 day) after treatment.
- Strep throat, until a full 24 hours (or 1 day) after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until a full 24 hours (or 1 day) after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for a full 24 hours (or 1 day).
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for a full 24 hours (or 1 day).
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:

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- The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
  - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.

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

### **Allergy Prevention**

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

### **Medications**

Day-Star Christian Academy reserves the right to refuse the administration of any medication whether over the counter or prescription to treat a child. Rather, we determine whether to administer medications on a case by case basis.

**All medications, whether prescription or over the counter, must be in their original, unopened package, accompany a doctor's note, and have a completed Authorization to Administer Medication form on file.** The written permission must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and all medications must be in the original, unopened package. No medication will be administered longer than two weeks. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

Non-prescription topical ointments (e.g., diaper cream or teething gel), sunscreen and insect repellent require a note signed by a physician, specifying frequency and dosage to be administered as well as the length of time the authorization is valid which cannot exceed two weeks. If administration is needed longer than two weeks, a new physician's note and Authorization to Administer Medication form must be completed.

**We will not be able to administer medication to children with severe medical issues, i.e. anaphylaxis, asthma/breathing apparatus.**

### **Communicable Diseases**

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

- Bacterial meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken pox
- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)



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- Meningococcal infection (invasive)
  - Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
  - Rabies (human only)
  - Rubella congenital and non-congenital (including suspect)
  - Tetanus (including suspect)
  - H1N1 virus
  - Any cluster/outbreak of illness, e.g. coronavirus
  - Tuberculosis

## **SAFETY**

### ***Clothing***

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, sand, water, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the classroom, and daily program activities are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One particular aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be avoided or removed as a precaution.

Closed-toe shoes are more appropriate than sandals or flip flops for outdoor and center play and make it easier for your child to participate in some activities.

### ***Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play***

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 90 °F or less than 30 °C degrees. Additionally, outdoor play will be cancelled if the air quality rating is 101 (Unsafe/unhealthy for sensitive groups) or higher.

### ***Communal Water-Play***

Communal, unsupervised water play is prohibited. Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precautions like health screenings and constant supervision are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable infectious disease and that all children are kept safe. A liability waiver form must be signed for children to participate in water-related activities and field trips.

### ***Injuries***

Safety is a major concern in child care and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained staff member in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact. The child will be accompanied by a member of the staff if a parent/guardian cannot be reached in time.

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## ***Biting***

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and comfort the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Phone calls will be made to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family and a copy of an incident report provided to the families. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change. If the biting continues to be a challenge, the biter may be withdrawn from our center.

## ***Respectful Behavior***

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

## ***Smoking***

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the premises both indoor and outdoor of the center including our parking lot and vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises such an action is a misdemeanor and will be reported.

## ***Prohibited Substances***

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who smells of and appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

## ***Dangerous Weapons***

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

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

## ***Child Custody***

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

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## ***Suspected Child Abuse***

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

## **EMERGENCIES**

### ***Lost or Missing Child***

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within 30 minutes, the family and the police will be notified.

### ***Fire Safety***

Our center is fully equipped with fire alarms and pull stations, fire extinguishers, and a fire alert system that immediately reports to the appropriate authorities in the case of a fire.

Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed and practiced with the children and staff on a monthly basis.

### ***Emergency Transportation***

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A staff member will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives. A Vehicle Emergency form that provides the child's primary care physician and any medical conditions and allergies must be completed for each child and kept on file.

## **CENTER POLICIES**

Our center policies included in this handbook are reviewed annually and updated as needed. They are available for review upon request to the center director.

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# Family Handbook Acknowledgement

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

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

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

I have received the **Day-Star Christian Academy Family Handbook**, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the Day-Star Christian Academy staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the Day-Star Christian Academy Family Handbook that I do not understand.

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Recipient Signature

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Date

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Center Staff Signature

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Date

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## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

We offer a variety of ways for families to participate in the growth and improvement of our program. We encourage families to take an active role.

### Advisors:

- Discussion of Program Goals – annual meeting for families to provide input into our plan for the program.
- Parent Advisory Committee – meets 4 times a year to review progress toward annual goals.
- Classroom Representative – serves as a liaison between classroom parents and teachers
- Home and School Committee – meets monthly to plan family events and fundraisers

**Family Events:** We have several events throughout the year that bring our entire community together. Watch for the announcements!

- Open House
- Parent Orientation
- Grandparents Day
- Holiday Gatherings
- Fall Festival
- GA Pre-K Graduation
- Field Day
- First Day of School Day

**Classroom Activities:** Enjoy and help your child's class with these special activities.

- Share a meal with your child
- Chaperone field trips
- Read to children at arrival or pickup
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Donate requested items
- Serve as a parent representative
- Welcome new families
- Contribute to class Pot Luck Meal
- Family Teacher conferences

**Family/Parent Workshops:** Our menu of family workshops changes annually. Below is a list of workshops we propose to offer. We will try to offer these in the evenings or on Saturdays virtually via Zoom. See the monthly calendar for scheduled topics. We welcome requests for workshop topics.

- Positive Guidance and Loving Discipline
- Toilet Training
- Safety in the Home
- Child Proofing Your Home
- Brain Development
- Nutrition and Exercise for Small Bodies
- Supporting Your Child in Times of Stress
- Food Allergies
- How to Prepare for a Conference
- Warning Signs for Developmental Delays
- Value of Reading to Your Child
- Everyday Math