



ABILITIESFIRST
Early Childhood Learning Center
Potential Made Possible

4710 Timber Trail Drive
Middletown, Ohio 45044

5134239496



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Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center

Director: Stephanie Cress
Phone: 513-423-9496 ext. 304
Email: stephanie.cress@abilitiesfirst.org

Assistant Director: Jenny Franer
Phone: 513-423-9496 ext. 305
Email: jennifer.franer@abilitiesfirst.org

Program and Intake Coordinator: Lacey Steele
Phone: 513-423-9496 ext. 226
Email: lacey.steele@abilitiesfirst.org

Executive Director: David Hood
Phone: 513-423-9496 ext. 245
Email: David.hood@abilitiesfirst.org

Welcome

Welcome to Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC)! We look forward to working with you and your family. This handbook is designed to inform you of our policies and procedures. Please read it thoroughly and ask any questions you might have. Please keep it in a convenient place at home for future reference. Our center's policies and procedures are designed to both meet our licensing requirements and help operate a high-quality center for the children and families we serve.

Our Early Childhood Learning Center provides a nurturing, caring, friendly, and inclusive atmosphere for young children. We follow a vital curriculum based on learning through play and child-led learning theories. Each child is supported in their own uniqueness in a developmentally appropriate program with planned activities by quality role models. We do our best to safeguard and direct each child to broaden their knowledge and awareness of the world around them. Our staff advocates for all children and families through support, education, and guidance.

Program Description

Our Early Childhood Learning Center is licensed to operate by the State of Ohio Department of Children and Youth. It is a non-profit childcare center for children from 6 weeks through 10 years old; serving children both typically developing and with differing abilities, providing an inclusive center for all. We maintain partnerships with community early childhood mental health agencies, ABA agencies, and Help Me Grow, and many other community-based organizations focused on the health and well-being of all children and families.

The licenses are posted on the center's informational bulletin board located at the front of the building in the ECLC hallway. The food service license is posted in the kitchen. Our compliance with licensing requirements is monitored regularly. The center's most recent compliance reports and evaluations are displayed next to our current license on the center's informational bulletin board. Further information is available from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. To report any suspected violation of licensing laws, please contact the Ohio Department of Children and Youth via their toll-free phone number: (1-866-635-3748). You may also register complaints with program leadership directly through the Director, Assistant Director, or the Executive Director at (513-423-9496). A copy of the current daycare laws and regulations is available for review upon request in the office of the Director.

Staff in the center are highly trained in the field and maintain compliance with state and local licensing requirements. We pride ourselves on establishing positive and collaborative relationships with families regarding the care and education provided to their children, including consistent, ongoing, and meaningful communication between families and staff. Our website is updated weekly, and monthly newsletters are sent home in every classroom to outline learning activities, special events, parties, birthdays, announcements, and much more. Program newsletters will go out monthly and be posted on our website including important dates, engagement opportunities, community resources, and announcements. Our program also utilizes the Brightwheel app for family engagement and communication, where staff will update daily activities, menus and lesson plans will be posted, billing and payments can be posted, and families and staff will interact via messaging

Philosophy

We are committed to supporting each child's optimum social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development within a safe, healthy, inclusive, and enriched environment. We will respect the racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, developmental, and socio-economics differences of all children, parents, and others with whom we work. We will maintain confidentiality in our dealing with children, parents, and colleagues. We will avoid misinterpretation of our professional skills, qualifications, and affiliations. We have the right and obligation to share in the maintenance of the ethics of our profession.

We will respect families' rights to make decisions for their children and will uphold their beliefs and practices whenever possible. We will be aware that not only the families, but also other people and experiences influence the development and attitudes of the children in our care. When conflicts arise between parents and Early Childhood educators concerning generally accepted professional and/or developmental practices, we will make every attempt to clarify the issues for the parent through education and communication.

We will uphold the principle that the Early Childhood educator's primary professional responsibility is to the child. Even though working with children may satisfy our own emotional needs, the child's total development will remain our primary concern. Because we believe that everyone has the right to feel that he/she is a worthwhile human being, we will treat each child with respect and dignity. We will not mentally, physically, or emotionally abuse the child in any way. We believe in positive productive discipline and guidance as the means for dealing with inappropriate behavior.

Abilities First Mission:

Abilities First empowers children and their families living with Autism and different abilities to celebrate their strengths and reach their unique and highest potential by providing comprehensive care and support in an inclusive learning environment.

Abilities First Vision:

All children and their families, regardless of abilities, receive support to thrive and lead productive lives in the community.

Licenses and Designations

Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center is gold level rated in the Ohio Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) rating system. Step Up to Quality is a quality rating and improvement system administered by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. SUTQ recognizes and promotes learning and development programs that meet quality program standards that exceed preschool licensing and school age childcare licensing health and safety regulations. Our center also holds an Inclusive Child Care Program (ICCP) Designation through Ohio Promise, a new statewide initiative that will Promote Resources, Opportunities, and Meaningful Inclusion through Support and Education.

Hours of Operation, Attendance and Late Policy Procedure

Our center is open Monday through Friday from the hours of 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We do not operate on weekends and are closed in observation of 11 holidays per year (New Year's Day, MLK Jr. Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day). Other vital closed dates for training and professional development days will be announced annually and can be found on the last page of this document. We will try our best to give at least one month's notice for additional closures that are not emergency or weather related.

Late Pick Up- We close promptly at 6:00 p.m. A charge of \$25.00 per child for every 15 minutes past the 6:00 p.m. pick up time (starting at 6:01) will be added to the family's weekly statement. This is true for both private pay and ODJFS voucher payment families. We want to respect the time of staff members who are scheduled out at closing, and their shift ends at 6:00 p.m. We understand that things do happen, causing a family to be late, so late occurrences will be tracked as follows: **prior notice is defined as letting the facility or leadership know that you will be late (and by how long) at least 15 minutes prior to closing**

- 1st occurrence with prior notice: fee waived and verbal reminder of closing time.
- 2nd occurrence with prior notice: verbal reminder and fee charged.
- 3rd occurrence with prior notice: fee charged with promise to pick up on time contract signed.
- 4th occurrence with prior notice: fee charged and possible suspension or discharge from care.

Daily Schedules:

Specific daily schedules will vary from classroom to classroom based on the needs of the children served. Daily schedules and activity plans will be posted in each classroom. Breakfast is served to all children between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. Lunch times vary by age and classroom, starting at 11:00 a.m. and ending at 12:00 p.m. Our afternoon snack is served between 3:00-3:30 p.m., though is saved for children arriving from school.

Pick-up List and Release of Children:

It is important that we can contact at least one parent or relative at all times when your child is at the center. There should always be someone 18 years of age or older who is available to pick up your child in case of an emergency or illness. Notify us immediately of any change in your contact information. Release will be denied unless the person picking up children are 18 years of age and older with a photo ID and whose names are on your pickup authorization list or written consent from a parent. If the person picking up the child is unknown to the teacher who is supervising the classroom, then the photo identification must be checked before we release the child.

If the child is not picked up by someone on the authorized pickup list, without contacting the center, by 6:30 p.m., the local authorities will be called.

Going to be Absent? Call by 10:00 A.M.:

As a courtesy, please call Abilities First at (513)423-9496 ext.304 or 305 or communicate through Brightwheel before 10:00 am to let us know when your child will be absent or when they will be arriving later than usual that day. Ask for the class your child (ren) is enrolled in and leave a message if a staff person fails to answer. We expect your child to be at the center every day that they are scheduled. We plan our staffing and lunches with the number of children we expect. An accurate daily count is an important part of keeping our costs under control and affects the quality of care we can give your child. Our cut off time is 10:00 a.m. every day, please have your child(ren) here before 10:00 a.m. This rule is in place to help maintain routines for learning, planning purposes, and to ease struggles during naptime. The cut-off time will only be waived for families who have called and given prior notice for late arrival and have been approved by program management.

Absence Policy for Families receiving assistance (vouchers)

The state of Ohio absence policy for families receiving vouchers is as follows: Allowable payment for 20 absences only from July to June on a fiscal schedule. This means that once 20 absences have been exceeded in that time frame, the state will no longer pay when children are not in attendance. This means families who exceed their allotted 20 absences will have to pay the difference in tuition when the child is absent, and a minimum of 25 hours are not met for full time voucher recipients. Absent days are not used during a weekly cycle if the child has been in attendance over 25 hours. Excessive absences will result in withdrawal from our program.

Arrivals

Each classroom desires to create a friendly, calm and respectful atmosphere where children feel secure and comfortable. Each day when you bring your child into the center, please enter the classroom quietly, and be respectful of the children's activities that are occurring. The teachers may not be able to have a lengthy discussion with you at that point, depending upon the time of day and the activities in the classroom and will be out of compliance with ODCY and Step Up To Quality guidelines if this occurred. Do say hello, pass along vital information, and sign in (voucher recipients only). Encourage your child to find something to do and say good-bye as you leave. Please limit your time in the classrooms at drop off to 5 minutes or less unless there is an urgent need to stay and chat with the staff. We do this to decrease the struggles with transitions into daily activities into the classroom. You should always make contact and acknowledge the teacher or staff member when dropping off your child in a classroom.

Departures

When you pick up your child before 4:30 p.m. the routine should be the same, because teachers are still very involved with a full classroom of children who need to be fully supervised. .

Licensing Requirements and Ratios

The program is licensed to operate legally under the Ohio Department of Children and Youth and endorsed by the Ohio Step Up to Quality Program. We are licensed to serve a total of 95 children; of this number 40 may be under the age of 2 ½. Our license is posted on the bulletin board at the childcare entrance in the ECLC hallway. The laws and rules governing childcare are available for your review upon written request. Our center's licensing records are available upon written request including but are not limited to compliance reports and evaluation forms from the

health department, building inspection department and fire departments. These are also made available to you in the form of a QR Code on our parent board in every classroom and on the parent information board in the ECLC hallway. The Ohio Department of Children and Youth toll free number is 1-866-635-7489. Any person may use this number to report a violation by any center. EVERY staff member of our program are mandated reporters and as such are required to report their suspicions of child abuse or child neglect

Ratios

In accordance with Ohio state regulations, below are the required ratios for child-to-staff based on age, as well as the higher standards our center follows when applicable:

Age of children	Staff/child ratio
Infants (birth and under 12 months)	1 to 5 or 2 to in same room
Infants (12 months and under 18 months)	1 to 6
Toddlers (18 months and under 2 1/2 years)	1 to 7
Toddlers (2 1/2 years and under 3 years)	1 to 8
Preschool - three years	1 to 12
Preschool - four and five years of age	1 to 14
School age - kindergarten to 11	1 to 18
School age - 11 years through 14 years	1 to 20

The appendix from the DCY licensed childcare center rules are also attached to the end of this document.

Supervision of Children

According to the Ohio Administrative code rule 5101:2-12-19 | Supervision of children and child guidance for a licensed child care center, each child care staff member shall:

(1) Leave no child unsupervised. Supervision means the childcare staff members have knowledge of a child's needs and accountability for his or her care at all times, including but not limited to, developmental and behavioral needs and parental preferences. Supervision includes awareness of and responsibility for the activity of each child and being near enough to respond to

and reach children immediately including responding to the child's basic needs and protecting them from harm.

(2) Ensure all children in care are always within sight and hearing of childcare staff members, except as listed in paragraph (B) of this rule. Within sight and hearing means without the use of mechanical devices such as baby monitors, video cameras or walkie talkies. The use of mirrors to view children in another room does not meet the supervision requirements of this rule.

(3) Not be under the influence of any substance that impairs the childcare staff member's ability to supervise children and/or perform duties.

(4) Always have immediate access to a working telephone on the premises which is available and capable of making outgoing calls and receiving incoming calls.

Supervision of School Age children

(1) School-age children may run errands inside the building, use the restroom, or engage in a short-term activity which poses no physical risk to their safety alone or in groups of no more than six children without adult supervision as long as the following conditions are met:

(a) Children are within hearing distance of a childcare staff member, without the use of electronic equipment.

(b) The childcare staff member checks on the children who are in kindergarten through third grade at least every five minutes until they return to the group.

(c) The childcare staff member checks on the children in fourth grade or higher at least every ten minutes until they return to the group.

(d) The center has exclusive use of the childcare space being used by the children.

Camera Usage

There are cameras in every area where children are permitted to be in. Administrators always have access to live footage. Parents do not have access to camera footage.

Enrollment

Children are enrolled in our Program after:

1. Family has contacted Program and Intake Coordinator and completed an Intake meeting and evaluation to determine fitness for the program.
 - a. You will meet with the Program and Intake Coordinator, Program administrator, orientation specialist, and the child's teacher at this meeting.
 - b. A tour of the facility and classroom will be given at this time.
 - c. Child must attend this meeting in order to evaluate for the program.
2. Parents/guardians have completed the necessary paperwork.
3. Schedule a child's beginning date.

Required Health and Enrollment Information

To enroll your child at Abilities First ECLC, you will need to complete the necessary forms required by the state licensing regulations as well as our forms. These forms must be returned to the Assistant Director by the first day of your child's attendance, for your child/ren to start. The forms required from all parents include (but are not limited to):

- JFS 01234 Child Enrollment & Health Information (annual review)
- JFS 01305 Child's Medical Statement For Children (annual) ** must be provided within 30 days of enrollment **or suspension will occur**, and annual renewal date is based on date of exam listed on form
 - Must be accompanied with a copy of most recent shot records (if you choose not to immunize for cultural or religious reasons, please complete the bottom of the JFS 01305 form).
- JFS-01511 Family Information for Step Up to Quality (annual)
- Authorization for Pick Up
- Basic Infant Information Sheet (infants only)
- Authorized Pick Up List
- Routine Trip and Water Activity Permissions
- JFS 01236 Physical Care Plan if applicable (any medication or medical food)
 - **A physician's note or signature on care plan will be required for any medication, medical food, or to eliminate a full food group from a child's dietary plan.**
- Written plan from parent/ guardian for cultural and religious dietary plans that differ from what is served on the center's menu.
 - Must contain parent signature, date, and be resigned or renewed annually.
- Any additional paperwork for enrollment required or requested by administrators of the program.

Failure to provide requested or required forms / documentation will result in withdrawal from our center.

Waiting List

If warranted, we maintain a waiting list for each classroom in our center. This is based upon a first come, first serve basis taking into consideration our priorities. When a space is available, you will be called, as well as other parents on the waiting list, to arrange an intake meeting. If you decline enrollment at that time, you have the option to be taken off the waiting list or placed at the bottom of the waiting list. If you would like to pursue enrollment, this needs to be completed within one week. This is also based on first come, first served basis.

Custody Agreement Procedures:

We follow the custody procedures ordered in court documents. Please provide a copy of your decree to the Director, so that the proper procedures may be followed. Custodial parent or guardian is permitted unlimited access to the center. A non-residential parent is permitted unlimited access to the center, unless a court order is on file with the center limiting access.

Care of Children without immunizations

Our center does provide care for children without immunization. Please complete the bottom portion of the JFS 01305 form.

Administration of Medication

We give medications as a special service to the parents and children. Parents must complete a state-mandated medication form for all medications. A Request for the Administration of Medication Form (JFS 1217) or A Physical and Medical Care Plan (JFS 01236) will be available from the Director or Assistant Director. Please allow time to complete the form in its entirety and be prepared (if necessary), to provide a physician note or have the physician sign the form. Parents are expected to take the full responsibility for properly completing the appropriate forms and for dropping off and picking up medicines, including but not limited to obtaining physician note or signatures.

For medication to be administered, a JFS 01217 or JFS 01236 must be completed and kept on file whenever the child is in our care or receiving the medication. The requirements are as follows:

- Medications are stored in an area inaccessible to children.
 - The exception to this rule is a school – age child may carry and administer their own rescue medications (example: inhaler).
- Any medication for your child must be handed directly to a staff member upon arrival.
- Medications may not be brought in a child's bookbag.
- Prescription medications must be in their original container, with prescription label, and administered in accordance with instructions on the label. All information on Medication forms, physician notes and the prescription labels must match completely and be within the timeframe of the expiration date.
- Over-the-counter medications also must be administered in accordance with label instruction or a JFS 01217 signed by a physician must be obtained.
- If parents request any different dosages or uses, a physician must provide written instructions on the JFS 01217, "Request for Administration of Medication for Child Care."
- Signed written parental permission is required for topical products, except for lip balm and hand sanitizer, to be administered. All topical products must be handed directly to the teacher upon arrival at the program and be labeled with the child's full name.
- We will NOT give any medications with an "as needed" instruction unless it is specific to symptoms or a rescue medication (inhaler or epi pen) and specific symptoms to watch for must be documented.
- We do NOT administer medications that are prescribed for reducing fever or over the counter cough suppressants.
 - An exception to this rule would be a child who requires a fever reducer for febrile seizures but would need to be accompanied by a physician's note.
- We do NOT administer medications in the baby bottle or sippy cup.
- We will work with parents whose children require a modified diet when we receive a doctor's statement stating what foods should be excluded from the child's diet. These statements must be renewed annually on the required state form.

Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center maintains an internal policy that assures the proper administration, storage and documentation of all medications.

Policies on medical foods (food that is formulated to be consumed under the supervision of a

physician or other appropriate professional and is intended for the specific dietary management of a disease or condition)

- If your child requires the administration of medical foods, you must provide a completed JFS 01236, “Child Medical/Physical Care Plan for Child Care.”
- All medical foods must be provided by the parent and must be in the original container with the child’s name on it and must be handed to the teacher immediately upon arrival.
- Staff will follow the directions on the medical food container to ensure safe storage.

Policies on modified diets

- If your child requires a modified diet that eliminates 1 or more of the 4 food groups or changing the amount of food to be served to meet 1/3 of the recommended dietary allowance, you must secure written information from your physician or parent regarding this.
- A JFS 01236, “Child Medical/Physical Care Plan for Child Care” must be completed.
- If your child requires a modified diet due to religious or cultural reasons, you must provide written, dated, and signed instructions. We will do our best to accommodate modified dietary plans, however, we have the right to ask parents to provide meals that are not a part of our planned menus.
- We do serve children with feeding tubes in place. A detailed feeding plan signed by the physician must be on file and the child must have a JFS 01236 Physical and Medical Care plan on file. Staff caring for the child must be trained in feeding procedures and what to do if the feeding tube comes out.

Nutrition/Food Policies

The menu includes a combination of new and familiar foods that are wholesome, of good quality, and prepared on site. It's important to focus on a balanced selection that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthy fats, with options that cater to dietary needs and preferences, while ensuring meals are well-timed throughout the day to maintain energy levels; snacks should be nutritious and not overly processed. There is a serving size chart that is with the menu, to show how much of each food is considered a serving. The menu would list everything that is served that day including breakfast, lunch, and snacks. The teacher and / or Kitchen Manager will update the menu, if there are any changes.

- Breakfast is served at 8:30 am
- Lunch is served at 11:30 am
- Snack is served at 3:00 pm

If you do happen to come later, please message on Brightwheel to save a meal if a child will need to be provided a meal upon arrival. Meal counts are based on attendance numbers.

Each meal is cooked by our kitchen manager in our primary kitchen on site. They oversee the preparation of all food, while ensuring adequate portioning of all food to the classrooms and distributing of the food. Breakfast and afternoon snacks are eaten in the classrooms and served by the teachers for all age groups. Lunches are served and eaten in the cafeteria, with the exception of our infant room, who eat all of their meals in their classroom throughout the day.

Occasionally, we will offer special occasion meals or treats for classrooms and children to participate in.

We do not place limitations on how much a child can or must eat, but we do encourage children to try everything on their plates. Every child will be served each component of the meal each day per the requirements of licensing. Although they must be served each component during the meal, the kitchen has choice items or “safe foods” on hand for children who may have sensory needs or are picky eaters, to ensure no child goes hungry. During mealtimes, the teachers sit down, eat, and interact with the children. If there are allergies, substitutions will be made for that child, and the kitchen is made aware of any dietary modifications and Physical Care Plans. See above for the policy on modified diets.

Food Allergies and Special Diets

If your child is allergic to a whole food group or is on a special diet that cannot be met with the foods on our center menu, a doctor’s note is required to allow us to modify their diet while here at the center. A plan will be written with your involvement that meets your child’s special dietary needs. We will identify alternative foods that meet both our nutritional guidelines and your child’s restrictions. In some cases, the family will be expected to supply these alternative foods.

Children who are working with our therapy Department may need textural changes or modifications to their diet. We will work as a team with your child’s therapist and our nutritionist to provide appropriate meals.

Infant bottles:

You will be advised of and required to follow our sanitation routine for infant bottles. Each bottle (and cap) brought to our Center must be labeled with your child’s first and last name and the date the child will use it. The center does have labels available and will assist in labeling bottles daily per DCY licensing requirement. Families are responsible for providing the number of bottles with appropriate caps for their child’s day here at the center. Bottles may be supplied pre-made for the day (with formula or breast milk) or the family may provide a bottle with water and formula to make bottles as needed by infant staff. If you choose to provide water, rather than pre-made bottles, you will be asked to bring the formula in the original container to be sent in to the center and back home each day or to be left at the center. Infant staff will let you know when your child may need more formula to be brought in. If we provide your formula, staff will order with the Kitchen Manager accordingly.

The center provides 2 options for infant formula: Similac Advance (blue can) and Similac Soy (pink can). If your child requires a different formula, the family must provide it.

Children under one year of age:

Families will be asked for feeding preferences and offered the formula and infant food our center can provide. The center provides baby food, and the brand may vary based on availability and pricing. A parent may decline the formula/ baby food offered by the center and supply the infant’s formula and food themselves. If you choose this route, please provide adequate amounts for the child to eat throughout the day. An infant or child may not go longer than 4 hours without

a meal or bottle. However, when the infant turns one year of age, our center will provide all milk and food to meet meal pattern requirements for toddler age children. Failure to comply with this rule, the child may be sent home from care. See above for special diets, modifications, and allergy policies.

A plan will be written with your involvement that meets your child's special dietary needs. We will identify alternative foods that meet both our federal nutritional guidelines and your child's restrictions. In most cases, the family will be expected to supply these alternative foods.

If parents would like to have the child's birthday celebration in the classroom, please consult with the teacher beforehand for any classroom allergies or restrictions. We do allow homemade, or store brought items to be brought in, but a full ingredient list must be able to be provided if requested. You could also provide an alternative, which could be a nutritional treat, or better yet, an activity or craft the children could do together.

Peanut Butter/ Nuts

To ensure the utmost safety of children with allergies, we do not serve or allow children to have peanut butter or nuts in our center. WE ARE A NUT FREE CENTER!!! This includes all nuts from the nut family and nuts in the shell and or things cooked in any nut oil, and peanut butter. The center uses WOW butter or Sunflower Butter as alternatives.

Release of Records:

There is a form for release of information included in the enrollment packet for each ECLC client ("Authorization for the release of Developmental/Education/Health Information"). This form may be used to transfer a child's records to or from Abilities First ECLC. No information or health care plan will be released without written consent from the parent or guardian. A request for records may come from the client's family, insurance company, attorney, physician, and/or another agency providing services. On any type of record release, the only information that is released is copies of information generated by Abilities First. The original signed authorization for record release must be dated and witnessed to authorize that copies of the records may be sent. The employee performing the record release will also date and initial the record release. This will be placed in the client's chart permanently. After the record release has been completed, the following information will be recorded in the child's file: person requesting records, date of request, list of records being sent and the date the records were sent.

Commented [SC1]: Working with other program leaders to revise together

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance Policies:

Children with disabilities are assessed on an individual basis to determine if the program is the right fit for their needs.

Administering medication to children with disabilities:

- As this program administers medication, staff administers medication to children with disabilities in accordance with the child's documented medical/physical care plan.

Commented [SC2]: Working with Lisa H

Administering care procedures for children with disabilities:

- Prior to caring for a child with a disability, staff who are responsible for caring for the child are properly trained regarding any necessary procedures.

Tuition/Fees:

Commented [SC3]: Add a how to pay section

Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center Fee Schedule
(April 2023)

Full- Time Weekly Rates:		Employee Rate:
Infants (6 weeks to 18 months)	\$253	\$126
Toddlers (18 months to 36 months)	\$253	\$126
Preschool/ Pre- K (3-5 years)	\$210	\$105
School- Age (Kindergarten age +- full day)	\$175	\$87
Part- Time Weekly Rates: Less than 25 hours per week = daily rate or weekly rate/ x days		
No additional discounts may be applied to Part- Time rates		

Infants (6 weeks to 18 months)	\$50/ day	
Toddlers (18 months to 36 months)	\$50/ day	
Preschool/ Pre- K (3-5 years)	\$42/ day	
School- Age (Kindergarten age +- full day)	\$35/ day	
Before and After School Weekly Rates:		Employee Rate:
Before and After School (full day students)	\$127	\$64
Before School Only (Full day students)	\$80	\$40
After School Only (Full day students)	\$100	\$50

Additional Charges:

Accompanied Walking to Creekview Elementary- there is a \$10 per week fee per family for children attending Creekview, to be walked to and from school for daycare.

Late Pick Up- We close promptly at 6:00 p.m. A charge of \$25.00 per child for every 15 minutes past the 6:00 p.m. pick up time (starting at 6:01) will be added family's weekly statement. This is true for both private pay and ODJFS voucher payment families.

Before and After school Break Fees

At any point during the year that schools take a week (or more) long break, the parents are required to pay the full fee for their child(ren). This includes, but not limited to, Spring Break, Thanksgiving/ Fall Break, Winter Break, and Summer Break. Parents of children who attend full-time will pay the full-time rate per week during the break. When school resumes the normal payments will resume as well.

Please note the following:

Full Time Enrollment: more than 25 hours per week
Part Time Enrollment: fewer than 25 hours per week

Multi-child discount: This is applied to families with more than 1 child enrolled in the center, at a rate of 10% off of the OLDEST child's weekly rate.

Employee Discount: employees receive 50% off their weekly rate

Financial Agreement:

The family of each child who attends our school signs a financial agreement with Abilities First. Copies of this agreement are in the child's file in the Child Care Services Coordinator's office and in the Finance Department. This agreement will be updated when tuition/fees change. This document states that tuition due must be paid in full by the last day of attendance of each week. Refunds or prorated bills are allowed only when a non- scheduled or emergency closure of the center is done or the child(ren) must be excluded for a surgical procedure or COVID – 19 related issue. Late tuition may result in denial of childcare services. Questions and/or comments regarding billing should be referred to the Assistant Director and Finance Director.

Annual Fees Review:

We are committed to you and your children to provide an environment where children receive quality care and one that promotes physical, cognitive, social and emotional development that prepares them for successful school readiness. In achieving this commitment, we are listening to the needs of our families and staff, incorporating continuous improvement processes for our early childhood education services while maintaining highly competitive rates. In order to maintain higher levels of staffing than are mandated by the state and to continue to develop the educational base of our program for all the children we serve, it is necessary for us to evaluate and increase our fees from time to time. This review includes a comparison of other Step up to Quality rated center rates and also a cost analysis that is undertaken on an annual basis.

Late Pick-up - We do close promptly at 6:00 P.M. A charge of \$25.00 per child for every 15 minutes past the 6:00 P.M. pick-up time, starting at 6:01 p.m., will be added to your family's weekly statement.

Credits and Statements:

There are no deduction /credits for days when your child is absent due to illness, holidays or other reasons, except for COVID related illnesses / closings. The regular weekly fee is due regardless of attendance as long as the child is enrolled, as we staff and order meals based on projected attendance.

You may request a statement of your account at any time, or see it real time on Brightwheel. If you have any questions regarding your account, please contact Stephanie Cress (Director) M-F 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or Finance Department M-F 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Arrangements can be made for other times as needed.

An annual statement listing your payments for the calendar year can be provided by the end of January of the following year, at your request or automatically generated through Brightwheel in January.

Clients of Job and Family Services:

We welcome the children of families who are being funded through Job and Family Services vouchers. Attendance at our Center can begin once Job and Family Services has sent us an official approval notice which includes co-pay information.

There are parental responsibilities that must be met in order to ensure your JFS funding for daycare. The following are the parental responsibilities:

1. Bring your child for the days and the times that have been approved by Job and Family Services. If you want to change the days or times that you bring your child to the Center, talk to your caseworker first for a new approval.
2. Go to work or school when your child is at the Center.
3. Copays must be paid in full by the first day of attendance of each week.
4. Using the tablet, tap your child(ren) in and out to the right of the front desk.
5. Handle absences with care. Your child is allowed a maximum of ten paid absence days in each half of the calendar year.
6. You must call our Center (513-423-9496) by 10:00 A.M. when your child is absent. Ask for the class your child(ren) are enrolled in and leave a message if a staff person fails to answer. Texting your child's teacher isn't often effective as some staff have a poor signal in the Timber Trail building. If we have not heard from you within two days, we will need to inform your caseworker.

Children with Differing Abilities:

When enrolling a child with differing abilities including identified emotional or behavioral issues, we wish to educate ourselves as fully as possible before your child enters a classroom. A release to gather information from your child's therapist, doctors and teachers may be requested. A pre-enrollment/ intake meeting will then be held with parents/ guardians, lead teacher, manager and AF support staff as needed. There may be situations where our center's resources and approaches may not meet the needs that are appropriate for your child. We will then refer you to other resources.

Commented [SC4]: Does this make sense? Should it be somewhere else or in enrollment.?

First Day:

Take your child directly to their classroom, where teachers will greet you. Bring along the items listed below and make sure that the items are marked with your child's name. Give your child time to adjust before you leave the room.

Items Required:

- Diapers and wipes (if applicable)
- Extra set of clothes
- Blanket (to be left at the center and washed weekly)
- One comfort item or stuffy for naptime
- Diaper creams, sunscreen, topical creams
- Bottles and formula (if applicable)

Initial Developmental Screenings:

At your request and with your permission, specialists from Abilities First Pediatric Therapies Department will provide initial screenings in order to ensure that your child is progressing appropriately according to developmental guidelines. These will be scheduled after one month of enrollment and are free of charge to families and not billed to insurance. If the screenings recommend that your child see a doctor or a specialist, we encourage you to follow-up on that

recommendation as soon as possible. Therapy services are available through Abilities First as well as other community agencies. Financial arrangements and scheduling for Therapy Services are made between the parents/guardians and the Therapy Program.

The Importance of Routines:

A consistent daily routine helps you and your child start the day and build trust, a sense of comfort and security. If you work irregular hours, try to keep arrival and departure times as consistent as possible. Young children prefer to have the same things happen day after day. They often feel uncomfortable when they arrive earlier or later than usual. After you arrive, you will want to say hello to the teacher and help your child find something to do. A kiss, hug and friendly good-bye are important for you and your child. Many parents wave as they walk out the door. If your child has a hard time saying good-bye, the teachers are happy to help and may give you some suggestions to make parting easier. Please don't leave without saying good-bye. Do not hesitate to call us at any time to reassure yourself that your child is fine. It is important that you have a good day, too!

Parking:

For your convenience we have designated three ten-minute parking spaces for you to use to drop-off or pick-up your child/children. We have parking spaces designated for clients only that you may use as well. **Please do not park directly in front of the building.** This will block traffic, and potentially interfere with buses dropping clients off. Your car must be parked in a designated parking space. This is a safety issue for all of our children. If a child's physical limitations require stopping in front for a pick-up or drop-off, we will make special arrangements for that child. The handicapped parking spaces are only for those families who have the parking designation as required by law.

Our Child Guidance Policy:

Guidance is a positive way to help a child improve self-control. At our Center we encourage:

- Expression of Feelings: for example, "I do not like it when you take my toy."
- Positive Reminders: for example, "Use your words." or "We build with blocks."
- Redirection: for example, "Books are for reading, here is an old magazine you may tear." or "You may not throw the blocks, but there is a ball you may throw."
- Problem Solving: for example, "What should we do when two people want the same toy?" or "What would happen if ...?"

Commented [SC5]: Working with program leaders to revise together

- **Taking Responsibility:** for example, if a child spills milk on the floor, “Oh, the floor is wet, please clean it up” or “Would you like me to help you clean up?”

We do not impose negative consequences for failure to eat or for toileting accidents. No child will be humiliated, shamed, frightened or verbally abused. Consequences will not be delegated to children. They are not permitted to hit each other on Abilities First property nor are parents permitted to spank, slap or verbally abuse children at the center. The teachers may consult with the child’s family about concerns or struggles that are occurring at our Center and encourage families to discuss any problems they are having at home. It is very important for us to work together for the benefit of the children.

When children display a pattern of aggressive behaviors that threaten or cause harm to others, our Center will implement our Procedure to Promote Positive Behavior.

Philosophy of Family Involvement

We believe that families should be involved in their child’s education. We provide many opportunities for families to be involved throughout the year. We value family involvement and encourage participation in your child’s learning at our center. You will be given the opportunity to volunteer or come to participate in your child’s class and at the center for different events. We want families to be involved in the education of their children. We also like feedback/ suggestions from the parents. If you would like to leave feedback/suggestion, please email the director or use the QR located in several parts of the building at any time. An annual parent/ family survey will also be provided. There will be at least 2 family/ parent educational trainings provided throughout the year. Please be on the lookout for those flyers on our parent board and Brightwheel.

Communication

Parents will be able to communicate with staff and administrators through emails, phone, newsletters, and Brightwheel. The most common way of communication for teachers and families is the Brightwheel app. You will download this app when your child starts and will be able to communicate with the teachers throughout the day. If you would like to talk to the administrators, please do so by email, phone, or appointment. Parent teacher conferences are held quarterly by the teachers. Be on the lookout for signups. We do have an open-door policy. If there is anything that needs to be discussed, please stop at the Director or Assistant Director’s office during office hours or call and a time can be set up for meeting.

Commented [SC6]: Office hours need posted for both of us

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conference provides an opportunity for parents and teaching staff to get to know each other better and to promote a closer working relationship between home and school. There may be a conference scheduled anytime your child transitions from one room to another. Individual conferences will also be scheduled quarterly. Each family will be notified in advance of the available dates and times. Additional conferences may be scheduled at any time by either the parents or the teachers.

If you should have any questions concerning your child, you are invited to call or message your child's teacher on Brightwheel to discuss matters on the phone or to set-up an appointment for a conference. Discussing your child during the hours the children are awake and require constant supervision could be a problem. Nap times (approximately between 12:00 P.M. and 3:00P.M.) would be most convenient, but still may require some planning to maintain compliance with ratios and active supervision. This will allow the teacher to pay full attention to you. Please be sensitive to the child and do not talk about concerns in front of him/her. Likewise, staff cannot discuss issues pertaining to another child with you. We are diligent to protect the confidentiality of information pertaining to all children.

Family Events at Our Center

Periodically during the year, we will have family events that incorporate fun and learning for the entire family, often scheduled after work hours. You will be informed of these events in flyer form. Please check your child's folder/ pocket daily for important news and information to be sent home daily.

Invitation to Visit, Observe and Participate:

Adults in a child's family are encouraged to participate, observe or visit their child at any time during the day. Visits during lunch hour, taking your child out for lunch or stopping by between appointments are welcomed. You have access to our Center at all times. If other relatives would like to visit, please notify your child's teachers or the Director of the Center. All visitors must sign in at the front desk. Parents/guardians are always welcome to participate as classroom volunteers.

Schedule

Naps:

Each child has a crib, cot or mat assigned to him / her. We ask that you bring a small pillow (if a child is under the age of one, no pillows or blankets are allowed), blanket and perhaps a soft toy to make nap time more cozy. These items will be kept at the center and be washed weekly. We do make some provisions for non-nappers after we have made every effort to help the children relax and sleep. If you are having problems at home with bedtime, talk with your child's teacher. Often bedtime problems can create a disruptive cycle. Children may have a hard time falling asleep at night, then take a very long nap in the afternoon and again have a hard time at home, etc. We will need to work together as a team if this should happen.

Dressing for Outdoor Play:

Children go outside in all types of weather. Please dress your child with the day's weather in mind. We will go outside daily for at least 30 minutes, as long as temperatures are between 25 degrees and 90 degrees. Provisions to keep children warm/ cool and water are all provided as needed for outdoor play. Please provide clothing for outdoor play – including hat, mittens or gloves, a coat with a working zipper and boots or extra shoes. Snow pants are nice when there is snow on the ground, but you may want to include a sweatshirt or light sweater on spring and fall days and even in the summer if your child is not used to air conditioning.

We are unable to keep one child inside even though you may request it. When a teacher must stay inside, the other teacher is left to work with the whole group - which can be unsafe and out

of compliance with state mandated teacher/child ratios. If your child is healthy enough to attend school, he or she should be healthy enough to play outdoors. If your child has a medical condition which the doctor feels outdoor play is unsafe, please have the doctor inform us of this condition in writing. We will make every effort to accommodate.

Shoes

For safety reasons, we request both teachers and children to wear closed toe shoes while at our center. These types of shoes prevent injury to the toes and keep foreign objects away from the feet. Every child must be provided with shoes for outdoor play, whether they are a walker or not. Non- mobile infants may be the exception to this rule.

Weather-Related School Delay or Cancellation:

Delays or closings of Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center will be announced on:

WHIO (1290 AM)	99.1 FM
Channel 7	whiotv.com
k99online.com	1290whio.com

Commented [SC7]: Revise base on new findings

For school age children: When Middletown schools announce opening delays, we will delay our transportation according to the schedule announced. If school is subsequently closed and we already have your children with us, we will continue to care for them under our School's out rules. (See page 6). If school age children are unexpectedly released from school early, we will expect each family to communicate with us to verify pick-up responsibilities.

Creative Curriculum:

Infants, Toddlers and Twos/Goals and Objectives

To provide quality care, we need to know how children develop and what we want them to learn. The goals and objectives of The Creative Curriculum are organized in four developmental areas: social/emotional, physical, cognitive and language. They address the important aspects of a child's development and learning that can be influenced by the care and education that we provide.

Teachers will observe assess and plan for the children in their small groups. They will write observations that are objective, rather than judgmental and evaluate information so they can decide which step accurately reflects a child's level of development. They will take observation notes and work samples. Teachers will then create a portfolio for each child. A portfolio is a collection of items that document a child's interests, skills, accomplishments and approaches to learning. Portfolios for Infants, Toddlers and Twos contain items such as photographs, scribbles and paintings.

Pre-School/Goals and Objectives:

The goals and objectives give teacher's the direction for planning their program and a way to determine what the children know and how they are progressing. The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum shows the progression we can expect 3-5 year olds for the

curriculums 10 goals and 50 objectives. It includes forerunners for children who may not be at a typical level but still exhibit strengths on which we can build.

Collecting Facts:

The first step in linking curriculum and assessments is collecting facts-learning as much as possible about each child. Ongoing observation is the primary way that the teachers collect facts. They then set up systems for documenting what they see.

Analyzing Facts:

Observation notes and samples of the children's work reveal a wealth of information that can be analyzed and evaluated to determine exactly where a child is developmentally.

Planning for Each Child in the Group:

The information pinpointed where each child is in relation to the curriculum objectives enables teachers to plan for each child. They review and summarize what they have learned about a child on progress and planning reports, then meet with families to exchange what they know and to work with the family to plan the next steps.

Transitions:

As children grow and develop, there will be many transitions such as moving from a crib to a bed, infant food to the center menu, potty training and moving to a new classroom. The first step of a transition to a new classroom is a meeting with the parents to develop a transition plan for their child. This meeting may take place between the teacher and the parent/guardian during a regularly scheduled quarterly conference or may be scheduled at a time at least 1 week prior to the actual transition. It may also be the Director and Parent/guardian that meets regarding the transition. During this meeting, parents and staff together develop an individualized transition plan as we understand that the same plan does not work for all children. After meeting with the family, a transition letter will be filled out with agreed upon dates/times so that the child can gradually get used to the new environment; this transition time is a guideline and is adjusted as needed per the child's individual needs. Transitions into another classroom are for the purpose of allowing the child time to become part of a new group and to be able to leave their old group comfortably. Therefore, each age group within the ECLC has activities that they carry out with the child, according to the child/family's needs. During the transition time, parents will be offered the opportunity to meet with your child's current and new teacher to share information and discuss:

- *The transitioning child
- *Family expectations
- *Classroom philosophy
- *Specific classroom schedules

There are many different activities that our classrooms may use to help ease the transitioning child into their new classrooms. For example, prior to their transition week, a toddler may walk to the preschool room to deliver a message, share some news, etc. While in the classroom the teacher would point out to the toddler what is happening and suggests that soon they will be able to join the group. A preschooler that is about to join the School-age classroom may already have established some friendships with School-age children, as they spend the first and last hour of the

day together. The preschooler may also walk with School-age teacher to drop off or pick up students at the elementary school.

Routine Developmental Screening:

The teachers and primary caregivers perform developmental screenings of all children in their classroom throughout the year. We use the Ages and Stages Assessment System to complete the screenings. These results are used to plan developmentally appropriate activities for the children and to monitor children's development. Your family may request to access the screening results at any time, and they will be shared with you at pre-school/school readiness conferences. The teachers and staff may ask that the parents/ caregivers complete a questionnaire as well to gather more data on a child.

Parent-Teacher Conferences:

Parent-teacher conference provide an opportunity for parents and teaching staff to get to know each other better and to promote a closer working relationship between home and school. There will be a conference scheduled anytime your child transitions from one room to another. Individual conferences will also be scheduled quarterly. Each family will be notified well in advance of the available dates and times. Additional conferences may be scheduled at any time by either the parents or the teachers.

If you should have any questions concerning your child, you are invited to call your child's teacher either to discuss matters on the phone or to set-up an appointment for a conference. Discussing your child during the hours the children are awake and require constant supervision could be a problem. Nap times (approximately between 1:00 P.M. and 3:00P.M.) would be most convenient. This will allow the teacher to pay full attention to you. Please be sensitive to the child and do not talk about concerns in front of him/her. Likewise, staff cannot discuss issues pertaining to another child with you. We are diligent to protect the confidentiality of information pertaining to all children.

Health and Safety

General Safety Guidelines:

1. No child will ever be left alone or unsupervised.
2. Upon arrival and departure, a staff person will greet or acknowledge each child as he / she comes and goes. Parents are responsible for accompanying their child to the classroom door upon arrival, and at departure.
3. There is always immediate access to a phone. Telephones are located in each classroom, the Directors' office, the Assistant Director's office and the Front Office. When staff takes children on walks near the Center, they carry a cell phone.

Fire Safety/Drills:

All staff members receive orientation training in fire safety and procedures. Agency fire drills are practiced monthly to insure that fire emergencies are understood and easily managed. A record will be maintained in the files of the Director of Facilities and Maintenance as well as on the

Parent bulletin board located outside the Director's office. A plan is posted in each classroom indicating staff responsibilities in case of an emergency. ODJFS also requires that an active shooter/ lock down procedure drill be performed in the building at least once quarterly. The Director of Facilities and Maintenance tracks all related information.

Emergency Evacuation:

If an emergency situation requires staff to evacuate the building with the children under their supervision, they will be notified through our intercom system and phone system with code words that state the type of evacuation emergency. Staff will calmly and quickly exit the building with the children, taking their attendance clipboards. They will relocate to a safe location, as instructed.

In the event of tornado or severe storm alerts, all classes gather in the 4 plus 1 classroom or the hallway where they will be away from windows. Parents who arrive during such an emergency will be strongly encouraged to remain at our Center until the alert has been lifted.

Field Trip Safety:

A first aid kit is available when away from the building. A person certified in First Aid will attend all field trips and administer First Aid as necessary. All children will wear wristbands with the center's name, address and telephone number.

Swimming Policy:

Permission slips must be signed by parents for all water-related participation. For infants/toddler/pre-school, the staff will supervise play in or near shallow wading pools at our Center. Permission slips will be signed by parents/guardians at the beginning of the season. Parents will be informed when we plan a field trip that will be near water even if we do not plan to be in the water.

Aerosol Spray Use:

The use of aerosol sprays is prohibited in the center while the children are in attendance.

Incident/Injury Report Process:

The supervising staff is required to fill out an Incident/Injury Report (JFS 01299) when a child in their care receives an injury that requires first aid treatment, a bump or blow to the head, emergency transporting, or an unusual or unexpected event which jeopardizes the safety of children or staff, such as, a child leaving the center unattended. Parents then have the opportunity to read, sign, and receive a copy of these forms. Any accident that requires more than ordinary emergency treatment by the classroom teacher will also be reported to the Department of Job and Family Services.

Emergency Transportation:

Our center does obtain written emergency transportation authorization from each parent or guardian before the child begins attending the program. We may not accept any children whose parents or guardians refuse to grant permission for emergency transportation.

If a child is injured and needs treatment immediately, the center will call 911. A staff member will go to the hospital with the child and will take the child's records. The parent/guardians will

be called to meet the child and staff person at the hospital and the staff will remain at the hospital until the parent/guardian arrives.

Child Abuse Reporting:

Ohio law requires that we report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect. All staff members are required to take a course in child abuse identification and prevention. Please understand our concerns and questions about injuries your child has had. We have a legal obligation to question bruises, marks, etc. We would contact the Children's Protective Services in the county in which the child resides.

Pick-up List and Release of Children:

It is important that we are able to contact at least one parent or relative at all times when your child is at the center. There should always be someone 18 years of age or older who is available to pick up your child in case of an emergency or illness. Notify us immediately of any change in your contact information.

Release will be denied unless persons picking up children are 18 years of age and older with a photo ID and whose names are on your pickup authorization list. If the person picking up the child is unknown to the teacher who is supervising the classroom, then the photo identification must be checked before we release the child.

Transportation of Children/Permission Slips:

Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center **does not** participate in field trips that require transportation in vehicles.

If a field trip is taken, you will receive notification in writing about the details of the planned trip. A signed permission slip (specific form) allowing your child to go must be returned in order for your child to participate.

Written permission for routine walks around the neighborhood is required as part of the enrollment process and will be renewed annually at the start of the Spring season.

Supervision Plan for All Trips:

During any trip away from the Center, safe and adequate supervision shall be maintained. In groups of more than five infants or a combination of seven or more older children, there shall be two adults accompanying the group. Children shall be assigned to specific childcare staff members for all trips, and a roster of these children and their assigned caretaker shall accompany each group. No child shall ever be left alone or unsupervised.

Management of Illness:

Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center maintains a strict policy excluding children from the center who may be contagious. The Ohio Department of Health has provided us with a "Day Care Center Communicable Disease Chart" which is posted in the ECLC hallway. Staff members have received training required by ODJFS in recognizing communicable illnesses. A trained staff person will observe each child upon arrival and throughout the day for evidence of communicable illness.

When a child becomes ill at the Center, we expect the parent to pick up the child within the hour. We know it is often inconvenient for parents to leave work and/or stay at home due to a possible communicable illness. However, our policy of strictly excluding children with possible communicable illness is designed to protect all of the children and staff.

A staff member who has a communicable disease will not work with the children and will be replaced by a qualified substitute.

Symptoms for Dismissal:

Out of an abundance of caution, if your child exhibits any symptoms of malaise or illness, we recommend calling your Primary Care Physician/Pediatrician for guidance.

We request that your child stay home from school if your child, or anyone else in the home, is experiencing flu or severe illness.

If your child experiences the following symptoms:

Your child must stay at home for treatment and observation if they demonstrate any of the following symptoms; if your child exhibits these symptoms while in childcare, we will ask that they be picked up and kept home for 24 hours. We may require your child to be seen by their primary care physician before returning. A child will be sent home with the following symptoms and must be picked up within one hour of contact with the family:

- ☐ Fever greater than 100.4 degrees. Your child may return to school only after his or her temperature has been consistently below 100 degrees, for a minimum of 24 hours without medication and all other symptoms are gone.
- ☐ Vomiting
- ☐ Diarrhea
- ☐ Frequent congested (wet) or croupy cough
- ☐ Lots of nasal congestion or runny nose needing frequent wiping of nose
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Red, runny, or crusty eyes
- ☐ Rash, blisters, and any associated malaise
- ☐ General malaise-not feeling well, even if not diagnosed
- ☐ Feelings of fatigue
- ☐ Discomfort, muscle aches

We understand this is a very strict policy. However, keeping a sick child at home will minimize the spread of infections and viruses in the classroom. If someone else in the home is sick, we just need to know that they are not contagious. If they are unwell, your child will need to remain out of school for a minimum of 24 hours; with a minimum of 48 hours out with more than 1 symptoms exhibited.

Your child may return to school sooner with a doctor's note stating what the illness is, and that it is not contagious.

Isolation Precautions:

When symptoms of communicable illness develop during the day, he/she will be isolated from the other children and supervised by an adult. Ill children will be provided with a clean cot and personal blanket and pillow. The cot will be disinfected after use. The parent/guardian and/or the designated emergency contact person will be contacted to come for the child. We expect parents or designees to respond within the hour.

Children with one of the following symptoms will be isolated from other children to be observed. The decision to discharge or to return a child to their classroom will be determined by the Director.

1. Sore throat or difficulty in swallowing.
2. Elevated temperature (below 100 degrees).
3. Isolated incident of vomiting.

Notification of Exposure:

When your child has been exposed to a communicable disease, you will be notified in writing within 24 hours. This notification will be posted on the door of your child's classroom and the exposure will be highlighted or sent out to exposed children in a notice on Procure.

Returning after Illness:

A statement from a physician must accompany a returning child. The statement must confirm that the child is free from communicable disease and that returning to the program presents no risk to the child or others. Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center retains the right to continue to exclude a child despite a physician's statement if that statement contradicts the Center's policies. We have the final say in caring for a child who may be contagious. Please feel free to discuss these policies with the Director if you have any questions or concerns.

Return after Identification of Head Lice or Nits:

Once the presence of nits or live lice has been observed on a child's head by Center staff, your child will be sent home for treatment and must be lice and nits (egg sacs) free before returning to our Center. We will re-examine a child on their return. If lice or nits are found to be present, and this is confirmed by a member of Leadership or staff, we will send the child home.

In the case of repeated findings of lice or nits on an individual child (after 3 occurrences), we require Doctor's statement that they are free of both live lice and nits before they may return.

Outdoor Play:

Children will be taken outside to play daily whenever weather conditions are safe. Time outside will be limited to 20 minutes when there is an air quality warning in effect. Limitations placed on outdoor play due to weather or safety issues:

- Children are not taken out if the temperature is below 25°F or above 90°F.
- Outdoor play time is adjusted or limited during inclement weather and safety conditions including rain, lightning, ice, wind chill warnings, air quality warnings, excessive humidity, high pollen counts, etc.

Food Allergies and Special Diets:

If your child is allergic to a whole food group, or is on a special diet that cannot be met with the foods on our Center menu, a doctor's note is required to allow us to modify their diet while here at the Center. A plan will be written with your involvement that meets your child's special dietary needs. We will identify alternative foods that meet both our federal nutritional guidelines and your child's restrictions. In most cases, the family will be expected to supply these alternative foods.

Children who are working with our Therapy Department may need textural changes or modifications to their diet. We will work as a team with your child's therapist and our nutritionist to provide appropriate meals.

Infant bottles: You will be advised of and required to follow our sanitation routine for infant bottles. Each bottle (and cap) brought to our Center must be labeled with your child's first and last name and the full date. Families are responsible for providing the number of bottles with appropriate caps for their child's day here at the Center.

Children under one year of age: Families will be asked for feeding procedure and offered the formula and infant food our center can provide. A parent may decline the formula offered by the center and supply the infant's formula and food themselves. However, when the infant turns one year of age, our center will provide all milk and food to meet meal pattern requirements for toddler age children.

Instructions for special diets due to cultural or religious reasons must be in writing, dated and signed by parent. A plan will be written with your involvement that meets your child's special dietary needs. We will identify alternative foods that meet both our federal nutritional guidelines and your child's restrictions. In most cases, the family will be expected to supply these alternative foods.

Meals and Snacks:

Our goal is to provide tasty, well-balanced meals and to develop children's healthy eating habits by exposing them to a variety of foods. Menus are posted in each room and also in the kitchen located off the childcare hallway. We review and revise the menu twice a year to incorporate season variety.

Lunch is served at 11:30 A.M. This meal includes foods from all four of the basic food groups:

- Meat/meat alternate
- Bread/bread alternate
- Vegetable/fruit
- Dairy product

Please join us for lunch if you are able to do so. Let the teachers know if you'd like to visit, so we can include you in the lunch count. Everyone is offered a serving of each food. We encourage the children to taste everything, keeping conversation pleasant, encouraging social interaction and gently teaching manners.

We also serve a breakfast between 8A.M. – 9 A.M. that includes foods from three of the food groups.

- Bread/bread alternate;
- Vegetable/fruit;
- Dairy products

A snack that includes two of the food groups is served between 3P.M. – 4 P.M.

We also offer the option that a child's parent or guardian may decline what is offered and supply the child's meals instead. The meal provided by the child's family must comply with ODJFS requirements and the family **MUST** provide the center with a note from the physician stating the parents will supplement meals or parts of meals while at the center.

Party and Treats Policy:

We prefer to keep any celebration of the holidays or special occasions at school simple. Therefore, we ask parents to consult with the staff about such things as wearing costumes or bringing Valentines.

If parents would like to have the child's birthday celebrated in the classroom, please consult with the teacher beforehand. Instead of treats loaded with sugar and fat, we ask that you provide a nutritional treat, or better yet, an activity or craft the children could do together.

Peanut Butter:

To ensure the upmost safety of children with allergies, we do not serve or allow children to have peanut butter or nuts in our center. **WE ARE NUT FREE CENTER!!!** This includes all nuts from the nut family and nuts in the shell and or things cooked in peanut oil, and peanut butter

Our Code of Ethics:

Each staff member adheres to the Code of Ethics of Abilities First Foundation.

General Statements

- We are committed to supporting each child's optimum social, emotional, intellectual and physical development within a safe, healthy and enriched environment.
- We will respect the racial, ethnic, religious and cultural and socio-economics differences of all children, parents, and others with whom we work.
- We will maintain confidentiality in our dealing with children, parents and colleagues.
- We will avoid misinterpretation of our professional skills, qualifications and affiliations.
- We have the right and obligation to share in the maintenance of the ethics of our profession.

Families

- We will respect families' rights to make decisions for their children and will uphold their beliefs and practices whenever possible.
- We will be aware that not only the families, but also other people and experiences influence the development and attitudes of the children in our care.

Commented [SC8]: What is this???

- When conflicts arise between parent and a staff member concerning generally accepted professional and/or developmental practices, we will make every attempt to clarify the issues for the parent through education and communication.

Children

- We will uphold the principle that the Early Childhood Educator's primary professional responsibility is to the child.
- The child's total development will remain our primary concern.
- We will treat each child with respect and dignity.
- We will not mentally, physically or emotionally abuse the child in any way.
- We believe in positive productive discipline and guidance as the means for dealing with inappropriate behavior.

Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center Staff:

We select our staff carefully in order to provide the best possible care and education for your children. We look for Lead teachers/Lead Primary caregivers that have at least a CDA Credential (Child Development Associate) or are working toward, an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education or Bachelor's Degree in Education and related field and/or experience as teachers of young children or have significant coursework and/ or experience caring for children. These are above the minimum standards required by State Licensing, which include staff to be 18 years of age and to have a high school diploma. Assistants Teachers/Assistant Primary Caregivers have some courses in Early Childhood Education and/or at least one year experience working with young children.

We employ people who are warm and nurturing, who understand child development, who can apply their knowledge in the classroom, and who can respect each child as an individual. We seek employees who value working as a team with parents and colleagues.

Continuing education is an important part of working for Abilities First. Each staff person attends training in First Aid, CPR, Recognition and Prevention of Common Childhood Illnesses and Communicable Diseases, Child Abuse Prevention and Recognition. All teachers are encouraged to work toward the CDA Credential or to earn a degree in Early Childhood Education.

The Director of Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center supervises all childcare staff, including the Assistant Director. The Director is supervised by the Executive Director of Abilities First; who is responsible to the Board of Trustees of Abilities First.

Volunteers and Students:

Abilities First encourages community involvement in all our programs. Volunteers are incorporated to perform a variety of duties depending on their interest and our needs. Students are given the opportunity to observe and gain practical experience in working with young children. Volunteers are encouraged to actively interact with our children, they are not considered to be staff and will not be included in the staff/child ratios, and will never be alone with the children. Volunteers and Students will have to meet the minimum requirements set

by DCY licensing, including an Childcare Employee Medical Statement and a background check.

Pediatric Therapies Information:

Abilities First Pediatric Therapies is the comprehensive out-patient Pediatric Therapy program designed to help children and young people to learn to overcome their disabilities and begin to function more independently in the world. These therapies are offered: physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and assistive technology. Children enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Center who are also clients of the Pediatric Therapies can receive therapy during the school day. Their classroom teachers work as partners with the therapists and parents to implement therapies in the classroom. All therapists meet the minimum requirements for their specific licensure, as well as DCY compliance and professional development requirements.

Complaints and Grievances:

We welcome your suggestion, concerns and compliments about what we are doing. This helps us develop a better program.

If you have a particular problem, we ask you to first address the problem with the person with whom you are having the problem. For example, if you have a problem with a specific staff person, address that person; if you have a suggestion about the classroom program, please speak to the Lead Teacher for the room. Handling problems in this manner allows the person involved to explain and for both of you to work toward a solution.

We would appreciate it if you would not discuss a staff person to another staff person. This affects relationships and puts staff in difficult positions. The Director or Assistant Director of Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center would be the appropriate person with whom to discuss complaints about the Center in general and about policies and procedures.

Should any problem you have discussed with the teachers, Assistant Director, and Director of Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center not be resolved to your satisfaction, or if you wish to appeal any decision regarding your child, you may contact:

Executive Director of Abilities First

4710 Timber Trail Drive, Middletown, Ohio 45044 (1-513-423-9496)

Please include your daytime phone number. The Executive Director will respond as soon as possible.

Reasons for Disenrollment:

Failure to Pay Daycare Bill: Late or overdue tuition/fee payments can result in disenrollment. Questions and/or comments regarding billing should be referred to the director / Assistant Director. Any payment arrangements that are made with our Finance Department will be monitored by the Director of our Center. If the family fails to comply with those payment arrangements, disenrollment will be initiated.

Failure to Comply with JFS Rules: Clients of the Job and Family Services System who fail to comply with their co-payment or parental responsibilities will be dis-enrolled after opportunity to correct these issues has been given. Any payments due our Center are subject to the same rules as private pay clients.

Failure to Provide State-Required Documentation: Our Center is required to have a record of specific information concerning your child. This information is updated on a regular basis. A family that fails to comply with requests for that information in a timely manner will be sent a warning letter of impending disenrollment that includes a deadline date. Failure to meet that deadline will cause disenrollment.

End Result of our Procedure to Promote Positive Behavior: Our procedure to address a pattern of documented aggressive behavior includes parent/teacher/management conferencing, a collaborative plan to promote appropriate behavior, and an expectancy of progress toward appropriate interactions when our plan is consistently worked. If we do not gain the cooperation of families, or we see no marked improvement in the child's interactions, we will meet again to discuss more appropriate placement options and initiate the child's disenrollment at our Center.

When You Decide to Leave Us

Two Week Notice: If you must withdraw your child(ren), it is required that the Center be notified **in writing** two weeks in advance. Failure to give us proper notification will result in two weeks of tuition charges.

Bill Paid In Full: Please make sure your child care bill is paid in full when you leave us.

Transitioning out of the program is a process that is more involved than just closing the financial account. During this two week period, several processes can be completed.

Your child will have a chance to tell his friends of his/her plans. Staff will verbalize this to younger children. In both cases, this gives the other children a chance to realize that there is going to be change and that their friend has not just disappeared. Classroom groups or the individual leaving may plan a little celebration as part of their moving on, if desired.

Teachers will gather a child's belongings so that they are ready to pass on to the family before the last day of attendance.

Teachers will also update the child's portfolio and review the child's files, making sure that the most recent quarterly conference has been completed and shared with the parent. The child portfolio will then be sent home on the last day of attendance.

Exit Interviews: The Director may from time to time conduct exit interviews with the families who are leaving our Center. The information we gather will be held in confidence and aid us in future planning. With your permission, we may use your positive statements in marketing materials.

We appreciate your understanding how important that two-week notice can be to us and to you. Saying "good-bye" is part of the life cycle and our culture. We hope these processes go a long way in making the transition easier for everyone involved.

In Closing:

We appreciate that your family has selected us to care for your child(ren). Just like you, we care deeply about your child(ren). Your suggestions and comments will receive careful consideration as we continue to design a program responsive to the needs of your family.