

Annie's Early Learning Center Parents' Handbook

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Welcome to Annie's Early Learning Center

Mission Statement

Our mission at Annie's ELC is to provide a quality educational program in a safe, caring and academic enriched environment for your child. Honesty, integrity and respect for each other are integral components of our program. Our primary goal is to successfully prepare each child with the necessary tools for excellence in their formal education.

Philosophy

It is our belief that children learn best when their interests are being explored and nurtured in a natural environment. Annie's welcomes children of all abilities. We work closely with families and other early childhood professionals to help all children reach their potential. We believe that observing children and creating lesson plans that reflect the children's interests is the best way to nurture the social, physical, emotional and cognitive development of children. Learning through hands-on experiences, developmentally age-appropriate activities and play are the best ways to foster a life-long love of learning.

Discipline/Guidance Policy

Teachers develop classroom rules in cooperation with the children. With the children's input, clear rules and expectations are developed, displayed and reviewed daily in each classroom. Throughout the day, children are given opportunities to make choices about what activities they participate in. This often occurs during center play time, outdoor play and small group activities. Teachers will encourage and praise positive behaviors throughout the day using verbal and non-verbal cues. Occasionally, children may require behavioral intervention. Children sometimes lose control as they are learning to self-regulate their behavior. Children are never spanked, humiliated, or embarrassed. Our teachers are trained to use re-direction and positive

reinforcement possible. Children may be re-directed to another activity or given a choice of another activity to work on as needed. Teachers will talk with the child to assist the child in regaining control of his/her emotions. Parents may be asked how they deal with difficult situations in order for us to work together in helping your child manage their own behavior.

If there is a situation where a child is either consistently abusive (physically or verbally) to the teachers or other children, the following steps will be taken.

1. A conference will be set up between the teacher and the parent(s) to discuss the behavior and ways to prevent it. An action plan will be set up.
2. If the misconduct continues, the director will meet with the parent(s) and teacher to address the concerns and create a behavior contract.
3. If the behavior continues after the second conference, the administration has the right to withdraw your contract with the center and disenroll your child.

Biting Policy

Biting often occurs due to a lack of communication skills. Biting is a traumatic situation for children and both sets of parents. Younger children often do not recognize the damage they are inflicting by biting. When a child is bitten, the area is cleaned and ice may be applied. The child will be consoled until he/she is ready to rejoin the group. The child who bites will be told that biting is not allowed and that it hurts our friends.

Annie's ELC takes biting very seriously. Parents of both children will be notified of the situation on an incident report. If there are two or more occurrences in a single day, the child who bites will be sent home. If biting becomes a chronic problem (child is sent

home more than once in a week), a conference will be held with the parents, teacher and director to discuss the situation and a behavior contract may be written. If all attempts to control biting are unsuccessful, the administration has the right to withdraw your contract and dis-enroll your child.

Tuition

Tuition is due each Monday for the current week. We accept cash (exact amount), check, money order and credit card payments. You may set up a recurring credit card payment by completing the necessary form. Families will be notified when payments are past due. There is a \$10 late fee for each day that tuition is not received. If tuition is not paid with late fees included by close of business on Friday, your child will not be able to attend the following week. If tuition is continually paid late, your child could be dismissed. Annie's reserves the right to dismiss a student for non-payment of tuition. Tuition is due for days your child is absent, holidays and days we may be closed due to inclement weather.

Returned Checks

There is a \$50 fee for returned checks. All future payments must be made by cash, money order or credit card. We cannot re-deposit checks. The returned check fee and tuition must be paid immediately or your child will be dismissed. The check will be submitted to the State's Attorney's office or to a collection agency.

Operating Hours and Late Pick-Up Fees

Annie's is open from 6:00am to 6:30pm, Monday through Friday (except for holidays noted on p. 4). If you are running late, please call the center to notify us. Late pick up fees apply. Please refer to your contract for the amount. There are no exceptions. Please remember that our staff have families and commitments to meet

after work. We understand the occasion where traffic or weather conditions cause delays. Please make plans for a back-up contact to pick up your children if necessary. Please drive carefully and arrive safely at the center. The late pick-up fee is due within 24 hours of billing.

Disenrollment

We require a 2 week written notice if you plan to disenroll your child from Annie's. Otherwise, tuition is still due. Vacation credit may not be used as part of your 2 week notice to withdraw. If you wish to disenroll temporarily, we cannot guarantee your spot. To guarantee your spot, you must continue to pay the weekly tuition. We can notify you if space is becoming limited and you are in danger of losing your spot. At that time, you can choose to pay the weekly tuition or lose the spot.

Holidays

Annie's will be closed for the following holidays. Tuition is still due for these days.

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Presidents' Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Columbus Day (Teacher In-Service Day)
Veteran's Day
Thanksgiving
Day after Thanksgiving
Christmas Day

We will close at 2:00pm on Christmas Eve if it falls on a weekday. If you pick up after 2:00pm, late fees will be charged according to our late pick up fee policy.

Vacation Credit

After attending Annie's for 1 year, you will be permitted a vacation credit if your child(ren) is enrolled *full-time and your payments are up-to-date*. Children may not attend Annie's during your vacation credit week. Please see your contract for the credit amount.

Vacation must be 5 consecutive days, Monday through Friday.

Two weeks written notice must be given in order to receive the vacation credit or tuition will still be due. There are no exceptions to the 2 weeks written notice.

Inclement Weather Closings

Annie's makes every effort to open every scheduled day. If weather is such that we cannot open on time, we will make every effort for a delayed opening. In the case that we cannot open on time or we delay our opening, an email will be sent to families and it will be posted on our Facebook page. If Annie's must close early due to weather or power outage, families will be notified by email and phone call. Families will be expected to pick their children up within 2 hours or late pick-up fees will apply.

Drop-off and Pick-Up

Families are required to sign their child in and out each day. In the main building, this is done on the key pad located outside the office. In the school age building, this is done by initialing and writing in the time in the sign in/out form in the book on the desk. It is important that this is done each day as it is required by licensing. Once you sign in your child, please bring him/her to the appropriate classroom or wherever your child's class may be (playground, another classroom). Children should not be left alone in a classroom or left to walk into their classroom alone. Families should ensure that the teacher knows of the child's arrival or pick-up. Please do not send an older sibling to drop off or pick up your child. Children should arrive by 10:00am. Our core academic time begins around 9:00am. Children who arrive later than 9:00am

miss our daily circle time and small groups when a great deal of our instruction is done. Occasionally, children will have difficulty separating from their parents at drop-off. This is a normal developmental stage that may appear, disappear and then reappear. Please say goodbye to your child, reassure them that you will return and then leave. Children will usually be involved in an activity before you leave the parking lot. Sneaking out or prolonging the goodbye usually extend the anxiety that the child feels. The teachers are well equipped to assist your child in transitioning. Please feel free to call and check in on your child during the day.

The only persons allowed to pick up your child will be those indicated on your emergency form. Persons picking up children may be asked for picture identification. New teachers in particular may request picture ID until they are familiar with families. This policy is to protect your child. If someone other than persons listed on your emergency form is picking up, you must call the office or provide the office with written notification. A picture ID must be presented at time of pick-up. If there are custody concerns, the applicable paperwork must be given to the office for the child's file.

Security

All families are issued a PIN to use to enter the buildings. Please do not give your PIN to anyone other than your authorized drop off/pick up persons. The PINs should not be given to your children nor should your child enter the PIN codes. The PIN is issued to ensure that only authorized persons are allowed into the buildings. Please do not hold the door open for others to enter the building. This is to ensure the safety of your children and the staff. Please enter the main building through the main entrance. The lower playground is not an authorized entrance for anyone. Family members should not enter the lower playground area through the gate as this eliminates our security system.

Safety

All employees of Annie's are required to adhere to Maryland law regarding reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.

Fire drills are performed monthly. Severe weather drills and stranger danger drills are performed semi-annually.

Emergency Preparedness

Our staff is trained to deal with a variety of emergency situations. In all situations, the teachers will remain with the children until the emergency has ended or the child has been picked up. Parents will be called to pick up children as soon as possible in the event of an emergency.

Confidentiality Policy

All employees of Annie's are required to maintain confidentiality policies in accordance with the recommended practices of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This means that staff can only discuss your child and are not allowed to discuss any other child with you. Conversations about other children, other parents, other staff or supervisors are unprofessional and are in violation of our employee's code of conduct.

Family Involvement and Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parents are welcome to visit the classrooms at any time. There are events held each year that families are invited to participate in. These may include, but are not limited to: Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparent's Day, Easter, Christmas, Halloween, talent show. Flyers will be posted whenever there are opportunities for family involvement. Please participate when you are able--the children love to share their classroom experiences with you.

Family involvement demonstrates to your child that you value your child's educational experience. While we welcome visitors to our center, we ask that visits are kept to no more than 15 minutes. If visits to the classroom become disruptive to the learning environment, you may be asked to return another time. Management reserves the right to limit visits to the classrooms.

Parent-teacher conferences will be held twice a year for infants – PreK (Jan. and July). Sign-up lists will be posted outside your child's classroom. Parents who are unable to attend a scheduled time may schedule a phone conference. If you would like to meet with your child's teacher at another time, please set up an appointment with the teacher. Teachers are unable to have in-depth conversations at drop off or pick up as they are in charge of the classroom at these times and need to direct their attention to the children.

Communication

The infant, toddler and 2 year old rooms use a daily sheet. Parents should fill out any pertinent information each day at drop off. Teachers will complete the form throughout the day and will have it available for parents at pick up. Other classrooms may use communication books in which teachers and parents can leave notes for each other.

Transitions

As your child grows and matures she or he will transition from one classroom to another. A letter will be sent home to inform you of the pending transition. Transitions will occur as your child demonstrates that he or she is developmentally ready for the next classroom and as space allows. If you have any concerns about your child's transition, please speak with the director.

Outdoor Play

We believe that children need time to be active and play with their peers in a non-traditional classroom setting. Outdoor play is important for children to develop muscles, eye-hand coordination and gross motor skills. Children will play outside as long as weather permits. When temperatures are too high or low, children will not be allowed to play outside. Please send appropriate clothing each day for your child to play outside. Clothing includes coats, sweaters, close-toed shoes, hats, and mittens. We do not have staff to allow children to stay inside during outdoor playtime. Children should wear shoes suitable for outdoor play (please no sandals, open-toes shoes). Shoes with rubber soles are preferred.

Outdoor Water Play (during summer months)

A schedule and permission slip will be sent home in late spring. Please send a bathing suit, towel, water shoes, and swimmer diapers if applicable for your child. Children without the necessary items will not be allowed to participate.

Meals and Nutrition

Annie's is a peanut-free center. No food with peanuts or processed on equipment with peanuts will be served. In the infant and toddler rooms, parents will provide all food and drinks. Please label all food and drinks/bottles with the child's name and date. Annie's provides breakfast and snack daily for all other classrooms. Breakfast is served at 8:30am. During the school year, breakfast is served at 7:30am in the school age building and at 8:00am in the Pre-K room to allow children to eat before school. Lunch is served between 12:00pm and 12:30pm. Parents provide lunch for their children. Please label all food items with your child's name. Lunch may include items that need re-heating that do not take longer than 1 minute as we have many lunches to heat.

Food should be cut-up and ready for children to eat. Regulations require that we serve 1% or non-fat milk with all meals. 100 percent juice, milk or water may be served with snack. Regulations state that we are not allowed to serve any drinks with added sugar. Please provide healthy foods and drinks for your child. Foods with added sugar do not provide any nutrition for your child. Breakfast and snack menus are posted outside the classrooms and on the parent bulletin boards.

Birthdays and other Celebrations

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday or other occasion at Annie's, please coordinate with the office. Appropriate celebrations would possibly include: providing lunch or dessert for your child's class or providing special plates and napkins. Any food or drinks provided must be store bought and include the ingredients list. Moon bounces and petting zoos are not appropriate celebrations for Annie's. Please save these types of activities for your personal festivities. Our first priority is the safety of all our children.

Personal Belongings

Children should not bring personal toys to Annie's. Annie's is not responsible for any personal belongings brought to Annie's. Personal toys may be removed from the classroom and left in the office at the teacher's discretion.

Electronic Devices

Children are not allowed to have electronic devices while at Annie's. This includes the school age children. Any electronic device that is out will be left in the office during the day until the child is picked up. Cell phones must be left in the child's backpack and are not allowed to be used while at Annie's. We do not have the staff to monitor electronic usage.

Medication

If your child requires any medication to be administered while they attend Annie's, the medication form must be completed by your child's physician and the parent annually. The medication must be in the original prescription container with the child's name on it. At least one dose of any new medication must be administered at home prior to being administered at Annie's. The medication and medication form must be turned into the office so that it may be placed in the lock box. Children are not allowed to keep medications (prescription or over the counter) in their backpacks. This is a safety concern for all. Staff who have been trained in medication administration are the only ones allowed to administer any medication. Please provide updated forms and medication annually.

First Aid

Staff are required to maintain CPR and First Aid certification. Any incidences of first aid being administered are recorded on Incident or Boo-Boo report forms. You will be asked to sign the form and a copy will be provided to you at pick-up. We will call parents about any serious injury or any injury to the head. Staff are trained to call 911 in the event of any serious injury.

Incident Report Forms

If your child is involved in any mishap that requires any type of first aid (except for re-applying an existing band-aid) or a head/facial injury, the senior staff teacher will complete an incident report form. You will be called immediately regarding any type of serious injury. You will be asked to sign the incident report form when you pick up your child. A copy will be given to you and one will be placed in your child's file.

Should a child require emergency treatment, 911 will be called. The parents will be contacted immediately. If neither parent can be reached, we will call the contact listed on the emergency form. A senior staff member or manager will accompany the child to the hospital by ambulance.

Health and Illness Policy

In order to reduce the spread of illness and maintain the health of all the children and teachers at our center, your child may not be allowed to attend the center or participate in certain activities for the following reasons:

- A reportable condition that the local health department or physician determines to be contagious and the child has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the risk to others.
- An illness or symptom as described below that prevents participation in routine daily program activities, including outdoor activities.
- An illness that requires more individual care than our center staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.

The following symptoms or signs of illness may also prohibit your child from participating in our program

- Diarrhea
- Eye drainage
- Fever over 100 degrees
- Infestation (e.g. scabies, head lice)
- Mouth sores
- Persistent abdominal pain
- Rash
- Respiratory distress
- Runny nose
- Unusual color of skin, eyes, stool, urine
- Blood in stool
- Unexplained irritability, lethargy, and/or persistent crying
- Nausea/vomiting

If your child becomes ill while in our care, we will notify you immediately. Children will need to be picked up as soon as possible, but not later than within 2 hours. Children may not return to the center until the child is symptom free for 24 hours without medication and the symptoms have been treated (a doctor's note is required). *The child may not return to the center the next day.*

Per licensing regulations, children may not be re-admitted to the center after an absence of 3 days or more due to illness without a written statement from a health care provider that the child may return to a regular schedule.

Clothing

On your child's first day, please bring a complete change of clothing labeled with your child's name. For infants and toddlers, we require at least 2 changes of clothing. You may place the clothing in a zip lock bag and put your child's name on the bag. Please do not forget underwear and socks.

Each season new clothing should be exchanged so that your child has the appropriate clothing for the weather.

Please dress your child in clothing that is easy for him/her to remove for toileting. As we work and play, we may get dirty. Please keep this in mind when choosing your child's outfit. Shoes must be closed-toed. Flip flops and sandals are difficult to run in and play in, especially on gravel and mulch. Please send a jacket, hat, and mittens as needed. We try to play outside at least twice a day, weather permitting. We will go outside as long as it is not too hot, too cold or wet/rainy. We use the Child Care Weather Watch charts to determine if it is too hot or cold for outdoor play.

Nap Time and Bedding

Children in the infant through Pre-K classrooms are required by licensing to have a two hour nap time/quiet time each day. If your child does not nap, he or she will be provided a quiet activity to do on his/her cot. Each child is required by licensing to have a crib sheet and blanket for nap time. Bedding should be brought in each Monday and will be sent home to be washed every Friday.

Babysitting and Transportation

Occasionally parents may ask teachers to baby sit. Annie's ELC LLC does not encourage this practice and assumes no responsibility for employees after their scheduled work hours.

Additionally, staff members are not allowed to transport children while in a pay status for Annie's with the exception of management that drive the Annie's van or personal vehicles for field trips.

Developmental Screenings

Developmental screenings are a brief questionnaire completed by parents or caregivers to help identify a child's progress through early childhood milestones. Annie's ELC will participate in developmental screenings as required by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Annie's has selected Ages and Stages Questionnaires as our screening tool. When required by MSDE, teachers will distribute the questionnaires to parents for completion. If parents do not complete the forms, the teachers will complete them. Results from the screenings will help determine if children would benefit from a full evaluation and assessment. Children who receive early intervention services generally do better in the long term than those identified later. Upon completion of the screening, your child's teacher will meet with you to discuss the results and whether a referral to another agency for further evaluation is necessary. Parents should consider this process as part of required documentation in order for the child to attend our or any other licensed child care program in the State.

IEP/IFSP

Our goal at Annie's is to help every child learn and develop. Our teaching practices are geared towards meeting each child at his or her particular developmental stage. We request that children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or that have an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) provide us with a copy of the plan. Helping our children reach their potential is best done when all parties are working together and sharing information.

Volunteers, Practicum Students, Observations

Annie's supports the higher education of our staff and others studying early childhood education. We may have volunteers (ages 13 and up) that may assist in classrooms of children ages 2 and up. Regular volunteers (volunteers other than family members

visiting for a school function) and practicum students (students studying early childhood education) are required to submit a background check. Practicum students may also spend time assisting in classrooms. Volunteers and practicum students are not allowed to be left alone with children. Practicum students are often required to complete observations. Students requesting to conduct observations at Annie's may or may not be current staff. Students are required to be observers only and not participate in classroom activities. Children's names are not allowed to be used in the observation reports. If you wish for your child to not be included in observation reports, please notify management.

Screen Policy

We believe that children learn by participating in hands-on activities. To support this philosophy, we have restrictions on screen time. Children under the age of 2 are not allowed any type of screen time (videos, computers, tablets). Children over the age of 2 are limited to 30 minutes per week of educational, passive screen time (watching videos, tablets, computer screens).

We also limit interactive, educational screen time (using a tablet, computer, or dancing to a video) to 30 minutes per week. We may occasionally allow a longer video in celebration of a holiday. All screen time is recorded.

Pet Policy

Classroom pets are limited to fish. Classrooms may use caterpillars changing to butterflies for educational purposes. If animals are brought into the facility for educational purposes, parents will be notified ahead of time in the center newsletter, on our Facebook page and by email. If a parent does not want a child to interact with visiting animals, the parent will need to notify the child's teacher or the office. Children will be required to wash their hands after touching any visiting animal. Turtles, squirrels, rabbits, ducks, raccoons, birds, ferrets and other wild animals are not allowed at any time.