KIDSCO jr.

2022-2023 PARENT HANDBOOK

Please note that changes may need to be made to this handbook before and/or during the 2022-2023 school year.

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WELCOME TO KIDSCO jr.

Hours of operation- 6:30am-6:30pm

Please refer to the KidsCo Jr. Calendar to become familiar with the specific days during which care is not provided or offered on a modified schedule. Please note dates and times are subject to change if needed.

BROWN STATION JR.
851 Quince Orchard Blvd.
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
240-912-4910

FALLSMEAD JR.
1800 Greenplace Terrace
Rockville, MD 20850
301-417-8732

EMORY GROVE JR.
8507 Emory Grove Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
240-686-6280

ROCKWELL JR.
24555 Cutsail Drive
Damascus, MD 20872
301-253-0330

Contact Us

Main Office Contact Information
Phone- 301-740-9600
Fax- 301-740-9611

Director of Operations- Lara Woodruff
Email- LWoodruff@KidsCoOnline.com

Registration Coordinator/Billing Specialist- Kaitlyn Johnson
Email- KJohnson@KidsCoOnline.com

KidsCo jr. 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

August 15	KidsCo Jr. Closed
August 16	KidsCo Jr. Closed
August 16	Open House
August 17	First Day Of KidsCo Jr. School Year Program
September 5	Labor Day: KidsCo Jr. Closed
September 14	Staff In-Service: KidsCo Jr. Closed at 3pm
November 8	Staff In-Service Day: KidsCo Jr. Closed
November 23-25	Thanksgiving Holiday: KidsCo Jr. Closed
November 28-December 2	Parent/Teacher Conferences
December 26	Christmas Holiday: KidsCo Jr. Closed
December 27-30	Winter Break: KidsCo Jr. Open
January 2	New Year's Holiday: KidsCo Jr. Closed
January 16	MLK Jr. Day: KidsCo Jr. Closed
January 27	Staff In-Service: KidsCo Jr. Closed at 1pm
February 20	President's Day: KidsCo Jr. Closed
April 6	Staff In-Service Day: KidsCo Jr. Closed
April 7 & 10	Easter Holiday: KidsCo Jr. Closed
April 17-21	Parent/Teacher Conferences
May 29	Memorial Day: KidsCo Jr. Closed
June 16	Last Day Of KidsCo Jr. School Year: Closed at 1pm
June 19	Juneteenth Observance: KidsCo Jr. Closed
July 4	Independance Day: KidsCo Jr. Closed
August 11	Last Day Of KidsCo Jr. 2022-2023: Closed at 1pm

*Please note that changes may need to be made to the calendar before and/or during the 2022-2023 school year.

Last Updated: 7/12/22

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

We are honored that you have chosen us to care for your child. This Parent Handbook has been prepared to answer many of the questions you may have about our policies and procedures. Through reading this handbook and following its guidelines, we can work together to provide a safe and secure environment for your child. Please read this handbook in its entirety and put it in a convenient place for future reference. If you have questions or concerns regarding the material enclosed in this handbook, please speak with the Director of your center, email us, or call our Main Office.

ABOUT US

KidsCo Jr. is a private for-profit Maryland Corporation whose primary purpose is to offer quality child development programs to children in Montgomery County, Maryland. KidsCo Jr. does not discriminate based on age, race, color, national and/or ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, military status, or economic status in the admission of students or staff. At KidsCo Jr., we are eager to welcome new faces as we create an amazing place for families and team members to call home. Our motivation to provide exceptional care for children has driven us to 'raise the bar' within Montgomery County for what should be expected of a child care provider. For the past twenty two years, we have proudly provided wonderful memories for families. Growing from one school year program in 2000, to twenty-two programs currently operating in Montgomery County, KidsCo and KidsCo Jr. have successfully formed links within many local communities through our programs. KidsCo Jr. centers are licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education- Office of Child Care. We accept subsidies through Maryland's Child Care Subsidy program and the Montgomery County Working Parents Assistance program. Please inquire if you receive a different subsidy, as we accept many other subsidy programs. These programs provide financially eligible families assistance in paying for child care. We are excited to welcome you and your family to KidsCo Jr. We are glad you are here!

MISSION STATEMENT

Our vision at KidsCo Jr. is to provide a home away from home that fosters growth and learning in a comfortable, nurturing, and consistent environment. It is a place where each child's individual developmental stage will be respected and encouraged. We will tap into each child's natural curiosity, discover and develop his or her unique talents, and inspire creative freedom. Above all, we will learn from and listen to all our families so that we can build a strong community bond. Our goal is to ensure that we care for each child as if he or she is our own.

PHILOSOPHY

KidsCo Jr. is designed to offer kids a unique and comfortable alternative to their home care. KidsCo Jr. is child-directed and guided with an emergent curriculum. KidsCo Jr. is an inclusive program where all children are welcome regardless of ability or background. We thrive on drawing from the energy, curiosity, and creativity of the children involved in the program. All KidsCo Jr. team members will work closely with the children to provide love, stability, and guidance. We believe that it is important to provide a family style atmosphere, where everyone is safe, treated with care and respect, and where kids, parents, and the team members work together as a community. We strive to promote our philosophy through our team members, activities, atmosphere, relationships, and outlook. For all the age groups that we serve, the positive development of a child's self-reliance and self-esteem is paramount. Our program's activities reflect the children's primary language. Our staff show affection and personal regard, acknowledging and accepting the unique qualities of each child. KidsCo Jr. provides many opportunities for each child to experience success, to earn praise, and to develop an "I can" and "Let me try" attitude. Our teaching strategies center around Directed Discovery and focus on the whole child. We build positive relationships with both children and their families, creating wonderful memories and a love of learning!

CURRICULUM

CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

All KidsCo Jr. team member have either been trained by a Teaching Strategies professional or have received training on our curriculum, "The Creative Curriculum". The Creative Curriculum is a state recommended curriculum that provides a wonderful foundation of learning where children are encouraged to learn based on their interests and at their own pace. Teachers create lessons that are developmentally and age appropriate, accessible to all children, represent multiple modes of exploration and learning, and reflect the children's interests and support abilities of all children.

We have weekly themes where teachers then create lesson plans that support children with:

- Science and discovery projects
- Reading and print concepts
- Early mathematics
- Gross and fine motor skills
- Dramatic play
- Food activities and nutrition
- Toys and games
- Music and movement
- Arts and crafts
- STEM

Children will also be given the opportunity for daily outdoor time and gym related activities, as weather permits. Within each preschool classroom, time is allocated to whole group, small group, and some individual instruction that supports the weekly themes. Teachers assess children both formally and informally to help guide their planning. Lastly, we promote the social-emotional growth of each child through our themes, teacher instruction, and relationship building with other students.

TRANSITION PLAN & CONTINUITY

Consistency & continuity play an essential role in helping children successfully manage transitions. We recognize that transitions can be difficult for children, they may experience a sense of loss; we believe this process should be handled with care. Our goal at KidsCo Jr. is to have all children experience smooth transitions to minimize emotional concerns for the child & family while maximizing the child's prior progress to provide a continuity of learning. When working with a family during this transition period, we will take into consideration issues for all children, including children with special needs. Such areas may include:

- Ways for the family to facilitate the child's health and learning needs.
- Written or verbal communication between program staff that provide children's strengths, needs, and interests.
- Preparing the child and family for the transition.

MD EXCELS, CREDENTIALING, AND ACCREDITATION

All KidsCo Jr. programs participate in Maryland EXCELS, a program which ensures that child care programs meet various quality standards. As a part of being in the Maryland EXCELS program, all KidsCo Jr. employees participate in MSDE Credentialing. Additionally, all KidsCo Jr. programs are either MSDE Accredited or going through the MSDE Accreditation process or renewal.

SCREEN TIME POLICY

KidsCo Jr. follows the American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations on Screen Time:

- Children under 2 should have no screen time
- Children age 2 and over should watch less than 30 minutes per week at child care, and less than 2 hours per day total.

KidsCo Jr. understands that TV and other electronic media can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting with others, which encourages learning and healthy physical and social development. Therefore; we will restrict screen time by:

- Allowing a maximum of 30 minutes total per week of educational material directly related to facilitated learning experiences that are age appropriate screen time (television, video, and DVD).
- Having zero screen time (TV, video, and computer) for children under the age of two.
- Screen time that is shown is related only to what children are currently learning about in class.

REGISTRATION

REGISTRATION PROCESS

All KidsCo Jr. programs are open to all children regardless of race, color, national and/or ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, or economic status. Children are enrolled in the order of which registrations are received. For centers located at MCPS school buildings, MCPS employees are eligible for priority enrollment.

Online Registration

All registrations are completed online using our KidsCo Jr. Parent Portal. Once a registration has been submitted, our Registration Coordinator will review and approve the application, if there is space available in the program. A confirmation email will be sent once the application is approved, followed by our welcome email that contains the child enrollment forms to be completed before the child can start in our program. All new accounts will be billed a one-time $100 non-refundable registration fee once the application is approved.

Orientation

Orientations are a great way for new children to meet their teachers and fellow classmates before their first day. Additionally, parents are given the opportunity to speak with the classroom teachers and share any relevant information about their child. This is also a great time for parents to ask any specific questions they may have and bring in any necessary supplies to be kept at the center. The teacher will reach out to schedule a virtual/in-person orientation prior to the child's first day.

Deferred Admission

There may be times when a family wishes to enroll, however there are no openings for their child due to our classrooms being at capacity. A parent can complete the online registration and if there are no openings for the desired classroom, an email will be sent regarding the deferred admission and the child will be added to our waitlist. When a spot does open, the family next on our waitlist will be called and given a time frame in which to decide if they still would like to enroll.

ENROLLMENT POLICIES

At KidsCo Jr., we will make every effort to work with families to help make a child's enrollment successful. Seldomly, there are children who require more individualized attention than we can provide. In the event we are unable to meet a child's needs, we will work with the family to help find alternative care options.

Changes to Enrollment

If a family needs to make a change to their child's enrollment, please contact our Main Office. To withdraw a child from our program, parents must inform our Main Office in writing, giving us at least two weeks notice. If two weeks notice is not given, the family will be billed two weeks from the last day of care or two weeks from the time notice was given to the Main Office.

Summer Opt-Out

KidsCo Jr. understands that some families do not need care during the summer months. Therefore, families do have the option to "opt-out" for summer without a fee. The start of "summer" is determined by the first Monday of summer for MCPS. Once a family opts-out for the summer, they will forfeit their space until the new school year begins in late August, if they are re-enrolled. When registering, families have the option to check off the summer "opt-out" box. Prior to the summer session beginning, we will remind families of their summer enrollment based on their registration, in which changes can be made if needed.

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE OPTIONS

KidsCo Jr. strives to accommodate our families' schedules by allowing flexibility with a variety of plans for each child. Below are the different schedules and hours that are offered.

Jr. Babies Program- catering to children ages 6 weeks – 24 months

- Full Day Plan – 6:30am-6:30pm, Monday – Friday

Preschool Program- catering to children ages 2 years – 5 years

- Full Day Plan – 6:30am-6:30pm
- School Day Plan – 9am-3pm
- Half Day Plan – 9am-1pm

➢ Our preschoolers have the option to attend 5 days a week (M-F), 3 days a week (M,W,F), or 2 days a week (T,Th).

DAILY SCHEDULES

KidsCo Jr. is proud to raise the bar by following Teaching Strategies' Creative Curriculum in all of our classrooms. This supports our progressive program through stressing the importance of self-esteem, self-reliance, and fostering a love of learning to guide young children into a successful Kindergarten year. By introducing children into a developmental continuum based on social, emotional, physical, and academic goals, a learning plan is customized for each of our families in a loving, safe atmosphere. Join our excitement in sharing this dynamic initiative with your family! Our schedule is flexible, allowing opportunity for uninterrupted play and an environment conducive to emergent themes and discussions. Additionally, this flexibility permits children a "learning curve" in preparing for transitions and practicing life learning.

Infant Schedule (6 weeks – 18 months)

At KidsCo Jr., we recognize the importance of a young child's routines and incorporate them into their care. Each day our infant room is balanced with opportunities for individual exploration. Our infant daily schedule is based on Center Rotation, which offers interest within different developmental stages and promotes individualized growth. Therefore, there are no beginning and ending times for our activities; rather, experiences are pre-planned and made available for our entire day. When each child is ready and his/her schedule allows, he/she may experience our centers! A 1:3 staff to child ratio or better will be maintained.

Toddler Schedule (18 months – 2 years old)

Our toddler schedule resembles many similarities of our infant schedule. We continue to offer center rotations that focus on social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth through a mixture of child and teacher directed activities. At this age, we break away from an individualized schedule to a group schedule for center rotation, meals, and rest time. A 1:3 staff to child ratio or better will be maintained.

2 Years Old

This incredible age group is absorbing something new every day! KidsCo Jr. will create a stimulating environment to nurture a two-year-olds innate love of exploration and learning. Meaningful experiences for which they can relate are used to bring the curriculum to life. We believe that by providing both child-directed and teacher-directed emergent experiences, two-year-olds expand their language, physical ability, social skills, and build a healthy positive self-image. Through intentional teaching, their desire for independence will be respected and supported by creating opportunities for success. We teach by modeling appropriate hygiene, caring for others, and the value of friendships. Concentration is placed on recognizing and defining personal feelings by making positive choices in an effort to shape intrinsic discipline. A 1:6 staff to child ratio or better will be maintained.

3-5 Years Old

At KidsCo Jr., we believe that preschool aged children learn through purposeful play with an emergent curriculum, a generous supply of varied, child-centered experiences, and positive interaction with other children and healthy, responsible adults. We allow children to be children by providing a safe and healthy environment for them to openly explore and increase their curiosity. Our active learning program offers choices and encourages children to think outside the box. Family-like environments offer young children an atmosphere of comfort, love, and freedom to explore their world. Our classroom environment is set-up to be as comfortable and 'homey' as possible. This snug space will be augmented with interest area/center rotation which cultivates individual choice and social interaction. Interest areas will vary according to season and theme and will also build upon teachable moments that occur. Our interest areas will include Blocks, Dramatic Play, Toys & Games, Art, Science & Discovery, Sand & Water, Music & Movement, and Cooking and will incorporate literacy, math, science, social studies, and the arts. A 1:10 or better staff to child ratio will be maintained.

DAILY PRESCHOOL SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

6:30-8:30	Open Centers (w/ Read Aloud & Potty Party as needed)
8:30-8:55	Handwashing & Breakfast
8:55-9:00	Transition from Snack to Open Interest Areas
9:00-9:25	Open Interest Areas
9:25-9:30	Clean-Up & Transition to Circle Time
9:30-9:45	Morning Circle w/ Music & Movement
9:45-9:50	Transition to Guided Interest Areas
9:50-10:50	Guided Interest Area Choices w/ Small Group Instruction
10:50-10:55	Clean-Up & Transition to Potty Party
10:55-11:15	Potty Party, Handwashing & Snack Time
11:15-11:20	Transition to Outside Exploration
11:20-11:50	Outdoor Exploration/Creative Movement
11:50-12:00	Attendance, Transition Inside for Handwashing & Prepare for Lunch
12:00-12:30	Lunch Time
12:30-12:50	Read Aloud Time
12:50-1:00	Transition to Cots for Rest Time
1:00-3:00	Rest & Relaxation
3:00-3:30	Snack Time & Goodbyes to School Day Friends
3:35-3:50	Gather Everyone at Big Circle
3:50-4:00	Transition to Outdoor Exploration
4:00-4:30	Outdoor Exploration/Creative Movement
4:30-4:35	Attendance & Transition Inside
4:35-5:05	Project/Activity/Craft/Interest Area Choices
5:05-5:15	Potty Party, Handwashing & Transition to Snack
5:15-5:35	Snack Time
5:35-6:30	Good Evening/Open Choice Interest Areas

SUMMER PROGRAMMING

During the summer, KidsCo Jr. continues to offer monthly care for children ages 6 weeks – 5 years old. Although we continue to follow the Creative Curriculum, our summer programming adds additional elements to it such as; waters days, fitness activities, and theme weeks/events.

Below is an example of our summer schedule:

CLOSING POLICIES

WEATHER RELATED CLOSINGS

KidsCo Jr. will make every effort to be open despite inclement weather, but will close or operate on a modified schedule if driving or walking conditions pose a risk to the safety of the children, their families or our team members. Parents are advised to call the center before leaving home on snowy days to confirm our schedule.

The KidsCo Jr. policy for inclement weather is as follows:

All KidsCo Jr. locations will follow guidelines from what MCPS determines for child care programs. KidsCo Jr. may determine additional closures/delays, if necessary. During inclement weather, all updated information will be available in the following ways:

- Voicemail Announcement 301-740-9600
- Facebook Fan Page
    - www.facebook.com/kidscojr
- Email to each family's primary email address

OTHER EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

In the event that an emergency closing occurs for any reason (power outage, no A/C or heat, pandemic, etc.) we will notify families of closings by email. If the closing occurs during the school day, parents will also be notified by telephone. No refunds or credits are given for any closings on these days. If families would like to de-enroll, they must give two weeks notice and pay during that time.

REFUND/CANCELLATION POLICY

Given the current state of the COVID-19 virus, we must all work together. Our team members are here for working parents during this time and we would like to be there for them in return if for some reason the center has to close for any reason. It is important for us to be able to pay our team members in the event of any closure. KidsCo Jr. must strongly enforce our two-week cancellation policy. If the center is shut down for any reason (including COVID-19) families will have the option to cancel their enrollment; however, they will be required to give two-week's notice and fully pay tuition during this time even if the center is closed. Additionally, if any family cancels, they will still need to pay during the two-weeks and will lose their enrollment priority spot and will go to the end of the waiting list, if there is one.

HOLIDAYS

KidsCo Jr. follows all MCPS Administrative Office holidays; however, please refer to our calendar for any additional holiday closings or modified schedules. Please note that MCPS may make changes to their calendar after our calendar is published. We will notify families if a change occurs and a modification to our calendar is needed.

STAFF IN-SERVICE DAYS

Each year, KidsCo Jr. provides in-service days for our staff. These days are used to complete required trainings, to prepare for parent-teacher conferences and transition to the new school year. Please refer to our calendar for closings and modified schedules on these days.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Monthly Newsletters

Our team is just as excited as your family for upcoming activities! Each month, we will email a center newsletter. The newsletter will provide an updated snack calendar and schedule of events for each class.

Daily Connect

KidsCo Jr. uses the computer/phone application, Daily Connect, to share individualized information about your child each day. Information provided varies depending on the age of your child, but can include diapering/potty time, naps, feedings, activities, photos, and more.

Assessments

At KidsCo Jr. we recognize the importance of on-going observations and assessments of children enrolled in our program. We use a variety of assessment techniques to identify the children's strengths, needs, interest, and progress. Teachers will document this through anecdotal records, checklists, and a collection of work samples. Teachers use information they collect daily to help plan for future activities in the classroom, including individualistic differentiation of instruction. Observation data is shared with parents at Parent-Teacher Conferences or as needed throughout the year.

Director/Teacher Communication

We love to communicate with families! If a parent needs to communicate with the Director or any team members, please call the center or email the Director. KidsCo Jr. is a small company, so all of the Directors are on site each day and play an active role with the children. Although we make every effort to answer each call as it comes in, all messages are checked periodically throughout the day. Parents can also request a Zoom or in-person meeting, if needed.

Parent Surveys

Two surveys will be utilized to learn our parents' perspective throughout the year! One will be given out mid-year (January) and another will be created as a wrap-up survey (June). Both surveys include a structured evaluation with a grading scale and give parents an opportunity to write comments. Each of these surveys will be reviewed by KidsCo Jr.'s management team, lead teachers, and Parent Advisory Board. Additionally, we will provide a hardcopy of the results at the parent table for any families wishing to read.

TUITION AND FEES

TUITION INFORMATION

Monthly installment rates are based on an annual fee and are paid in 12 monthly installments, from August through July. Families will receive an email with their billing statement each month. Tuition is due by the 15th of each month, prior to the month of service. Each tuition payment secures your child's enrollment in our program. Days missed for any reason including, but not limited to, illness, vacation, emergency closings, etc. will not be credited. If tuition payments are late, a $30 late fee will be applied. If tuition is not paid in full (including late fees by the first day of each month), the child may not be allowed to attend KidsCo Jr., and the family risks losing his/her space in our program. Once the tuition balance is caught up, the child may resume attendance in our program, provided that we have not given his/her space to another family.

Subsidies & Tuition Assistance

KidsCo Jr. will gladly accept Working Parents Assistance (WPA), Department of Social Services (DSS), Child Care Scholarship (CCS), NACCRRA, and FEEA vouchers for child care. Our administrative team is very familiar with these organizations and can provide information and guidance on how to receive tuition assistance and answer any questions about the process. Parents are responsible for any part of the tuition not covered by the vouchers. KidsCo Jr. will consider a scholarship or reduced tuition for a special needs family after all other financial avenues have been explored. The decision to provide a scholarship or reduced tuition will be made solely by KidsCo Jr., based upon input from the family's social services representative, and if applicable, the child's MCPS team.

FEES

Registration Fee

Upon registration approval, all new accounts will be billed a $100 non-refundable registration fee. If you choose to de-enroll from the program prior to attending, the registration fee is still due.

Re-Enrollment Fee

Each year, currently enrolled KidsCo Jr. families are given a month of priority re-enrollment for the upcoming school year, before new families are able to enroll. After the re-enrollment is approved, a $60 fee is applied to their account.

Payment Method Fee's

For families choosing to pay by credit/debit card, there will be a 3.5% processing fee charged to each payment made.

Returned Check Fee

There will be a $35 charge for all returned checks. KidsCo Jr. reserves the right to ask that your tuition be paid in cash, money order, or cashiers' check if there is a history of returned checks.

Collection Fees

In the unlikely event we must refer your account to our attorney or collection agency to aid in the collection of an outstanding balance, you shall be responsible for any collection fees KidsCo Jr. incurs.

Late Payment Fees

Tuition is prepaid and is due by the 15th of each month, prior to the month of service. After a 15 day grace period, a late fee of $30 is applied if tuition has not been paid before the 1st day of the month of service.

Late Pick-Up Fees

If a parent is late picking up a child in the evening, a fee of $1.00 per minute will be charged to the family's account.

Drop-In Fees

If a child arrives prior to the start time of their plan or is picked up after the end time of their plan, a drop-in fee will be charged to the family's account. Drop-in fees differ in price, based on the type of drop-in utilized. These prices are available on our yearly pricing guides.

DISCOUNTS

Sibling Discount

A 10% Sibling Discount is available for any family with more than one child enrolled in KidsCo Jr. This discount also applies if a sibling is enrolled in a school-age program with KidsCo, Inc. The discount will be applied to the child enrolled with the least expensive tuition. *Please note that discounts may not be combined and are subject to change.

MCPS Discount

A 10% MCPS Discount is available for any family with a parent who works for MCPS. This discount is only applicable for families who utilize our Full Day plans (any 6:30am-6:30pm plan). *Please note that discounts may not be combined and are subject to change.

SUPPLIES & PERSONAL BELONGINGS

DAILY SUPPLIES

Your child's day will be brimming with interactive, hands-on fun! Dress should be casual, non-restrictive, and seasonal. Our outside areas and playgrounds are an extension of your child's learning environment and we conduct outdoor activities whenever possible. Each day, except in cases of extreme weather, we will venture outdoors to meet the children's need to get fresh air, have some large muscle activity, and release energy. Please check the forecast each morning and prepare an outfit accordingly. When looking for indoor and outdoor clothing, please choose items that are durable, comfortable, washable, and easy for your child to put on and take off. This also includes shoes!

MASKS

At this time, masks are optional at KidsCo Jr. centers. We will update our mask policy as needed to comply with the State of Maryland and MCPS guidelines. Masks are required for children who return to care between days 6 and 10 after testing positive for COVID-19.

EXTRA CLOTHING

Additionally, children should have two complete sets of seasonally appropriate and well-fitting clothes complete with underwear, socks, and an extra sweatshirt to leave at the center. Don't forget to label items with your child's name and replace items that go home to be washed.

REST ITEMS

Infant & Toddler

KidsCo Jr. asks that all parents provide two fitted crib sheet/cot covers. One clean sheet will be kept extra at the site and one will be brought in each Monday to be sent home on Friday for laundering. Stuffed animals, heavy blankets, and pillows are not appropriate for children in cribs. If your toddler is sleeping on a cot, a small pillow may be comfortable for him/her!

Preschool

Each child will be given a rest period, even if they choose not to nap. Every Monday, a pillow, blanket, crib sheet/cot cover, pillow case, and lovey/special item should be brought to the center. Families should pack these items on Monday and they will be sent home each Friday for laundering. Additionally, we request that all pillows be labeled and small enough to fit in your child's cubby. Typically, this is more convenient for families because we can send just the pillow case for washing and the actual pillow can stay in your child's cubby. Large pillows will be sent home in following appropriate sanitary and hygiene practice. Each child should have a ventilated, lightweight or knitted blanket, along with a comfort item available for their rest time each day.

NUTRITION

Nutrition is an important part of healthy development. If your child has special dietary needs or any food allergies, please make us aware upon diagnosis.

FOOD SERVICE

For all children over the age of two, we will augment the food and snack supply that you bring with a variety of healthy choices for breakfast in the morning and an afternoon snack. Each family will receive a monthly menu of snacks to be served.

FEEDING GUIDELINES

Infant & Toddler

In order to accommodate the rapid changes in infant growth and to provide consistency from home to center, we schedule infant feedings according to their own individualized schedule. Responsive care is also paramount and caregivers are constantly in tune with your infant's physical cues that may indicate hunger. Parents will need to bring a daily supply of formula and baby food, all labeled with your child's name. Breastfeeding mothers need to provide both a supply of expressed milk for the day and an extra supply of two bottles worth to be kept frozen for up to one month at the center. If possible, within a parent's schedule, a private lactation room is available to breastfeed at the center. Each time your infant is fed, a separate, unused bottle should be provided. Your child's bottle should be plastic and include a cap/lid, and each piece to each bottle should be clearly labeled with your child's name. Once a child has begun to drink from a bottle containing formula or breast milk, the contents will be discarded within 60 minutes to avoid contamination. Containers of baby food may be kept at the center, but once opened, the unfinished contents will be returned home that evening. All bottles, sippy cups, dishes, and utensils will be rinsed and returned for sterile cleansing each evening. Solid foods and possible food allergens will not be introduced for the first time to any child while in KidsCo Jr.'s care. Please make our team aware of any symptoms that are noticed when a new grain, vegetable, fruit, or protein source is introduced. We will continue introducing foods at a parent's discretion and will also be observant of any abnormal reactions. *Note: Solid food should not be fed to an infant in a bottle, unless a clear, specific directive is described in writing by the child's physician. Solid food in bottles models incorrect eating habits and can present a choking hazard.

Preschool

All children enrolled over the age of two will need to bring their lunch each day. Each classroom does have a microwave to reheat items, but we ask that lunches requiring preparation be packed only on occasion, so that we have ample time to assist all children and to spend time with them at the lunch table. KidsCo Jr. provides 1% milk and filtered water at lunch times. Our programming encourages nutritionally balanced and wholesome foods.Packing a balanced variety of healthy options is important! Cookies, chips, or treats should be accompanied by fresh fruit and vegetable baggies. We have found that most children like "finger foods" as an alternative to a traditional "lunch box" meal. Plastic food containers are a great idea for packing fruits and vegetables, cheese, chicken pieces, pasta leftovers, and more. All food should be ready to eat, cut into manageable pieces, and easy to swallow. Please make sure all lunch boxes, bags, and containers are labeled with your child's name. All of our lunches are kept in the refrigerator, so we suggest that you use a brown bag or Bentgo-style container.

PEANUT POLICY

Peanut Butter/Peanuts

Throughout our tenure at KidsCo Jr., we have successfully accommodated children who have many different food and environmental allergens. We have maintained egg, tree nut, dairy, legume, gluten, and peanut allergies present in our students. Our practice has been to separate a child with allergies by either seating him/her across from instead of next to a friend at lunch, or even designating an "allergen-free" table at lunch time. Additionally, we have posted allergy signs, avoided nut products when ordering snack foods, and requested labeled alternate food supplies. Our entire team is well trained in exposure prevention and symptom identification. Injectable epinephrine (Epi-Pen) training is also given to teachers with allergic students. We kindly ask that no foods that have peanuts as an ingredient be brought to the center. We appreciate your support in this matter.

HEALTH & SAFETY

CLEANING PROCEDURES

- All KidsCo Jr. programs will intensify all cleaning protocol due to COVID-19.
- All classrooms will be routinely cleaned multiple times a day (at least every 2 hours or sooner, if necessary) including surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, especially toys and games. This will also include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily such as doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops, nap cots, desks, chairs, cubbies, and playground structures. Our facilities will use appropriate sanitizers that are approved by the MSDE Office of Child Care.
- Cleaning products will not be used near children, and staff will ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children from inhaling fumes.

CHILD ABUSE

All KidsCo Jr. team members are trained to identify and report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the police or the Department of Social Services.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Working within this industry demands a flexible model to accommodate children with special needs as best as we are able to. KidsCo Jr. uses Teaching Strategies: The Creative Curriculum within our classrooms where children are "learning by doing" and our interest areas (centers) offer a variety of activities that are scaffolded to meet different children's learning styles and abilities. This model has been found to be successful with children who have special needs and families who require individualized learning plans. At KidsCo Jr., we actively promote inclusive practice in order to best meet the needs of the children, families, and staff at our center. Children are welcome to attend regardless of ability, need, background, culture, religion, gender or economic circumstances. We value the partnership we have with Montgomery County PEP programs, Montgomery County Infants & Toddlers Division, and other entities of MCPS to ensure that we are able to provide the best services and education to our enrolled children. KidsCo Jr. is also open to working with pediatricians or other specialists not named above to do whatever is needed to help a child succeed. In the event that we are unable to accommodate a child, we will work with the family to suggest and seek alternative care.

ALLERGIES

Please make the Director aware of any allergy issues that pertain to your child. For quick reference, all known allergies will be posted next to a photo of each child in food preparation areas.

HAND WASHING & HYGIENE

Knowing the best way to wash hands is the first step in staying healthy! Children are taught the proper way and times to thoroughly wash their hands. Our schedules are flexible to allow time to promote healthy habits. Children who are unable to wash are assisted by a staff member and have their hands and faces wiped at each changing. Skills that ingrain beneficial routines are also practiced daily. Keeping clean, picking up after playing, wiping a nose, cleaning up, and neatness are demonstrated.

DIAPERING & TOILET TRAINING

Parents are required to supply KidsCo Jr. with diapers and wipes for each child. Our team will notify families if supplies begin to run low. All of the children's diapers are checked periodically and changed as needed in a sanitary routine. KidsCo Jr. is also committed to working in conjunction with parents on toilet training their children. Children are never forced or punished when toilet training. We use positive reinforcement and encouragement as our strategy. In order to provide a consistent model, our staff members will make every effort to communicate with parents in order to compliment the efforts and tactics used at home. MSDE licensing prohibits portable toilets from home or the use of food as a reward item when toilet training.

ILLNESS & MEDICATION POLICIES

EXCLUSION FROM CARE

It is in the best interest of both your child and the center to keep sick children at home. Illness spreads easily, so please be courteous to everyone and don't bring your child to KidsCo Jr. if he/she is ill. Please use the following guidelines in assessing your child's health and determining if he/she is able to attend school. Generally, your child should not attend school if:

- He/she does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in daily indoor and outdoor activities.
- The level of care would necessitate attention by staff that may compromise the health or safety of other children in attendance.
- Symptoms or indicators are typical in illnesses for which exclusion for care is recommended.

SIGNS OF ILLNESS IN CHILDREN

Illnesses at KidsCo Jr.

If, after being dropped off, your child complains of feeling sick or symptoms are noticed, we will provide temporary isolation while contacting you to require that you come and pick him/her up. We will notify other parents if your child experiences any of the above symptoms. Respectfully, to reduce risk of contamination, we request that your child be picked up within one hour of calling. In the event that you are unable to come to the center, a designated alternate person listed on your child's Emergency Information Card will be contacted.

Required Notification of Illness

In addition to the regular notification you provide if your child will not be attending KidsCo Jr. on a regularly scheduled day, we ask that you notify us should your child be absent due to illness.

Signs of Illness in Children as Provided by the CDC Guide

If a child in your care exhibits any of the following common signs of acute illness, the provider should contact the child's parent immediately and try to keep the child separated from the other children until the parent arrives.

Fever & Behavioral Change

Please keep your child home if he/she has a temperature that is 100 degrees or higher when taken under the arm. A child should not attend if he/she has a fever (of any temperature or grade), or if a change in behavior is present along with other signs of illness such as:

General Appearance

- Excessive crying, clinginess, fussiness
- Doubled over in pain, unable to move
- Listless, lethargic, unresponsive
- Vomiting, diarrhea
- Feverish
- Seizure (although child has no history of seizure disorder)

Breathing

- Fast, shallow, gasping breaths
- Difficulty breathing, wheezing
- Sucking in around ribs
- Flaring nostrils
- Persistent or uncontrollable coughing

Skin

- Pale, grayish, flushed, yellowish skin
- Hot or cold and clammy skin
- Skin rashes, sores, swelling, or bruising
- Body rash
- Diarrhea
- Earache
- Excessive crying
- Individual's pain indicators
- Lethargy or listlessness

Skin continued...

- Scratching at skin or scalp
- Skin doesn't spring back when pinched

Eyes, Nose, Ears, and Mouth

- Eyes swollen, red, crusty, watery, yellowish, or sunken
- Nose congested or runny
- Ears draining pus or blood
- Pulling at ears
- Mouth or lips with sores
- Sore throat, difficulty swallowing
- Excessive drooling

Appearance of Urine/Stool

- Gray or white stool
- Black or blood-flecked stool
- Unusually dark or tea-colored urine
- Restlessness or agitation
- Sore throat
- Swollen glands
- Vomiting
- Wheezing

Your child must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to KidsCo Jr. This time period should begin when the fever breaks with no medicinal assistance.

Vomiting

Policy pertains to vomiting, regardless of cause or trigger, after first incident of vomit during the day (exceptions for infants - may be due to diet). Your child must not have vomited for 24 hours before returning to KidsCo Jr. This time period should begin when vomiting ceases with no medicinal assistance.

Diarrhea/Constipation:

- More than two loose stools during the school day
- Presence of runny, watery, and/or uncontrolled, and/or unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet
- Stools containing blood or mucus
- Any stools that cause discomfort or pain when passing or are impacted

Your child must not have diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to KidsCo Jr. This time period should begin when diarrhea ceases with no medicinal assistance.

Colds & Flu

Being the most probable illness in young children, we ask that you use your best judgment when considering whether or not to bring your child to KidsCo Jr. Please remember that full participation in programming should be an enjoyable experience for children. Here are some facts to consider:

- The contagious period with a cold or flu is during the initial onset of symptoms. Additionally, your child's resistance to germs is reduced, which makes him/her more vulnerable to other infection.
- Colds often begin with consistent, clear nasal discharge (actually the most contagious period) and then move into a thick, creamy yellow or green color.

Eye Discharge

- Any mucus or pus draining from the eye.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow discharge
- Excessive or bothersome itchiness or discomfort

Please note: Viral Conjunctivitis usually has a clear, watery discharge and may not require medication or exclusion, but does need a diagnosis from your pediatrician.

Coughing or Wheezing

- Severe coughing or wheezing that causes a child to get red or blue in the face or causes a loss of breath
- After coughing, a high-pitched whooping sound is indicated
- Any respiratory distress that causes an inability to rest comfortably or participate in daily indoor and outdoor activities

Head Lice or Nits

- Any observed lice (living or dead) or nits (eggs) on a child's scalp or hair.

Your child may not return to care until his/her hair and scalp have been treated with a medicated shampoo that is indicated for the treatment of head lice, and all nits have been removed with a specialized comb. No symptoms should be observed.

Communicable Disease

Children with a communicable disease will not be allowed at KidsCo Jr. during the contagious period. Please notify the Director upon diagnosis. Examples include:

- Chicken Pox
- Pinworms
- Fifth Disease
- Poliomyelitis
- Giardiasis
- Ringworm
- Hand, Foot, Mouth Disease
- Rubella
- Hepatitis
- Salmonella
- Impetigo
- Scabies
- Measles
- Scarlet Fever
- Meningococcal Disease
- Streptococcal Infection
- Mumps
- Tuberculosis
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
- COVID-19

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

Parents will need to complete authorization for the Administration of Medication Form for each and every type of medicine to be administered. These are printable from the KidsCo Jr. website and are available at the center. All medications need to be personally given to a staff person with verbal instruction. For safety, no

medication should be kept or stored in cubbies, lunchboxes, or backpacks. A designated staff person shall administer medications according to the Five Rights of Medication: 1) Right Child 2) Right Medication 3) Right Dose 4) Right Time 5) Right Method. Each time a medication is given, a record will be kept, detailing dose, time, and any reaction.

Prescription Medication

"As needed" medications to treat symptoms at their onset must be provided to keep and store at the center. This includes EpiPen, Albuterol, nebulizer treatments, seizure medications, etc. All medications must have a valid expiration date and should be replaced before expiration.

Non-Prescription/OTC Medications

For all medications, parents must provide the following:

- A completed Authorization Form, specifying the name of drug, reason for administration, time to be given, dosage, treatment start and end date, and method of administration. Physician signature is required. We suggest that families take the medication authorization form with them to the pediatrician to complete
- Medication in the original container that has the current pharmacist label and instructions. Child's name, dosing instructions, drug name and manufacturer, current date, and contact information for the prescribing doctor. Current expiration date must be clearly displayed.
- A spoon or measuring device for any liquid medication. Please clearly label this, along with the medication box with your child's name.

RETURNING TO CARE

Medication Requirements

- No child may return to KidsCo Jr., unless they have been symptom free without the aid of over-the-counter remedies (Tylenol, Imodium, Benadryl, Robitussin, etc.)
- If a fever is present during a flu/cold like illness, no child may return to KidsCo Jr. until they have been fever-free (without OTC remedies) for 24 hours.
- Any diagnosed illness requires a 24 hour period of antibiotic treatment before returning to care.

Doctor's Notes

Doctor's notes must include:

- The date of appointment
- What has been diagnosed
- Why the child is not contagious and is able to return to care
- What is the treatment or antibiotic
- When we should notice an improvement in symptoms

Families will need a doctor's note to readmit a child in these circumstances:

- If a child suffers from the same above illness indicators for two days or more, we will request the parent to pick up and to provide a doctor's written statement.
- If your child is medically absent for 3 days or more, a note from your physician is required before returning to care.

Additionally, communicable diseases will require exclusion from care during their contagious period. If applicable symptoms are observed, we will call you requesting that you pick up and provide written release from your doctor before returning. Please refer to the illness indicators for examples of communicable disease (page 26). In addition to your family doctor, KidsCo Jr. refers to the Communicable Diseases Summary, which is produced exclusively for Health Services in Group Care. You may refer to a copy at the MD Community Health Administration at www.edcp.org. This resource, as well as MD approved Medication Administration Training, is the foundation for all of the above mentioned policies.

EXCLUSION OF CARE & RETURNING TO CARE (COVID-19)

Child care programs require the complete exclusion of any staff or child that has tested positive for COVID-19 or is symptomatic for at least 5 days since the onset of symptoms or a positive test. To return to care, the individual must not be exhibiting symptoms and must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication. The individual must also wear a well-fitted mask through day 10. We are obligated to comply with all Maryland Department of Health, Montgomery County Division requirements for quarantine, isolation and other safeguards.

In certain cases, KidsCo Jr. or the Maryland Department of Health may deem it necessary to close classrooms or the center if an extensive outbreak occurs. While we don't anticipate this happening, we do want families to be aware that it is a possibility.

No refunds or credits will be given for missed days or closures due to COVID-19.

MISC. POLICIES & PROCEDURES

SECURITY

The safety of your child is our number one concern. The following procedures are how we can work together to ensure the safety of your child:

Parent Drop-Off/Pick-Up

Each center has site/class specific procedures for drop-off and pick-up. Given the current state of COVID-19, our goal is to minimize exposure and the spread of germs at the centers and limit the number of people entering and exiting the building when possible. While some classes will have drop-off/pick-up at their classroom door, other classes will need to enter the building for drop-off/pick-up. If a parent wishes to enter the building, we ask that the parent ensure they are healthy and not exhibiting any symptoms of illness. Persons who have a fever of 100.4 or above or show other signs of illness will not be admitted to the facility. We encourage parents to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and keep them home when they are sick. Additionally, if someone at your home is sick, we kindly ask that you not send your child.

Persons Authorized to Pick Up Your Child

You will be asked to list individuals who are authorized to pick up your child from our center. If someone other than the child's parents or legal guardian will pick up, please have him/her prepared to show a picture ID upon arrival. Your child will not be released to someone not listed as authorized to pick up your child. If there is an emergency, and someone other than those authorized will be picking up your child, you must call the center and inform a KidsCo Jr. team member. For the safety of your child, please let us know if there are issues per-taining to the legal custody of your child.

Custody Issues

If there are any custody issues between the parents/guardians, we must have legal documentation on site that specifies the custody agreement. If we do not have legal documentation, KidsCo Jr. will have to grant access to both legal parents/guardians listed on the account.

Emergency Cards

You will be asked to fill out an Emergency Card for each of your children enrolled in our program. Please make sure that the information on this card is kept up-to-date. It will be the first place we look to locate you in case of an emergency, so make sure that it is accurate.

Emergency Policies and Preparation
We have an extensive staff orientation at the beginning of the school year, during which staff are trained on KidsCo Jr. emergency policies and procedures. They also attend a brief orientation at their center where they are given important information on locations of phone numbers, fire drill meeting locations, attendance pro-cedures, and any other site-specific information. In addition, monthly staff meetings are held to keep them updated on current issues. Team members have been trained in a MD Certified Emergency Preparedness course and are also equipped with a Crisis Kit.

Fire Drills
KidsCo Jr. and the state of Maryland require that every center conduct a mock fire drill every month. The Director will designate meeting places and will assign individual responsibilities for all team members. These drills will also be recorded in a labeled logbook and kept on file. In addition, emergency exit procedures will be posted at every exit.

Media Release
While participating in classroom activities, field trips or special events, it is possible for photographs, audio, or video to be taken by our team. Pictures or quotations from enrolled children may appear in the classroom, center displays, or newsletters. Such media is also required for documentation purposes as part of our accred-itation through the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). When enrolling in the program, parents accept that this is a normal part of the child care program. In addition, for training, marketing, or promotional purposes, KidsCo Jr. may use photographs, audio, or video in which enrolled children appear, without lim-itation, reservation, or compensation. At the time of enrollment, parents will be asked to sign a contractual agreement, which includes our media release.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Positive Guidance
The goal of our policies is to help each child develop recognition of positive self-worth, individual compe-tence, and mastery. Discipline at KidsCo Jr. is in line with the age and needs of each child. Teaching by ex-ample, positive reinforcement, redirection, and one on-one discussion are strategies that provide resolution. We provide an opportunity for children to learn problem solving techniques and to think through actions by providing consistent and logical consequences. We set realistic limits for the children to follow and provide a wide variety of positive choices to give each student the greatest chance to succeed. We believe it is import-ant to help the children understand the difference between acceptable and unacceptable choices. KidsCo Jr. team members provide all children with clear rules and expectations for how one should act at KidsCo Jr. Team members review the expectations daily before, during and after activities and at times when a child is not acting appropriately.

Steps to Success
All staff are trained on and informed of our discipline policy at our staff orientation. Parents and staff will re-ceive written copies of this policy within their respective Handbooks.

- Step One: Assess the situation by kneeling down to the child's level and asking clarifying questions in a calm and even voice.
- Step Two: While practicing active listening, allow the child to use words to express his/her feelings about the situation.
- Step Three: Use positive words to remind the child what is an acceptable action and reaction and give them verbal cues on ways to fix the problem if it should occur again.
- Step Four: Redirect the child to an acceptable activity. Allow the child to make a new positive choice.

Communication is the key to each child's progress! If there are changes in the home or with a child's routine, we encourage families to let the Director know. Likewise, our team will keep parents up to date with any situations that we feel should be addressed. We are committed to working with families to remedy any issues or circumstances that may arise. However, KidsCo Jr. does reserve the right to ask parents to find an alternate source of care, either on a temporary or permanent basis, should our team deem it necessary.

THE KIDSCO JR. TEAM

OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE

Each team member was hand chosen to work with our children. We pride ourselves on our exceptional staff, as they truly make KidsCo Jr. a great place to be. As part of our continued dedication to raise the bar, we com-pensate our staff members at well above the average rate within Montgomery County. All team members are valued, appreciated, and encouraged to have input on the program, which fosters a sense of ownership. We continually strive to create a fun, rewarding, and solid place for our staff to call "home!"

Background Checks

Each staff member is required to pass a background check before working at one of our centers. All staff must submit finger prints to the State of Maryland and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. KidsCo Jr., as well as the Office of Child Care, also receives written notification of the results.

Selection Process

All potential team members will successfully demonstrate a passion for children, a positive upbeat attitude, a commitment to our philosophy, and a willingness to go above and beyond to raise the bar within our indus-try. We schedule an extensive interview process that includes an in-office interview with KidsCo Jr.'s owner and an on-site interview with the center Director and staff. Prior employment and personal reference checks are thoroughly examined. Newly hired employees are assigned to an experienced team member for training. A 30-Day Formal Review is conducted; all new staff are on a 60-day probationary period thereafter. After completion of the probationary period, they are reevaluated by the center director. Throughout the year, our center directors continuously monitor and assess all employees; a formal Mid-Year Review is also conducted.

First Aid/CPR Requirements

The state of MD requires that, for every 20 children, one staff member is certified. KidsCo Jr. provides First Aid/CPR training to most senior staff and some assistants, even if we surpass state requirements.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Team Meetings

We expect all staff to attend monthly team meetings. Each center will cover upcoming projects, themes, events, observations, curriculum planning, and overall daily plans. We want to include all staff members' in-put into the program because their ideas are important to us and participation will promote a well-organized and unified team.

Continuing Education

Here at KidsCo Jr., we pride ourselves on our ability to hire and retain talented, top-notch team members! To maintain cutting edge strategies, rejuvenate and introduce new skills and ideas, we provide twenty four hours or more of current and interesting continuing education to all of our lead staff members. Assistant Teachers receive twelve hours' worth of courses. Additionally, each of our team members is MD State Credentialed, which mandates double the amount of continuing education!

Resource Center

KidsCo Jr. will have a professional staff resource center within the center's staff area. Th ese re sources will include the following: up-to-date professional journals, suggested reading lists, curriculum guides, current articles of interest, supply catalogs, motivational and educational books; resource idea books to further staff development and provide daily assistance