



BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

A Christian Academy of

New Mexico PreK Family Handbook

2026-2027

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS is a non-profit, Christian academy in the heart of Las Cruces, NM. A NM FOCUS 5-Star center, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS strives to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children, families, and our staff to grow and thrive. Using a child-centered curriculum we facilitate opportunities for children to explore, negotiate with peers, and create their own unique learning experiences through hands-on activities such as music, art, gardening, free-play, and drama. We are an academy of learners – from the smallest to the largest. As we learn together and from each other, we create solutions, make new discoveries daily, and shine the light of peace and liberation in our world.

New Mexico PreK (NM PreK)

NM PreK is a free program during the school year that delivers high-quality education in both community-based and school-based settings. NM PreK focuses on providing a fun, rewarding, and developmentally appropriate learning environment for children ages three and four. NM PreK teachers plan play-based activities and lessons oriented towards children's physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional stages of development.

(<https://www.nmeced.org/pre-k/>)

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS offers two NM PreK classrooms that are state funded and align with the public school system. NM PreK classrooms do not include religious teaching. In addition, our Bright Beginnings NM PreK Family Handbook excludes reference to faith-based beliefs and constructs. However, all PreK children and families are invited and welcome to participate in faith-based activities that are outside of regular school hours. Families are under no obligation to participate in activities that are of a religious nature.

New Mexico's FOCUS program states the following as its Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System:

"Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. Early learning programs that support the full participation of every child build on these strengths by promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child."

Mission Statement

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS' purpose, mission and philosophy consistently align with the State of New Mexico's commitment to the full and unbiased participation of every child in our early learning environment. Our NM PreK adapted **Mission Statement** is *to nurture and strengthen families by building community that together strives towards spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being and relational wholeness.*

We Believe that children who are grounded in an ethical approach to being and doing will live, grow, and thrive. They will become effective adult leaders that have a passion for life-long learning; live lives of integrity and sincerity; understand relationships as integral to personal and societal wellbeing; and have the courage and conviction to stand for what is good, moral, and right.

At BRIGHT BEGINNINGS we are **one community**, connected through various experiences and interactions. We know that we are only as resilient as our most vulnerable brother or sister. Through our mutual and multifaceted connections, we strengthen and support one another - striving to make our entire community whole. We encourage you to take a moment and connect with someone - another parent, our staff, or our pastor - when you come in each day!

Philosophy

We believe learning should

- Be grounded in ethics
- Engage the whole child
- Be hands-on
- Cultivate child-centered teamwork
- Foster social-emotional awareness
- Engage the entire community

Our small class sizes and low student to teacher ratios (consistent with Safer Sanctuaries policies and practices) enable teachers to have a powerful impact on each child's development. Our teachers are experienced and knowledgeable about early childhood education through college course work and professional development classes. Classes have consistent schedules that balance teacher-directed and child-centered activities. Our teachers work collaboratively to provide an atmosphere that is safe and engaging for all children.

Curriculum Statement

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate thematic units and practices that emphasize hands-on learning experiences, ethical values, and opportunities for children to make choices in a safe and nurturing environment. Teachers apply a variety of approaches and provide daily opportunities for children to develop and enhance knowledge and skills in language and literacy; mathematical, science, and social studies; social emotional development; and fine and gross motor movements. We strive to honor and celebrate the culture and heritage of our diverse families throughout our curriculum.

Culture and Language

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS supports children's home language while supporting English language development through:

- Validation — the intentional and purposeful legitimatization of the home culture and language of the student.

- Affirmation — the intentional and purposeful effort to reverse the negative stereotypes of non-mainstream cultures and languages portrayed in historical perspective.
- Building — creating connections between the home culture and language and the school's culture and language through instruction for success in school and society.
- Bridging — creating opportunities for increased engagement by utilizing appropriate cultural and linguistic aspects of the children in the classroom.

Student-Teacher Ratios

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS has a 4-Star FOCUS rating by the New Mexico Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD). Because of our Safer Sanctuaries policy, our student-teacher ratios already reflect the minimum requirement for a 5-Star rating, which are:

2 years old: 1 teacher for every 6 children
 3 years old: 1 teacher for every 9 children
 4 & 5 years old: 1 teacher for every 10 children

FAMILIES

Preschool is a delightful time. We envision ourselves in partnership with families to provide the highest quality of care and childhood experiences possible. To do that, ongoing and open communication with families is essential. Forms of communication include an annual calendar, newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, conversation at drop-off and pick-up times, special events, specially scheduled parent-teacher-administrator meetings, and the Student Information System (SIS) app. Families are welcome and encouraged to contact the Executive Director at any time, for any reason.

Communication With Families

All communication with families about Bright Beginnings or their child must take place through Procure messaging or by phone through the Bright Beginnings office. Employees may not use personal phone numbers, personal text messaging, social media, or other personal accounts to communicate privately with a child's family regarding Bright Beginnings business. This protects the privacy of children, families, and employees and helps ensure that important communication is documented through approved Bright Beginnings systems.

Staff Cell Phone Policy

Effective September 1, 2026, Bright Beginnings provides a tablet for each classroom so employees do not need to use personal cell phones for routine work purposes. Classroom tablets are used to enter children's information into the Student Information System (SIS), currently Procure, including meals, nap times, diapering/toileting, and other required information. Employees should use the classroom tablet for Procure whenever possible. Only in rare circumstances, such as when the classroom tablet is unavailable or not working, may an employee use Procure on a personal cell phone for work purposes.

Personal Cell Phones in the Classroom

Personal cell phones should be put away and not in use while employees are working with or supervising children. Phones may only be used in the classroom for an authorized work purpose or in an emergency. Employees may use personal cell phones during scheduled breaks or meal periods when they have been relieved of responsibility for supervising children. Personal calls, texts, social media, browsing, and other personal phone use are not permitted while supervising children.

Family Involvement/Volunteering

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS encourages families to participate in special events, visit their child's classroom*, and/or volunteer. Opportunities to share your gifts and talents (career, hobbies, interests, skills, etc.) with the children and staff are welcome. Regular volunteers are required to complete a comprehensive background check. Background checks are paid for by the NM ECECD.

Families are expected to participate in parent-teacher conferences as scheduled throughout the year. Parent-teacher conferences are an opportunity to share in depth, your child(ren)'s classroom experiences, growth, and development.

**We discourage parents and family members from "dropping in" to see a child in the middle of the day. When a child sees a parent/family member at the school, they believe that person has come to pick them up and take them home. When the family member leaves the child behind, it is unsettling for the child and can make it difficult for the child to function for the remainder of the day.*

Family Organization

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS is invested in creating an active Family Organization. Involvement includes, but is not limited to, input on programming and scheduling, identifying opportunities for improvement, fundraising, and special events. **If you are interested in leading or being a part of a Parent Organization, please let the Executive Director know.**

FUNDRAISING

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS is a blended private Christian childcare and preschool provider and simultaneously offers free public NM PreK classes. Both are non-profit enterprises with limited funding sources. BRIGHT BEGINNINGS commits to responsible stewardship of all available resources.

To operate on a balanced budget, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS must take advantage of multiple resource options including tuition, public and private grants, the church, generous donors (big and small), and fundraising. Fundraising is an essential element of our financial framework. **As a family of BRIGHT BEGINNINGS, you will be expected to participate in fundraising activities.**

ENROLLMENT, TUITION, & FEES

Non-Discrimination Policy

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS is an equal opportunity organization and does not discriminate based on ethnicity, gender, natural origin, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, or any other status prohibited by applicable law.

Home Visits

As part of our NM PreK program, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS PreK teachers will schedule home visits with each child's family. At least two teachers will attend each home visit. At the family's request, the visit may be scheduled to take place at the school.

Inclusive Practices

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS' classrooms provide inclusive settings for children with developmental delays and disabilities based on the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and consistent with a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), if applicable.

- IDEA mandates that the IEP team consists of a general education teacher that is knowledgeable about the child. Other entities may participate in the IEP process with parental consent.
- In collaboration and consultation with the special education services providers, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS educators will integrate IEP goals and objectives into the daily schedule, classroom activities, and lesson plan. During the IEP meeting, staff may request additional training from the program's Local Education Agency (LEA) specific to each student's needs, goals, and objectives. Collaborative efforts must occur to determine the child's ongoing needs.
- If applicable, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will develop interagency agreements with the LEA responsible for implementing IDEA to improve service delivery to children eligible for services under IDEA. This includes the referral and evaluation process, service coordination, promotion of service provision in the least restrictive environment, including appropriate community-based settings, and reduction in dual enrollment which causes reduced time in a less restrictive setting, and transition services as children move from services provided under Part C of IDEA to services provided under Part B of IDEA and from PreK to kindergarten.
- BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will collaborate and coordinate with its respective LEA to integrate ancillary services (e.g., occupational, speech/language, and physical therapies) within regular program activities and routines to the maximum extent appropriate, as described by the IEP team working with the individual child. BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the LEA so that each agency is aware of its

responsibility for providing the special education supports and services listed in each IEP, keeping in mind the continuum of placement and services.

- Children will not be dismissed from BRIGHT BEGINNINGS' PreK program due to special needs or behavioral needs. Instead, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will make a referral to a LEA Child Find program, or the IEP team must reconvene to determine staff training needs and determine the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for the child.

Toilet Usage & Learning

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will not deny enrollment to a child who is not toilet trained. We will work together with the family to help the child learn to use the toilet, as the child demonstrates toilet training readiness.

Eligibility

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS offers childcare and preschool education for children ages 2 – 5 years, and afterschool care for children ages 5-6 years. BRIGHT BEGINNINGS toddler classes are for children ages 2-3 years, and private preschool classes as well as New Mexico Early Pre-K and Pre-K classes, are for students who are 3 and 4 years old, respectively, by Sept. 1 of each year.

To be eligible for NM PreK, children must reside within the state of New Mexico and cannot be older than the age required to attend kindergarten. Priority registration includes children residing within the boundaries of a Title 1 school district, children who are experiencing homelessness/displacement, and children who are in foster care.

Enrollment

Registration must be completed annually and is on a first come, first serve basis. Registration is complete when the registration form and all required materials have been submitted, and families have been notified by BRIGHT BEGINNINGS that their child has been accepted and enrolled. Additional forms/documents may be required throughout the year for continued enrollment. NM PreK enrollment may require additional registration documents.

Children may be enrolled at any time during the year as long as there is available space in an appropriate classroom. Available space is defined by the room capacity determined by the NM Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD), and the staffing capacity of BRIGHT BEGINNINGS.

When classrooms are at capacity, children will be placed on a waitlist. Families will be contacted via email and/or phone on a first come, first serve basis, as soon as a position becomes available. Families will have 24 hours (business working days) to respond once they have been notified a position is available. If they do not respond within that time, the next family on the list will be notified. Families on the PreK waitlist will be given information to contact collaborating PreK programs where space may be immediately available.

Recruitment

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS recruits students through various means throughout the year. Venues include local advertising (marketing magnets, shopping bags, t-shirts), signs/banners posted on the school/church campus, website, and word of mouth. Most advertising is not specifically geared at recruitment, but brand recognition. Should Bright Beginnings need to be more proactive in recruitment, we would distribute flyers to local businesses and schools, post signs specifically for enrollment, and update the website to focus on enrollment.

Tuition and Payment Options

Although the NM PreK program is tuition free, **NM PreK students participating in the Aftercare program (3:30pm – 5:30pm) must make arrangements to pay for the extended hours**, which are not included in the NM PreK program.

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS accepts the following payment options:

- Self-pay by the child's family
- Payment through the New Mexico Childcare Assistant Program (<https://www.nmeccd.org/child-care-assistance/>)
- Tuition free NM Early PreK and PreK enrollment (8:00- 3:30pm)
- Limited scholarship funding may be available; please inquire as needed

Tuition & Fees

Aftercare tuition is determined annually, is based on the school year, and is prorated into monthly rates. Therefore, tuition is *the same every month*. Discounts are *not* given for holidays, closure for inclement weather, illness, vacation, change of residence, or school breaks.

To assist working parents, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS **may** offer “Bridge Week Camps” during times that the school is out on extended breaks (e.g., Spring Break, etc.). **Bridge Weeks are NOT part of the tuition & fees described above and are NOT part of the NM PreK school year. A separate registration and fee will be required** to participate in any Bridge Week Camp.

Aftercare tuition payments are due the 1st of each month. After the 10th of each month, any unpaid tuition will be considered late, and a \$30.00 fee will be charged. Additional fees will accrue at the rate of \$10.00 per day for each day thereafter, unless other payment arrangements have been made with the Executive Director.

New Mexico Childcare Assistance

Families with students whose Aftercare tuition is paid through a New Mexico Childcare Assistance Contract are responsible for ensuring their contract remains current and active, and that the number of hours awarded are consistent with the number of hours of attendance at BRIGHT BEGINNINGS. For more information, go to <https://www.nmeccd.org/child-care-assistance/>.

It is the sole responsibility of the family to ensure their New Mexico Childcare Contract(s) is/are current and to submit renewal applications such that there is no break in payment for a

child's care. Any care provided and not paid for by a New Mexico Childcare Assistance contract – for any reason – will be billed directly to the family, who is responsible for full payment in a timely manner.

Hours of Operation/Enrollment Options

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS' hours of operation are 8am-5pm, Monday through Friday, with an additional 30-minute drop-off/pickup time from 7:30am and until 5:30pm.

NM PreK enrollment* option includes:

- 5 days per week attendance (M-F)
- 8am-3:30pm full-day only
- Aftercare supplemental option from 3:30-5:30pm is available for an additional fee (self-pay or NM Child Care Assistance Contract)

**Students with recurring or prolonged unexcused absence may be removed from the NM PreK program/classroom.*

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS Private Classroom enrollment options include:

- 2 – 5 days per week attendance
- Full-day **or** half-day (morning or afternoon) attendance
- Flexible drop-off and pick-up times

Withdrawal Policy

Families who wish to withdraw their child from BRIGHT BEGINNINGS should notify the school in writing at least 2 weeks prior to the student's final day of school. Aftercare tuition refunds will not be given for any student withdrawn without **2-weeks written notice**.

CALENDAR & SCHEDULE

Calendar

An annual Calendar* will be provided at the beginning of each academic year. The annual calendar is subject to change, and families will be notified as soon as possible of any changes. Calendars may be posted on the BRIGHT BEGINNINGS website. BRIGHT BEGINNINGS recognizes that changes do impact families, and we will do our best to minimize changes.

To assist working parents, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS **may** offer "Bridge Week Camps" during times that the school is out on extended breaks (e.g., Spring Break, etc.). **Bridge Weeks are NOT part of the tuition & fees described above and are NOT part of the NM PreK school year. A separate registration and fee will be required** to participate in any Bridge Week Camp.

**NM PreK/Early PreK program is required to meet a predetermined number of hours and the PreK calendar may differ from the regular BRIGHT BEGINNINGS school calendar.*

Kindergarten Transition

Toward the end of the school year, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will facilitate kindergarten transition activities for children and families of children who will be going to kindergarten in the following year. These activities will inform families about what to expect in kindergarten and introduce and help prepare children for a kindergarten environment.

School Cancellation

Due to severe weather conditions or other emergency situations, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS may experience unplanned closure. Emergency closing is at the discretion of the Executive Director or his/her designee. Notifications will be communicated via the Student Information System (SIS), which is the official communication mode for BRIGHT BEGINNINGS.

Severe Weather Conditions

In the event of severe weather conditions, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will typically adopt the decisions of the Las Cruces Public Schools in determining school closure and/or delayed start times.

Other Emergencies

Other situations that could result in unplanned closure include, but are not limited to, the following – electrical power failure, lack of water, lack of heat or air conditioning, hazardous road conditions, or other situations which may endanger the safety or health of children and employees. Closure is at the discretion of the Executive Director or his/her designee.

FOOD & MEALS

Meals

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS provides three healthy, nutritious, and good tasting meals each day: Breakfast (8:30-9:15am); Lunch (11:30am-12:15pm); Snack (2:30pm). Mealtime is considered part of the curriculum. All meals/snacks are provided family style, which promotes healthy eating habits, a positive environment for eating and socializing, trying new food, children learning to serve themselves and others, and good table manners.

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). As such, all families are **required** to comply with food and meal policy and practices **and** complete Income Eligibility, and CACFP Enrollment forms. Information provided on forms determines the amount of assistance BRIGHT BEGINNINGS receives in providing meals to children. Failure to comply with our food policy could result in loss of our CACFP food grant and poses a significant financial hardship on the school.

Food and Meal Policy & Practices

Children should NOT bring food from home when they enter the classroom. This could pose a safety problem for children with food sensitivities/allergies and is not allowed by our food

contract. **If your child brings unapproved food to the school, you will be asked to take the food with you or to dispose of it in the trash before the child enters the classroom.**

Families of children with food allergies must provide written documentation to receive accommodations. Food allergies should be noted on the student's registration form. For new or emerging allergies (post-registration), the parent/guardian must provide a letter stating the allergy/allergies and what alternatives are needed. Lactose free, soy, or almond milk will be provided for children with allergies or sensitivities to lactose. For any other milk substitutes, a letter from a physician is required.

Requests for additional exceptions to our food and meal policy must be accompanied by a letter from a physician stating the need for the exception.

SUPPLIES

Required Supplies – All personal items should be labeled with your child(ren)'s name

- Pullups and wipes (as needed)
- Change of clothing *each day* – clothing may be left in a child's backpack and/or in a labeled zip-lock bag placed in your child's cubby
- Water bottle daily – *water only*
- Crib-sized fitted sheet for napping cot
- Light blanket for nap/rest time
- A soft toy for nap/rest time (optional) – *no other toys should be brought into the school*

Bright Beginnings has a No Backpack policy.

Classroom Supplies and Materials

Each semester/session, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will provide families with a **School Supply List**. Supplies will be based on needs for each classroom and will not include unneeded items.

Personal items from home

Children should not bring toys from home into the classroom unless specifically requested by your child's teacher to enhance a current lesson, theme, or activity. When personal items are brought to school, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS is not responsible or liable for any lost, stolen, traded, damaged, or broken items. The possession or use of toy guns, lighters, knives or other potentially dangerous articles is **prohibited** and may result in suspension or dismissal from the school.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Dress Code

Students must arrive fully clothed (shirt; shorts/pants/skirt/dress), and in appropriate attire for the weather conditions. In winter and cooler weather, children should have jackets, sweaters, coats and mittens, etc. Whenever possible, children will have outdoor play time every day.

Dress should also be comfortable and allow children to move and play freely. Clothing may become dirty or stained through daily activities, so careful consideration should be given before bringing a child in special outfits or intended for special occasions. Bright Beginnings is not responsible for any spills, stains, or damage to clothing while the child is at the school.

Children should always arrive in clean and dry pullups. This gets the day off to a good start and helps solidify classroom routines for diaper changing and toilet training where applicable. Children must always have shoes or sandals on their feet.

Arrival/Departure

The blue door on the north end of the playground is the **only door** that will be used for drop-off and pick-up of students. All children must be dropped off and picked up **by an ADULT** (18 years or older). Children must be signed in and out each day via the Student Information System (SIS) kiosk at the entrance AND THEN escorted by the adult to and from their assigned classroom. Check in and out is NOT COMPLETE until the student has been checked in/out via the SIS kiosk AND the adult escorting the child has made direct contact with the classroom teacher to ensure the teacher is aware the child is being transferred to their care. *Failure to do so is potentially dangerous and could result in dismissal from the program.*

So that students receive the full benefit of consistent routines, **the latest drop off for children in NM PreK classrooms is 8:30am**. Dropping students off after that time not only interrupts the classroom schedule and routine, but also makes it difficult for the child coming in to integrate into activities already in place. Exceptions will be when the family provides written documentation for the tardiness, such as for doctor's appointments or other scheduled appointments.

Students should be picked up and dropped off at regular times* so as not to disrupt classroom routines. Children should be picked up promptly at their registered time. Recurring late pickup may result in additional charges or a daily fine of no less than \$10 per day and/or dismissal from the program. **If there is an emergency and you are unable to pick up your child by dismissal time, you should call 575-522-8220 AND message the classroom teacher via the Student Information System (SIS/Procure).**

**Parents are strongly discouraged from picking up children during nap time because it is disruptive to children who are napping.*

**Families are encouraged not to linger during drop-off; a prolonged departure of the family is often more difficult for the child than shorter, clear departure. If prolonged departures are assessed by classroom teachers to be interfering with a child's ability to effectively transition to the classroom environment, families will be directed to adjust drop-off routines accordingly.*

Attendance & Tardy Policy

It is important for children to attend class every day so that they develop a sense of routine and are able to fully experience the benefits of NM PreK. Students enrolled in the NM PreK program are **required to attend a minimum of 85% of the calendared school days**. In addition, **students enrolled in the NM PreK are considered tardy when they arrive *after 8:30am***. *Frequent or extended consecutive absences or tardiness for NM PreK classes may result in removal from the program.*

If your child will be absent due to illness or another unplanned event, you should message their teacher through the Student Information System (SIS) or call the BRIGHT BEGINNINGS office at 575-522-8220. If you have a planned absence for any reason, you should notify the child's teacher AND the BRIGHT BEGINNINGS office in advance of the absence.

Pick-up time for NM PreK classes is 3:30pm. Students needing care after 3:30pm must be enrolled in the Aftercare program.

Visitors

All visitors and therapists are required to sign in at the information table and should check in with the Executive Director upon arrival. They should also wear an identifiable uniform or visitor badge. See additional information on family visitors under heading PARENTS - Parent Involvement/Volunteering.

Playground

Only individuals authorized by Bright Beginnings may enter the playground while children are present.

Kindermusik

All BRIGHT BEGINNINGS classes will participate in music class one time each week, using Kindermusik curriculum. Kindermusik is a Research-based music and movement curriculum. Independent studies show Kindermusik's approach to play-based learning improves cognitive, physical, and social-emotional growth.

Birthdays / Celebrations

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS welcomes birthday celebrations. In most cases modest treats for snack or lunch time are welcome. Families should **always consult with their child's teacher before sending food** to ensure there are no food allergies/sensitivities of children in the classroom. According to state regulations, **all food brought into the classroom must be store-bought**.

Field Trips

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS does not participate in off-site field trips unless families are providing transportation for their child. Guest speakers will be invited from time to time to come to the school. Previous guest speakers have included doctors, dental assistants, horse trainers, border patrol officers, and fire department and police department representatives.

CHILD & PARENT BEHAVIOR

Guidance & Redirection Policy

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS rules addressing unacceptable behaviors are designed to promote the health, safety, and well-being of each child. Consistent with our philosophy of healthy relationships, our focus is on making good choices and respecting others and ourselves. This approach allows children to learn and grow from negative experiences while gaining respect for themselves, other people, and property.

Whenever possible, positive reinforcement will be given so the student receives immediate feedback when desirable behavior is demonstrated. Students displaying unacceptable behavior will be redirected and/or removed from the offending activity. In some cases, age-appropriate reflection time may be used (approximately 1 minute per age, i.e. 3 mins for a 3-year-old). When needed, Bright Beginnings staff may use 'bear hugs' to prevent a child from hurting themselves or others

Bright Beginning may offer tools to children to help them self-regulate. Such tools might include fidget toys, sensory objects, biting necklaces, weighted blankets, stuffies, or vests, calming centers, or heavy work activities, or feelings emotion dolls.

Punishment that is humiliating, shaming, or frightening to a child is **strictly prohibited**. This includes:

- Spanking, hitting, pinching, or other forms of corporal punishment
- Verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or their family
- Inappropriate or unwarranted restriction of movement or enclosure in a confined space
- Withholding or forcing meals, snacks, or naps

Only Bright Beginnings employees or individuals authorized by Bright Beginnings may correct or redirect students (other than their own child) while the students are in the care of Bright Beginnings. Any attempt by an unauthorized person to correct or redirect a student in our care may result in immediate removal of the person from the property, removal of privileges to enter the school while children are present, and/or immediate dismissal of the family from the school.

Incident Reporting & Behavior Reports

Toddlers and Preschoolers are all learning appropriate social skills and emotional behavior control. It is not unusual in a preschool setting for children to exhibit occasional inappropriate behaviors such as hitting, taking toys, throwing sand, and biting, etc. Teachers will make every effort to intervene to avoid serious incidents, but occasionally incidents cannot be predicted or prevented. So that you are aware of any such behaviors affecting your child, teachers routinely document Incidents in the form of an Incident Report. Written incident reports will be provided at pickup and require signature by the person picking up the child. *In rare instances* a courtesy phone call or Procure message may be initiated if more immediate notification is required. Repeated failure to sign incident reports could result in dismissal from the school.

Incident Reports are intended to be a source of information regarding the behavior and experiences of your child. Incident Reports of inappropriate behavior by your child should be taken seriously, and the family of the child should do everything in their power to curb ongoing inappropriate behavior. This can be a frustrating time for many families. BRIGHT BEGINNINGS is here to partner *with* you, including collaboratively developing a Corrective Plan of action and/or providing relevant resources and information.

Multiple or severe incidents instigated by a child in a given day may result in the child being sent home for the remainder of the day.

Behavior reports will be completed when like behaviors are frequently observed, or behaviors are extreme. The purpose of the behavior report is to better understand the circumstances in which the behaviors occur. Behavior reports provide information related to behavior events, such as what was happening before and after a behavior was observed, who was present, and what other factors might have been important surrounding the behavior(s). Behavior reports will be used by teachers, in collaboration with parents, to identify opportunities to prevent and/or redirect unwanted behaviors.

Corrective Plan

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will attempt to work with your family and child to take constructive steps to find a solution that resolves a problem before a suspension or disenrollment is considered.

When a child's teacher or an administrator has concerns about a child's ongoing behavior or other circumstances, he or she will document such concerns. The family will be contacted to set up a parent-teacher-administrator meeting* to determine what steps can be made to support the child. Together, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS and the family will develop strategies to address a child's particular needs. During this time a variety of options may be considered, depending on the child's individual and/or developmental needs. Options may include, but are not limited to, changes in:

- the physical environment
- the daily structure of activities
- transition times
- redirection

To maintain a collaborative environment, staff will inform the family of progress as needed via notes, phone calls, the SIS, or meetings. If, after one to two weeks (depending on the individual situation and the risk to the welfare and safety of others) the behavior does not improve or if improvement is temporary and behaviors return, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS may determine it can no longer accommodate the needs of the child, the child will be disenrolled.

**Failure of the family to comply with any of the following may lead to suspension and/or disenrollment:*

- *Schedule and/or participate in a Corrective Plan meeting*

- *Seek and participate in resource referrals*
- *Actively support implementation of an agreed upon Corrective Plan*

Suspension/ Disenrollment Policy

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS strives to provide quality care and instruction to ALL students entrusted to our care. We strive to create a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment for each student. While this philosophy cultivates individual needs and respects diversities, it may be necessary on rare occasions to suspend (short-term removal) or disenroll (permanent) a child from our program.

We will do everything reasonable to work with the family of a child in order to prevent suspension or disenrollment. When unavoidable, the family should be given a minimum of two weeks' notice to find a new childcare provider prior to disenrollment. However, *BRIGHT BEGINNINGS reserves the right to disenroll a child immediately, or with less than two-weeks' notice if it determines it is necessary to ensure the safety and/or wellbeing of other children or adults who interact with the child, or it is in the best interest of the school.*

The following are reasons that may require us to suspend or disenroll a child:

Child's Actions

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or themselves
- Uncontrollable violent tantrums/angry outbursts
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children
- Excessive biting or other behaviors

Family's Actions

- Failure to provide or complete required forms (i.e., immunization records)
- Physical threats or intimidating actions towards staff members
- Inappropriate behavior towards staff members or children at the center
- Action or attempt to redirect or correct a child other than their own
- Failure to make payments or make arrangements to do so
- Failure to make provisions for the student's personal needs (e.g., provide pull-ups/wipes, change of clothing, etc.)
- Failure to cooperate with the school to correct a child's ongoing misbehavior
- Recurring late pickups
- Failure to comply with policies and protocols described in the Registration Form and/or the Family Handbook
- Failure to comply with all check-in/check-out procedures
- Failure to actively seek and utilize referred resources

School Considerations

- The school cannot adequately or reasonably meet the physical or emotional needs of the child

- For any other reason in the best interest of the school

HEALTH & SAFETY

Health & Safety Policy

Please keep your children home, as directed, if they exhibit any of the symptoms below. Children who develop or exhibit these symptoms while at school will be sent home immediately. A parent/guardian or the designated emergency contact/authorized pick-up will be called. **Please ensure that all Emergency Contact/Approved Pick-up information is kept current with correct phone numbers. You are required to inform BRIGHT BEGINNINGS in writing, if and when, any Emergency Contact information changes.**

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS may adapt these guidelines based on advice or updates from the Health Department.

- Runny nose with green or yellow discharge
- Severe coughing and/or sneezing – a child who is making a high-pitched whooping sound after coughing, or who turns red or blue in the face when coughing should remain home
- Fever – a child who has had a fever of 100.5-degree F orally or 99 degrees F under the arm in the last 24 hours, or a child on fever reducing medication such as Tylenol, should remain home until they are fever free (without medication) for 24 hours
- Vomiting – a child who has vomited twice within 24 hours, or who has vomited once and displayed other symptoms of illness (e.g., low-grade fever or headache) should remain home for 24 hours *after* symptoms have passed
- Diarrhea – a child who has had 2 abnormally loose stools, or 1 loose stool with other symptoms of illness should remain home for 24 hours *after* the symptoms have passed
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Pinkeye – a child who has symptoms such as tears, redness of eyelid lining, irritation, swelling and/or discharge should remain home until the discharge has stopped completely, or until they have been on medication for 24 hours *and* have a physician's written permission to return to school
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Sore throat and/or trouble swallowing
- Infected skin patch(es) – crusty, bright yellow, dry or gummy areas of skin.
- Unusually dark, tea-colored urine
- Headache and stiff neck
- Unusual spots or rashes, undiagnosed skin outbreak
- Severe itching of the body or scalp – evidence of head lice, mites, scabies, or severe itching/scratching of the body or scalp
- Other signs or symptoms – a child with symptoms that are compatible with a communicable disease, especially if the student has been exposed to a communicable disease (i.e. chicken pox), should remain home until symptoms disappear

Notification

Families of children who become exposed to certain contagious diseases will be notified through a flyer sent home and/or through a SIS message to all families. **If your child should become infected with a contagious disease, you are required to notify BRIGHT BEGINNINGS immediately.**

If your child has an allergy or any other chronic health problem, you are required to inform the Executive Director and the child's teachers.

Medication

Medications will not be given to a student unless it is related to a preexisting condition, severe allergies requiring emergency treatment, or other medical condition that may require emergency treatment. In all cases medications, will ONLY be given when a signed Medical Authorization Form is provided.

With written permission from the legal guardian of a child as provided in the Registration Packet, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS may apply sunscreen and insect repellent to the child if deemed necessary.

Serious Illness, Accident, or Injury

School and playground rules are established to keep students and staff safe. Staff members trained in CPR and certified in First Aid and will be present at all times in case of an emergency or accident.

In case of serious accident or illness, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) will be called. They will advise whether or not the child should be taken to the nearest hospital or doctor's office by ambulance. A BRIGHT BEGINNINGS staff member will accompany the child in the ambulance. Once EMS is contacted, the staff will call a parent/guardian and inform them of the situation. An accident/injury report will be filled out and one copy will be kept in the student's file and one copy will be provided to the family. In any case that an injury needs medical attention outside of basic first aid a copy of the accident/injury report will be sent to CYFD with any additional treatment measures from the attending medical personnel.

Security Cameras

Bright Beginnings security cameras are in use 24 hours a day, year-round. Cameras are placed to cover as much of the public access areas (entrances, main hallway, playground) as possible. No images from security cameras are to be used for public access or distribution.

Video recordings may be used to provide clarity about an incident, interaction, or situation. However, access to security cameras and video recordings/footage is restricted to authorized

personnel only and children or families of Bright Beginnings will not be granted viewing access for any reason.

EMERGENCY

Emergency Preparedness Drills

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS conducts monthly fire drills and quarterly emergency drills (e.g., shelter in place, lockdown, situation unfolding, etc.). We conduct drills to ensure we are well prepared to respond effectively in a real emergency situation. During emergency drills we will post a sign on our entry doorway.

Emergency Notification

In the event of a real emergency, families will be notified via our Student Information System's (currently Procure) emergency notification system. Notification will be in the form of a direct text.

Emergency Evacuation and Disaster Preparedness

In the event of a disaster or emergency evacuation from BRIGHT BEGINNINGS and University United Methodist Church, the following actions will be taken. In every situation, the health, safety, and well-being of our students is our primary concern.

1. Students will be evacuated from the building per the Emergency map in their classroom.
2. Administrators are responsible for "sweeping" the building to make sure every child is evacuated and for being first contact with designated relocation areas. This responsibility will be handled by the Executive Director, Assistant Director or delegated appointed staff.
3. Students will be taken to either First Church of the Nazarene at 1900 S. Locust or University Hills Elementary School at 2005 S. Locust. Should further relocation be required, BRIGHT BEGINNINGS will follow the instruction of Las Cruces Police Department (LCPD) or other law enforcement agencies. Families will be notified of the new relocation area as soon as possible.
4. We will attempt to contact families as soon as students are safely evacuated
5. Families are urged to follow the instructions of the local authorities under such circumstances regarding when it is safe to pick their child up.

Emergency Lock-Down/Shelter in Place Procedures

The purpose of a **lockdown** is to restrict movement within a specific area (like a building or school) due to a perceived immediate threat inside the building. Examples include an active shooter or other immediate danger. The goal is to secure a safe space within the building and prevent entry from outside.

In the event of an emergency requiring BRIGHT BEGINNINGS to go into **lockdown**, the following actions will be taken:

1. An adult will be with students at all times.
2. Emergency services will be notified immediately.
3. The building and all classroom doors and windows will be locked.
4. Lights will be turned off and window coverings will be lowered so there is no visibility into the room.
5. Phones will be silenced.
6. Children and adults will remain in their rooms and away from doors and windows.
7. We will attempt to contact families via the Student Information System (SIS) as soon as it is safe to do so.
8. Families are urged to follow the instructions of the local authorities regarding when it is safe to pick their child up.
9. If needed and possible, students should have access to a spare set of clothing in their backpacks/cubies.

Shelter in Place is a temporary measure to protect individuals from an environmental hazard or other threat by moving them to a safer location within the building. Examples include Severe weather (tornado, hurricane), hazardous material release, or other external threats. The goal is to minimize exposure to the external hazard and create a safe space within the building.

In the event of an emergency requiring BRIGHT BEGINNINGS to **shelter in place**, the following actions will be taken:

1. An adult will be with students at all times.
2. If appropriate, emergency services will be notified immediately.
3. Depending on the situation, classroom doors and windows will be closed and/or locked; cracks will be sealed; ventilation systems will be turned off.
4. Children and adults will be moved to an interior room.
5. We will attempt to contact families via the Student Information System (SIS) as soon as it is safe to do so.
6. Families are urged to follow the instructions of the local authorities regarding when it is safe to pick their child up.
7. If needed and possible, students should have access to a spare set of clothing in their backpacks/cubies.

MANDATED REPORTING of ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Childcare providers in the state of New Mexico are mandated reporters. This means staff are required, *by law*, to report to the proper authorities any reasonable suspicion that a child may have been or may be being abused or neglected. Staff members receive training regarding indicators of child abuse/neglect, and how to report. Bright Beginnings and its' staff are not obligated to notify families/parents/guardians that they will make or have made a report to the proper authorities. To report such a claim, the phone number to Children, Youth and Families Department is: 1-800-797-3260.

Please understand that when a report is made, it is done with the best interest of the child's safety and well-being in mind. Bright Beginnings staff do not make determinations of guilt or accusations against any individual. Rather, we report observations or concerns that may indicate a child's safety could be at risk. In many cases, staff do not have direct knowledge of all individuals involved in a child's care, and it is not our role to investigate or assign responsibility. Our responsibility is to report concerns as required by law.

While we fulfill our legal obligations as mandated reporters, our goal remains to partner with and support families in fostering safe, healthy, and nurturing environments for every child's growth and development.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Bright Beginnings would like to actively participate in a student's IFSP process, Early Childhood Outcomes process, and the Transition Conference. To do so, written consent must be provided by the family to Bright Beginnings. For more information please contact our NM PreK Administrator, the Assistant Director, or the Executive Director.

Confidentiality Statement

Student files may not be taken off site. Families may view their child's educational file by contacting the Executive Director or Assistant Director to make arrangements. Copies of student files are available outside of BRIGHT BEGINNINGS only with a release signed by a parent/guardian. Only authorized certified personnel, authorized government officials, or appropriate authorities in a health or safety emergency may access a student's educational records without the approval or notification of the family.

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS's public records may be viewed by contacting the Executive Director or Assistant Director to make arrangements to view as soon as practical.

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS Committee Contact

The BRIGHT BEGINNINGS Committee is always happy to speak with you about our school. Contact information is available from the Executive Director and/or the University United Methodist Church (UUMC) office, at 575-522-8220.