

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC

PARENT HANDBOOK





Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC

Bringing A⁺ Quality Learning to Early Childhood!

**Corporate Office:
116 N. Highway 52, Suite B, Moncks Corner, SC 29461
(843) 761-3330**

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

PHILOSOPY

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC provides quality early care and education to young children between the ages of one and five. As educators, we believe that it is our responsibility to facilitate an effective environment that is conducive to children learning and developing at a unique pace that is developmentally appropriate. As a team, we strive for excellence as we work together to build a strong foundation for all students enrolled while striving to prepare our students for kindergarten.

Through a variety of experiences in creative learning, music & movement, art, science, and language development, our students will grow to develop self-confidence, and a strong foundation for learning, while striving for success and excellence.

MISSION STATEMENT

At Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC, we provide every child with quality learning in a safe and effective environment. Each child will have an opportunity to prosper and develop at a pace that is individually and developmentally appropriate. The academy will support the right of each child to play, learn, and grow in an inclusive early childhood program that will foster kindergarten success. We are committed to ensuring that every child receives the best opportunity to produce a strong foundation for a fruitful, educational experience.

THE OWNER

Latorie S. Lloyd has over twenty-five years of consistent experience in the Early Childhood industry. Her leadership and teaching experiences include head start, early head start, public schools, corporate, private, and religious childcare centers. She enjoys working with families to provide a circle of love and education for children. Latorie believes in creating strong foundations for children that will enhance educational experiences, leadership abilities, and confidence.

Visit our website to learn more about the owner. Families are also welcome to contact her by email and/or mail.

Corporate Office mailing address: 116 N. Hwy 52, Suite B, Moncks Corner, SC, 29461.
Email: Latorie@AspireEarlyLearningAcademy.com.

CHANGES IN POLICY

It is our goal to be consistent with company policies and procedures. However, policies and procedures are subject to change to accommodate state laws and regulations, and/or the needs of the Academy. Families are notified of these changes by email, printed

communication, parent portal, or on the website. Once a policy has been revised, changed, or eliminated, superseded policies will be null.

FAMILY/CENTER RELATIONSHIP

We believe that it takes a village to educate our children. We encourage families to develop and maintain professional relationships with the academy's teaching team. This will show our students that their circle of supporters communicates and care about their well-being together. Family-center relationships are imperative to the overall development of children in their early years. We prohibit personal relationships between families and employees that will disrupt the professional environment at the Academy.

GRIEVANCES

Families are encouraged to speak with or message your child's direct teacher first if a concern arises. If your concern is not resolved, or you are uncomfortable speaking with the teacher, we encourage you to address the concern confidentially with your Academy Director. The next course of action would be to contact the Regional Director and/or request a meeting with the leadership team. It is expected of all parties to communicate professionally and respectfully with each other. Mutual respect is the heartbeat of positive communication.

CURRICULUM

The foundation of our education tool is the nationally recognized Learning Beyond Paper Curriculum. This curriculum is a practical approach on how to organize the environment to support children's social development and active learning. It is based on extensive research regarding children development. Additional information can be found on our website.

Our team also incorporate the guidelines of The SC Early Learning Standards which support the readiness of young children through nurturing early care and education environments and developmentally appropriate practices. The standards focus on the development of voluntary guidelines as required by the Good Start, Grow Smart Initiative. The assessment tool that we use is the Ages and Stages Questionnaire – 3, in which we assess children three times per year to track growth and development.

As practical tools for educational and social development, we will also incorporate the following age-appropriate practices: kindergarten readiness, independence skills, young leadership, organization, etiquette, healthy living, reading, mathematics.

SECTION 2

HOURS OF OPERATION

DAYS AND HOURS

Aspire Early Learning Academy days of operation are Monday through Friday from 7:00 am – 6:00 pm.

HOLIDAYS

The Academy will close to observe the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day and one additional day before or after, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and one full week during the Christmas Holiday (generally the last week of the year).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

The Academy will close for two days in August for professional development. Families will be notified at least ninety days in advance through the parent portal, newsletters, email, letters, and/or signs posted throughout the academy.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of inclement weather, the Academy will close, or release early, at the discretion of the owner and the guidance from local officials. The Academy may follow the decisions of the local area school districts. We will notify all families of closings through email, website, social media, and/or the parent portal.

ARRIVAL TIME

Our team takes great pride in preparing our students for their next educational endeavor, which will be kindergarten. To be successful, structure and routines are imperative. Children are welcome to arrive at the Academy between 7:00 am and 9:00 am. After 9:00 am, children will not be allowed to enter for the day without a doctor's note and/or prior phone call notifying the Director of the child's attendance. We understand that occasionally families may run behind. It is the Academy Director's discretion to determine when tardies become excessive.

SECTION 3

ENROLLMENT

ADMISSION

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC enrolls children without regard to race, culture, sex, religion, national origin, ancestry, or disability. The Academy will accept children with special needs if we can provide a safe and supportive environment for the child.

Children are enrolled at Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC in accordance with available classroom space and staffing. Parents/guardians are to complete family orientation, along with all forms that are required by the Academy, Department of Social Services, Department of Health and Environmental Control, and additional state-based governing agencies prior to the students first day. A copy of the parents' photo IDs is required to be on file with registration forms. Before your child's first day, it is mandatory that parents provide the Academy with a current South Carolina DHEC Immunization form, which meets all health requirements for your child's age. A notarized DHEC exemption form and the Military Certification form are also accepted.

Children are accepted for a two-week probationary period. The two-week trial period provides the Director with the opportunity to assess if our program is a good fit for your child. A good fit is determined by the students' actions, behaviors, individual needs and social skill set. The Director will follow-up with the parents at the end of each week. At the end of the trial period, families will be provided with up to a week's notice if it is not a good fit. The Academy Director may extend the probationary period up to an additional two weeks. If the student poses a physical threat to classmates and teachers, immediate withdrawal may be necessary.

WAITNG LIST

If space is unavailable, families will be provided with the option to be placed on the waiting list. A waiting list intake form will be completed by the Academy Director or online. To officially secure the next available classroom spot, the annual registration fee of \$150.00 will be required; however, the registration fee is not mandatory to be placed on the waitlist. To receive a phone call when space is available, a completed waiting list form is only required. The registration fee is non-refundable.

The waiting list provides a general time frame of availability. We are unable to guarantee a specific date for an available space, only an estimated date based on your family's needs and our projected availability. When space is available, we will contact the families who have paid their registration fees first in respect to the submission order, all others will be called according to the date of submission on their form.

WITHDRAWAL

Families can withdraw from the academy at any time with a documented (written or email) two-weeks' notice to the Academy Director. Families who do not provide a two-weeks notices, will be subjected to collections for the reservation fee of ½ of their normal weekly tuition for two weeks. Registration, tuition, and reservation fees are non-refundable.

Aspire Early Learning Academy reserves the right to disenroll a family if we see where the relationship between the child, parent, teacher, and/or Academy is not positive. Two weeks' notice will be provided to the family in writing. Before proceeding with the withdrawal, the Academy Director will work with the family and teachers to address the challenges that are presented. If the challenge with the Academy-family relationship poses a threat to enrolled children, the team, or the operations of the business, the family will be asked to leave immediately.

The following grounds for immediate withdrawal are, but are not limited to:

- The behavior of the child, parent, family guest, or legal guardian that is endangering to self or other persons, materials, building structure, and/or classroom environment.
- Chronic disruption of a positive learning environment due to a child's behavior.
- Delinquent tuition of one week or more.
- Repetitive delinquent tuition/fees of three or more times.
- Excessive late pick-ups or drop-offs of three or more.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We recognize the importance of keeping children, family, and employee files confidential. All files are kept locked in the Director's office. Children's files will be accessible to the parent/guardian of that child, owner, director, director's designee, DHEC, and DSS Child Care Licensing. Parental permission must be obtained to use photographs of children in the academy, on the website, on social media sites (Facebook/Instagram), and newsletter publications.

INCLUSION POLICY

Inclusion

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC believes that children of all developmental levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on their individual capabilities and needs.

Non-Discrimination

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

Communication

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC provides communication to parents and guardians through email, parent-teacher conferences, and the parent portal. Once the initial Ages and Stages Questionnaire is completed, the Director will call the parent to schedule a meeting with a parent if there is a concern that needs to be addressed. The call will be followed by a formal email. If there are no concerns, families will only receive a copy of the assessment.

Reasonable Modifications

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC will accept children with reasonable modifications. Parents and guardians are to complete the Request for Accommodations form upon enrollment. The Director and parents will schedule a meeting to discuss the child's needs, abilities, activities, and routines. The Academy will support specialized services from outside agencies to assist the child in the classroom setting.

Individualized Care Plans

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC team will participate with families to implement Individualized Family Service Plans that are created by professionals, such as pediatricians and/or therapists. Teachers will use individualized goals from the IFSP to support the child's individual learning style and development.

Confidentiality

Unless Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC receives your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released, except for information that is required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Daily Communications

Daily notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at the center. Notes and activities are communicated in the parent portal only.

Bulletin Boards

Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, upcoming events, faculty changes, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc. Some notes may be placed on the front door.

Newsletters

Quarterly newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters are emailed to families and available at the sign-in/sign-out desk if needed.

Email

Families are required to provide at least one email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters, and general updates.

Family Visits

Family participation is encouraged. Scheduled visits in our classrooms, volunteering, joining a field trip, or eating a meal with your child are welcomed. All adults are required to sign-in for the safety and protection of our children and team. Each visitor must wear a visitor's badge while on the premises and sign-out upon leaving.

Family Nights

Family nights are scheduled two to three times a year. These nights include snacks, drinks and fun filled age-appropriate activities for children and families. Family nights allow everyone time to share, learn, and have fun while visiting the Academy. Families have an opportunity to be a part of their child's learning experience and connect with other families.

Conferences

Family & teacher conferences occur as needed throughout the academic year. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns with the teaching team.

SECTION 4

FEES AND PAYMENT POLICIES

ANNUAL REGISTRATION

The non-refundable registration fee of \$150.00 per family is due upon enrollment and annually. Once paid upon initial enrollment, the next non-refundable registration fee will be due by September 1st of the following year and each year thereafter while enrolled.

(Examples: enrollment October 2023 – next registration fee is due September 2024 or enrollment March 2023 – next registration fee is due September 2024.) The registration fee will automatically be placed on families account in the parent portal during the month of August if your child will be attending for the upcoming academic year. The final deadline to pay the annual registration fee is September 1st.

TUITION

Tuition payments are due on Mondays for the week that you are receiving services. Accounts with a balance at closing on Tuesday will receive a twenty-five dollar (\$30.00) late payment fee. The tuition and all fees accumulated must be paid in full before returning to the Academy on Wednesdays.

All payments are only accepted online through our parent portal. Parents may pay with a debit or credit card in which they are responsible for the processing fees. Families also have the option of paying by ACH with no processing fees. Tuition payments, registration, reservation, and graduation fees are non-refundable. Field trip fees may be refundable if the field trip was cancelled.

Adjustments in tuition are not made for sickness, inclement weather, pandemics, holidays and/or any unanticipated situations that would hinder full attendance. If your child will be absent for a full week, then a reservation credit of half of your normal weekly tuition will be credited to your account. Your family will only be responsible for the reservation fee of ½ of your normal weekly tuition rate. The reservation fee must also be paid by Tuesday to avoid the \$30.00 late payment fee. If your child attends at least one day within the current week, your family will be responsible for the full weekly tuition rate. Tuition payments are non-refundable. Request for a refund may be considered if a SC Voucher payment is received and backdated. The request must be submitted in writing or by email. Refunds are processed using the same method of payment in which the payment was received.

SUMMER ACTIVITY FEE

Our team strives to create an excellent fun-filled program for our students who remain with us for the summer. Families who continue with summer enrollment will be responsible for the \$100.00 summer activity fee per student. The fee will be due the first Monday in June. The summer activity fee covers extra curriculum activities, guest speakers, field trips (in-house and community -based), materials, etc. for up to nine weeks. This fee is mandatory for all children attending ages two and up. Children in the SC First Steps program are not required to pay the summer activity fee and will have a separate activity calendar.

SC FIRST STEPS 4K

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC has partnered with South Carolina First Steps to offer Four-Year-Old Kindergarten at two of our locations (Lexington and Columbia). Families are approved for this program by applying with SC First Steps. Children who are

accepted will be able to attend, tuition-free, from 9:00 am – 3:30 pm. If families need before and/or after care, the weekly tuition will be \$40.00.

SOUTH CAROLINA VOUCHER PROGRAM

Families who are a part of the SC Voucher programs are responsible for the difference in the weekly tuition that is not covered by the SC Voucher. Families are also responsible for paying the \$50.00 difference in the registration fee before enrollment. Children may not start until the Academy receives confirmation from the Department of Social Services of the family's approved SC Voucher.

The Academy will do its best to notify families when their vouchers will expire, however, it is the parent's responsibility to renew their application in reasonable time frame to avoid gaps in tuition and enrollment.

If there is a gap between voucher connection periods, the family is fully responsible for paying the tuition until the new voucher is connected. Tuition may be reimbursed up to 100% if the new voucher connects to the date on which the previous voucher ended. Refunds will be processed once the payment is pending from the Department of Social Services. The request for a refund must be submitted in writing or by email. Refunds are processed using the same method of payment in which the tuition was received.

Families also have the option to withdraw their child/children until the reconnection is established. The Academy will not be able to hold a spot for your child during the waiting period.

REFERRAL PROGRAM

Families who refer another family to any location within the company will receive one free tuition weekly tuition credit, for one child. New families must be enrolled for a minimum of three weeks for the referred family to receive the weekly tuition credit. It is the families' responsibility to notify the Director to receive the credit on their account. Credits will remain on the account until the family chooses to use it. The referred family will need to notify the Academy Director of who referred them to the Academy upon enrollment.

VACATION CREDIT

After one full year at the academy, with no break(s) in childcare service, families will receive one free vacation week where they will not have to pay the reservation fee. The child/children must be absent the entire week to receive this credit. It is the families' responsibility to notify the Director, in advance, if they choose to use their free vacation week. It is only available once per calendar year and may not be rolled over to the next year if it is not used.

TUITION EXCPETION

During the Christmas Holiday, the Academy will close for one full week to provide our team with time to spend with their family. The closing week generally falls during the last week of the year. Families will not be charged weekly tuition when the Academy closes for the week of Christmas. However, if there is a past due balance on the account at 6:00pm on Tuesday during this week, a \$30.00 late payment fee will be applied to the account. The family may not return the following week until the balance is paid in full.

SIBLING DISCOUNT

The Academy offers one sibling discount of ten percent to families with two or more children attending within the same household. The discounts apply to the oldest child's tuition and for full-time enrollment only. The discount is for one child only.

TUITION INCREASE

An annual tuition increase will be effective in August of each year. Families will be notified of the new rates two weeks prior with the annual renewal packet.

RETURNED CHECK FEE

There is a \$40.00 fee for all returned payments. After two returned payments have been received from one family, the family will no longer be able to use the online option for payments. Money orders or certified checks would be required. Payments returned for insufficient funds are subject to court filings and collection agencies.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

The Academy closes promptly at 6:00 pm and the First Steps program closes at 3:30pm. A late fee will be charged for families who pick up after the closing time. After one hour, we are required by DSS to notify the proper authorities. More than three late pick-ups within a thirty-day period may result in a notification of withdrawal. The late pick-up fees are due by the end of the week to return the upcoming week. The late fee schedule is as follows:

5 -10 minutes	\$10.00 per child
11-20 minutes	\$15.00 per child
21 – 30 minutes	\$20.00 per child
31 – 45 Minutes	\$25.00 per child
46 – 60 Minutes	\$30.00 per child.

RESERVATION POLICY

If within one service week (Monday – Friday), your child attends at least one day at the Academy, families are responsible for the full weekly tuition. If your child is absent the entire service week, for various reasons, families are responsible for the reservation fee of ½ of your normal weekly tuition rate. The reservation fee is due on Monday of the respected week to avoid the late payment fee. If a child is hospitalized for two or more

days, the Academy will waive the reservation fee for the week(s) of the child's hospital stay with official documentation.

FIELD TRIP FEES

Families will be notified at least two weeks in advance of upcoming field trips and fees during the academic year. All fees are due by Monday of the week in which the field trip will occur to ensure proper planning and staffing. Field trip fees are not inclusive in tuition cost and registration fees. Field trip fees are to be paid online in the parent portal.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

It is our goal to be able to offer a variety of enrichment programs for our students. If families wish for their children to participate in a program that is offered, there will be an additional fee for the enrichment program. The programs and fees will be provided to parents in advance. Payments are to be made directly to the program.

SECTION 5

DISCIPLINE POLICY

DISCIPLINE

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior management of children. When children receive positive, nonviolent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief, Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC, will use a positive approach to discipline and practice the following discipline and behavior management techniques.

WE DO

- ◆ Communicate to children using positive statements.
- ◆ Communicate with children on their level.
- ◆ Talk with children in a calm quiet manner.
- ◆ Explain unacceptable behavior to children.
- ◆ Give attention to children for positive behavior.
- ◆ Praise and encourage the children.
- ◆ Reason with and set limits for the children.
- ◆ Apply rules consistently.
- ◆ Model appropriate behavior.
- ◆ Set up the classroom environment to prevent problems.
- ◆ Provide alternatives and redirect children to acceptable activity.
- ◆ Give children opportunities to make choices and solve problems.
- ◆ Help children talk out problems and think of solutions.
- ◆ Listen to children and respect the children's needs, desires and feelings.
- ◆ Provide appropriate words to help solve conflicts.

- ◆ Use storybooks and discussion to work through common conflicts.

WE DO NOT

- ◆ Inflict corporal punishment in any manner upon a child. (Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force to the body as a discipline measure. Physical force to the body includes, but is not limited to, spanking, hitting, shaking, biting, pinching, pushing, pulling, or slapping.)
- ◆ Use any strategy that hurts, shames, or belittles a child.
- ◆ Use any strategy that threatens, intimidates, or forces a child.
- ◆ Use food as a form of reward or punishment.
- ◆ Use or withhold physical activity as a punishment.
- ◆ Shame or punish a child if a bathroom accident occurs.
- ◆ Embarrass any child in front of others.
- ◆ Compare children.
- ◆ Place children in a locked and/or dark room.
- ◆ Leave any child alone, unattended or without supervision.
- ◆ Allow discipline of a child by other children.
- ◆ Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle a child's parents, families, or ethnic groups.

Conferences will be scheduled with parents if disciplinary problems occur. If a child's behavior consistently endangers the safety of the children around him/her, then the Director has the right, after meeting with the parents and documenting behavior problems and interventions, to terminate childcare services for that child.

Time out will be used as a last resort. If time-out is used, the child will not be isolated from the group. The child will only sit for minutes that are identical to his/her age.

We understand that biting could be a challenge for younger children. If the child is a biter, we will document the incidents, with two separate documents (one for both families). Both sets of parents will be notified. Families of biters will be conferenced, and a corrective action plan will be put into place for the biter, teachers, and parents. If the incident continues over the documented period of time, the family will receive adequate notice to withdraw from the academy for the overall safety of all children enrolled.

Note: If, at any point, there is an indication/suspicion that a child may have special needs, Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC will inform the child's family and contact Baby Net for assessment and assistance.

SECTION 6

ILLNESS, MEDICATIONS, & SAFETY

6.1 CHILD ILLNESS & EXCLUSION POLICY

Our child illness policy is based on the Health Care Policies that were developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Department of Health and Environment.

We understand that it is difficult for parents or guardians to leave work and/or miss work. It is recommended that preparations are made in advance for occasions where children must remain home or be immediately picked up due to illnesses. Exclusion from the center, for a certain period, may become necessary to reduce the transmission and spread of an illness. The center may not be able to adequately meet the individual needs of mildly ill children, it will be determined on a case-by-case basis and may require a note from the pediatrician.

Minor illnesses are common in children; exclusion serves no purpose for minor illnesses if it does not represent any harm to other children.

Children will be excluded from the childcare setting for the following reasons listed below. This list covers most common illnesses, but is not inclusive of all reasons for exclusion:

- Any illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.
- Illness that results in a greater need for care than our employees can provide without compromising the health, safety, and security of other children.
- Fever that is 100.0 orally, 100 forehead, 100.0 aural (ear), or 99.0 under the arm (without the added degree).
- Diarrhea – More than 2 loose stools within 24 hours; stools with blood or mucus; or uncontrolled stools that cannot be contained in a diaper, underwear, or toilet.
- Vomiting – Green or bloody; 2 or more times during a 24-hour period.
- Rash – with fever or behavioral changes (unless written excuse is provided by a physician).
- Purulent conjunctivitis – pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow discharge around the eye; may return 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- Ring worm – may return 24 hours after treatment has begun and soars have crusted over.
- Impetigo – may return 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- Strep Throat – may return 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- Head Lice – may return 24 hours after treatment has begun and all nits are removed.
- Scabies – may return 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- Chickenpox – may return when all lesions have dried and is crusted (appx. 6 days)
- Pertussis (whooping cough) – may return after 5 days of receiving treatment with appropriate antibiotics.

- Hepatitis A Virus – may return one week after the onset of the illness and after immunoglobulin has been administered.

Children who have been excluded due to illness may return:

- ✓ When they are free from fever, vomiting and all other symptoms without the aid of medication, prescription or over the counter, for a full 24 hours.
- ✓ When they have been treated with antibiotics for a full 24 hours.
- ✓ When they can participate comfortably in all usual program activities, including outdoor time.
- ✓ The child must be free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless a note from a pediatrician specifically states that the child's condition is not contagious, and the involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.

For your child's comfort and to reduce the risk of transmission, children are to be picked up within one hour of parent notification. Children are to be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to the Academy. In the case of a suspected contagious illness or continuing symptoms, a note from a pediatrician stating that the child is well enough to return to school may be required to return to the Academy.

If your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness, we request that you notify the Director so that we may inform families and monitor the students for similar symptoms.

Refer to our Pandemic Policy, located on the Academy website, for information regarding Covid-19 and other highly contagious viruses.

MEDICATION POLICY

We understand that there may be occasions where medication may need to be administered to a child while at the Academy. We will only administer medication when it is prescribed by the pediatrician to be given three or more times a day.

We will only administer the following medications: liquid prescription medication in the original bottle with a descriptive label, diaper rash ointment, Neosporin, sunscreen, bug spray, and additional similar products. Items such as Neosporin, sunscreen bug spray, etc. must be labeled with your child's name on it and it must be accompanied with a completed medication form.

We will not issue over-the-counter medication for fever or pain reduction purposes, such as Tylenol or Motrin.

Should medication be administered, the following conditions will need to be met:

- Medications must be left at the Director's office and/or designee for proper handling.

- No medications (including topical solutions, such as diaper creams and sunscreen, etc.) can be left within the reach of children.
- Parents must complete the medication form before medication can be administered. A completed form includes times to be dispensed, dosage amounts, last time administered, and signature.
- Medications must be in original containers and labeled with the child's name and current date. We cannot give medication that is not in the original container or is prescribed for someone other than the child. Medicine will be dispensed as directed on the container. We will not administer medication that is more than 90 days old. **The first dose of the medication should be given at home in case there is an allergic reaction.**
- If your child needs special medical procedures (ex: nebulizer treatments), we need a signed note from your physician stating the type and amount of medication to be given, times and any additional information/instruction. This note is only good for six months.
- If your child has severe allergic reactions to certain foods or insect bites, you may keep a prescribed Epi-pen at the academy. Written instructions from the physician on when to administer will be kept on file, as well as written permission from the parent for us to administer it in an emergency. These forms will need to be updated every six months. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the Epi-pen is not outdated.
- The Director, or designee, will administer all prescription medications.
- Information will be logged immediately following the administration of the medication and a copy will be provided to the child's parent/guardian upon request.
- If there is an error during the administration of medication, parents/guardians will be notified immediately, and it will be documented in writing. If the error requires medical attention, the emergency officials will be called immediately, along with the parents, and the Department of Social Services- Child Care Licensing.

INJURY

Safety is a major concern in childcare. Daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver if your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). Injuries from the neck up will result in a phone call to a parent.

You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately by phone. Each Academy is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact to meet our team at the hospital.

BITING

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

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

Documentation will be provided to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

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

SAFETY

The safety of our students is a high priority for Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC. Doors are always locked from the outside but remain unlocked from the inside. Everyone who approaches the building must ring the doorbell to enter. All visitors, including therapist, must sign in the visitor's log upon arrival and sign out upon departure.

Children are tracked hourly throughout the day to ensure that each child is continuously accounted for. The teachers use an assigned DSS approved tracking form to call each child by name and facial recognition.

If someone other than the parent/guardian picks up your child, they will need to bring a state or government issued picture ID. If he/she is not on your approved list (on the enrollment application or parent portal), a parent will be called before the child can be released with the guardian. We request that parents notify a member of management in advance regarding any pick-up changes. Parents/guardians may be asked to show ID as well if an employee is new and/or not familiar with families.

Court-ordered documentation must be on file for families who are experiencing custody challenges. We are not able to legally withhold a child from being picked-up from a non-custodial parent unless a court-ordered document is provided and placed in your child's file. If there is a potentially dangerous altercation, we are required to release the child from the non-custodial parent, notify the local police department, and the Department of Social Services.

CHILD CUSTODY

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

RIGHT TO REFUSE CHILD RELEASE POLICY

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

The academy reserves the right to address a parent/guardian if we suspect that they are under the influence of drugs/alcohol, in which the child's safety may be in danger. If we are unable to retain the child, we are mandated by law to notify the proper authorities and/or another parent/guardian of the child's removal.

CLOTHING

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

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

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 95°F or less than 50°F degrees.

REPORTING ABUSE & NEGLECT

Along with being illegal, child abuse and neglect interferes with a child's healthy development and later achievements in life. The State and Federal government requires

that all Early Childhood Professionals report any suspected abuse and neglect to our local Child Protective Service office. The law requires reporting the following:

- Any physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by those responsible for his/her care, custody, and control (except for discipline including spanking administered in a reasonable manner) shall be construed to be **abuse**.
- Failure to provide by those responsible for the care, custody, and control of the child, the proper or necessary support, education as required by law, medical, surgical or any other care necessary for his/her well-being shall be classified as **neglect**.

Parents may not be informed of reporting if such information may hinder a full investigation. The law requires reporting to come directly from the employee who suspects the abuse. Management may, or may not, be aware of a suspected child abuse report/case.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & EVACUATION PLAN

If an individual medical emergency should occur at the Academy, the following steps will be taken:

1. The Academy's designee will call 911 and the emergency medical team will transport the child to the nearest hospital. We will attempt to reach both parents and take the Emergency Contact Form for the child to the hospital.
2. The Academy Director, or designee, will go with the child to the hospital and stay with the child until the parent/guardian arrives.
3. The Director's designee will remain at the facility to remain in charge during the Director's absence.

In the event an environmental emergency should occur at our Academy, the respected evacuation plans are posted in each academy and a general summary is provided below:

1. For severe inclement weather, the Academy will follow the school district's closing schedule in which the respected Academy is located. Parents are encouraged to check email, listen to the local radio station, television station, and/or view social media pages for weather updates.
 - a. In the event of an unpredicted emergency, such as a tornado/earthquake, the children will be relocated to the safest location within the building. If we lose power or electronic communication for an extended period and conditions become hazardous, the children will be relocated to a safe location and a note will be placed on the Academy's front door to inform parents of our location.
2. In the event of a fire: We will follow the following steps:

- a. Children will immediately be escorted out of the building and will line up against the fence that is the farthest away from the building.
- b. Once all the children have exited the building and the Academy Director or designee has safely cleared the building; we will relocate to a safe location together if conditions are not controlled.
- c. Teachers will account for all children by checking attendance logs/tracking forms and reporting to the director or designee before leaving, upon arrival at the safe location, and every 15 minutes thereafter.
- d. We will notify parents of our location by phone call, text, and/or email once we arrive safely.
- e. The Director or Designee will provide first aid as needed.
- f. We will not re-enter the building until permission is given by the Fire Officials.

TRANSPORTATION & FIELD TRIPS

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC does not provide transportation to and from individual homes. In the event of an off-site field trip, will use state certified buses, with approved drivers, to transport children to and from field trips. Children will be tracked every 30 minutes by using the tracking sheet face to name checklist in which the teacher calls their names and verify it is the child through facial recognition.

Parents will be notified at least two weeks prior to a field trip. Notices will include departure time from the Academy, return time to the Academy, dress attire, and the cost of the field trip. Written parental authorization for field trips is required and must be signed in advance. Payment is due the Monday before the field trip, unless otherwise noted. All children are encouraged to participate in all field trips as this is an important part of the learning experience.

If the children are being transported by school bus, a separate “check on/check off” form will be used. Children will be checked on **each** time they enter the bus and checked off **each** time they exit the bus (either at a field trip site or at the Academy).

A child who does not have written permission to go on a field trip will remain at the academy and be placed in another classroom with supervision.

Parents are invited to attend with the children on field trips. Parents as chaperones are not permitted to supervise groups of children alone. Parents may only be alone with their child/children. Parents are to provide their own transportation to and from the field trip site.

PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

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

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

DANGEROUS WEAPONS

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

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

SECTION 7

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

OPEN-DOOR POLICY

We have an open-door policy where parents are welcome to visit the academy at any time during normal operating hours and circumstances. If you believe that your child's learning will be interrupted and/or the learning of the class during your visit, we request that visitations are limited. The Academy Director reserves the right to request limited visits if it affects the overall learning environment of the classroom.

VOLUNTEERING

We encourage parents to volunteer in the classrooms and on field trips. Please notify your child's teacher and/or the director if you will be available to volunteer. If someone other than a parent/guardian volunteers, you will need to notify the Director before the person visits the academy/field trip site. Repeat volunteers will need to complete a Central Registry Background check for \$45.00 through the Academy.

PARENT MEETINGS

Each academic year, we will have one fall Open House for families to drop in and speak with the teachers and Director.

There will be one optional parent-teacher conferences during the Spring for children ages four and five who are preparing for kindergarten. Conferences will be a time for parents to learn about their child's experiences and developmental progress at the Academy. Documentations of your child's progress, developmental checklists, and classroom portfolios will be shared at the conference. Additional conferences may be scheduled at the request of either the teaching team or parents.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES & CELEBRATIONS

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC encourages parents to celebrate their child's birthday at the academy. This brings joy for your child and his/her peers. Classroom celebrations may be held at 3:00 pm Monday – Friday. Parents and family members are welcome to attend. We have a No Nut Policy in place, so please be mindful when purchasing your items. Cakes, drinks, and all food items must be purchased from a store and brought in the store's original container. Homemade items are prohibited. It is required that you notify your child's teacher at least one day prior to the classroom party.

FUNDRAISING

The Academy will hold two to three fundraising opportunities a year. We encourage every family to participate. Fundraisers provide the academy with the ability to purchase and replenish items for the children as well as keep tuition at an affordable cost for our families.

AFTER HOURS ACTIVITIES

Our team may host a small number of after-hours activities so that families may attend special events. After-hour activities will be posted in advance for proper planning. We request that families participate as our team donates their time to prepare for these activities.

SECTION 8

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND REGULATIONS

FREE AND FULL ACCESS

Parents have free and full access to their children, unless a court order states otherwise and the visit does not disrupt the overall classroom instruction, activities, and/or routines. We encourage parents to schedule court-ordered family visits away from the academy as we strive to maintain a consistent environment for our students.

PARENTAL CUSTODY

Our goal is to remain a neutral environment for our students and families. We request that all custodial guidelines are resolved outside of our circle of love for children. If our team has been introduced to parents, we are unable to stop a parent from picking up their child without a court-ordered document. If a court-ordered document is on file, our team will call the local authorities if an unauthorized parent arrives to pick up their child. For the safety of all children, and the employees, the team member is only authorized to advise the parent of the court order, notify the authorities and custodial parent.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Children will only be released to authorized adults. The parent/guardian will complete a form listing all adults who are authorized to pick up the child from the facility. If special circumstances arise and you need someone to pick up your child that would normally not be allowed to do so, you must notify the center prior to departure, either by phone and/or written notice.

In the event of a parental emergency and we are unable to reach an emergency contact, the individual(s) will be required to provide us with a copy of his/her photo identification and/or confirm knowledge of the family code word to the Director. The Director will also call Emergency Contacts on file to confirm their identity if the parents are unable to be reached.

Any additions, changes, or deletions to the authorized pick-up form must be made by the parent/guardian only. Identified biological parents will not be removed from forms or denied from picking up a child unless a court order prohibiting them is provided.

If someone arrives to pick up a child who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, law enforcement and the Department of Social Services will be notified.

TRACKING OF CHILDREN

All children will be accounted for as they enter and exit the facility, enter and exit a vehicle for field trips, or move from classroom to classroom within the Academy. The location of all children will be tracked through our Tracking Form.

Parents should ensure that when dropping off their children that the caregiver is fully aware that the child has entered the building/room and that the parent will be leaving. **Please do not drop your child off at the front door or classroom door and assume that the caregiver will see that your child has arrived.**

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC does carry liability insurance.

PROVISIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Child Care facilities have the option to participate in provisional employment which is an emergency hiring process. If the facility participates in this option, the parents may be notified if we have a provisional worker at the academy.

The Provisional Employment process means that employees are hired using an internet SLED catch (based on date of birth and social security number) and Central Registry of Abuse and Neglect has been returned. Employees hired using Provisional Employment are waiting for the completion of a full FBI background check.

Aspire Early Learning Academy uses the provisional hire process in the event of a staffing emergency.

CHANGE OF CLOTHING

Parents/guardians are required to provide two change of clothing sets. Clothing sets must be size and season appropriate for each child. Labeled clothing sets must include shirts, pants, undergarments, and socks. While we strive to keep everyone's items separated, our team is not responsible for unlabeled clothing items. While the Academy will strive to keep extra clothing available, we are not required to.

The Academy has the right to refuse service to families who do not provide additional clothing or pull-ups for their child/children while at the academy.

TOILET TRAINING

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

Our teaching team's goal is to begin introducing toilet training to children at the age of 2. Parents are responsible for providing pull-ups only for two-year-olds only. Parents and the teaching team will work together during this process by providing pull-ups, change of clothing, and providing consistency at home. Children must be potty trained before transitioning to the Threes/Preschool classrooms.

TELEVISION TIME

Our normal daily routine does not include television watching, but from time-to-time, we may view a television show as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator. Television consumption will not be longer than 30 minutes to 1 hour and the program will be screened prior to showing. Programs will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide children with a positive experience with increased understanding of the world.

CELL PHONE USAGE

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

POLITICS

Aspire Early Learning Academy respects everyone's freedom of speech. However, it is in the best interest of all parties that we refrain from the discussion and/or debate of political favors and/or viewpoints while on the Academy's premises. We are to maintain the integrity of a neutral environment for our children, families, and the Aspire team.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING POLICY

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to coincide with curriculum-based assessment(s), we monitor each child's achievement of developmental milestones, share observations with parents/guardians, and provide resource information as needed for further screenings, evaluations, and early intervention and treatment. The developmental screening process is a collaborative one, involving parents/guardians and done in conjunction with the child's primary care provider and health, education, and early intervention consultants. Developmental screening is conducted with written consent from the child's parent/guardian(s).

Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC believes in partnership with parents and outside agencies to strengthen and support the child's growth and development. Upon completion of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, the Director and families will meet to discuss concerns and develop a plan to connect with agencies for support referrals and resources.

Referrals could include, but are not limited to, social-emotional, behavioral, developmental, and/or mental health. Connections will be made with the appropriate agency.

Our program also partners with the following referral agencies for ongoing support and development:

Baby-net: <https://www.scdhhs.gov/resources/programs-and-initiatives/babynet>

Child Care Resource and Referrals: <https://www.childcareservices.org/>

Beginnings SC: www.SCBegin.org

SC Child Care Inclusion Collaborative: www.scinclusion.org

SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs: www.ddsn.sc.gov

SC Department of Mental Health: www.scdmh.net

Behavioral and Mental Health Services in South Carolina:
<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/stateprofiles-providers/south-carolina/index.html>

CULTURAL AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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

Aspire Early Learning Academy will work with parents and translators to communicate with children whose primary language is not English. If difficulty with communication arises, the Academy and family will meet to develop training and obtain additional resources for our team to eliminate communication barriers.

Aspire Early Learning Academy will provide support for children of dual language learning building social and cultural competence, improved communication abilities and strengthened cognitive and memory processes. Our team will implement a print rich environment with both languages, practice using the language with the students in the child's classroom, and/or strategize with the family to incorporate activities in the classroom to support the dual language learner.

TRANSITIONS POLICY

Children's transition in childcare should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with our students to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Transition from home to center

Prior to a child's first day, families will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At this time, please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

Transition between learning programs

Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program. Children will only be transferred once per year to another program/class within

the Academy. Transitions generally occur in August and the student will remain with that teacher for one academic year. Exceptions may be made in January to accommodate a student’s developmental level.

Transition to elementary school

Transition activities such as a field trip to a local elementary school, creating a mural of special friends and special times at our center will be part of your child’s education at our center. We will provide you with information on local schools, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary school.

EMPLOYEE QUALIFICATIONS & STAFFING

Team Qualifications

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

Position Title	Education/Certification	Experience
Teacher	Child Development Associate Credential	6 months - 1 year
Teacher Assistant	Early Childhood Development 101	6 months

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

We strongly discourage families from entering employment arrangements with staff (i.e., babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected with or sanctioned by Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC.

Child to Staff Ratios

Children are always supervised. All team members receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:

Age	Child to Staff	Maximum Group Size
13-24 months	<u>6 to 1</u>	<u>6</u>

2-year-olds	<u>8 to 1</u>	<u>12</u>
3-year-olds	<u>11 to 1</u>	<u>11</u>
4-year-olds	<u>16 to 1</u>	<u>14</u>
First Steps 4K	<u>10 to 1</u>	<u>10</u>

(A Parent Handbook signature form is provided in the Enrollment Packet)

ASPIRE EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY, LLC

Acknowledgement of Parent Handbook

I am signing below to confirm that I have received the Parent Handbook for Aspire Early Learning Academy, LLC and it is my responsibility to review it. I am also confirming that I am aware that the Parent Handbook is located on the company’s website.

Enrolled Child’s Name

Parent/Employee’s Name

Parent/Employee’s Signature

Today’s Date