

Parent Handbook



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Bethel Child Care Services, Inc.

Revised

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Introduction

Since 1987 Bethel Child Care Services has provided services in Massachusetts for:

- ★ Parents
- ★ Family Child Care Providers
- ★ Children

Bethel Child Care Services has always recognized the importance of cooperation and involvement of the family and the provider in a child's childcare experience and is committed to high quality early education and care.

Bethel Child Care Services makes monthly visits to the child care provider's home to provide the following for your child:

- ★ Developmentally appropriate workshops for parents and providers
- ★ Comprehensive curriculum and guidance programs that focus on literacy, health, nutrition, and social interaction
- ★ Nutrition training and Menu supervision
- ★ Professionalism
- ★ Early Intervention referrals

Bethel Child Care Services has offices in Greater Lowell, Northshore, Lawrence, Springfield, and Boston. Approximately 600 children are currently receiving quality care in over 175 licensed child care provider's homes serviced and trained by Bethel.

Bethel Child Care Services is active in four Community Partnerships and actively working in each community to bring together quality services for child care providers and the parents they serve. All providers signed with Bethel are licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care.

Bethel is a Family Child Care System. We subcontract with licensed providers which we refer to you for your child care needs. Bethel Child Care Services does not license these homes, but we do provide training, assistance, referrals, monthly visits, and curriculum programs to contracted providers.

Bethel Child Care Services has been active in raising the standard of quality of care by assisting providers in obtaining degrees in Early Childhood Education, Child Development Associates Certification (CDA), NAFCC Accreditation and developmental training. Currently many of the agency's providers have reached these levels of excellence in childcare. Bethel is committed to ensuring that all children in the program receive the best quality care possible and remains committed to the importance of providing children with the best start for a productive future.

This handbook was developed to assist parents and providers with needed information regarding Bethel Child Care Services' regulations and policies that pertain to the care of your child. It is our hope that your experience with Bethel will prove to be a positive one. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have regarding any of our policies. If you need clarification on any of the information in this handbook, please feel free to contact the office. At the end of this handbook you will find a directory listing.

Mission Statement

Bethel Child Care Services' goal is to promote quality, affordable child care for all children in Massachusetts. This is accomplished by:

- ✓ Providing Child Care Provider trainings and workshops.
- ✓ Promoting and supporting higher education for Providers.
- ✓ Supplying Providers with curriculum programs to use with the children.

Bethel Child Care Services strives to ensure that all children will:

- ✓ Be treated with respect.
- ✓ Benefit from Bethel's curriculum programs that are rich in literacy development.
- ✓ Be cared for in a safe, nurturing environment.



Absences

Please notify your child's provider before 8:00 am if your child is going to be absent from care. For parents on a voucher, Bethel Child Care Services must call your voucher counselor when you have incurred three unexcused absences. This can result in termination of your voucher. We must also notify your voucher counselor of ten excused absences in a month, which can also result in termination of care, unless the absences are reported.

Parents are allowed a ten day vacation each year; however the provider should be notified of vacation plans in advance. **Parents are required to pay all parent fees during absences and vacations** in order to hold their slots.

If your provider goes on vacation or is closed, you can call our office for a back up provider. If you use a back up provider, you will still need to pay your parent fee.

If your child will be absent due to an extended illness (chicken pox, or other contagious disease) or hospitalization, it is important to contact your provider immediately.

Activities

The goal of Bethel Child Care Services, Inc. is to provide your child with the best learning experience possible. Children will learn through a variety of stimulating activities developed to increase self-esteem, build readiness skills and create positive communication skills. Curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate practices and is a literacy based curriculum.

Bethel Child Care Services promotes literacy by encouraging reading to children by providers and parents. Bethel promotes language development. In addition to curriculum geared to building literacy skills, we also encourage activities that include puzzles, books, dramatic play, music, arts and crafts, outdoor play, number and letter recognition. Bethel promotes multicultural activities and awareness.

Bethel Child Care Services has many books, curriculum programs and activities that are made available to the providers for your children.

We encourage you to ask your provider what activities they do each day. Providers should make the child's family an active part of their learning experience. If you are unsure or have any questions about your child's day care activities or program, please contact Bethel Child Care Services, and we will address your questions.

Bethel Child Care providers perform annual educational assessments on children 2.5 to 5 years of age. These assessments are designed to gauge your child's growth and progress in various learning areas.

Discipline

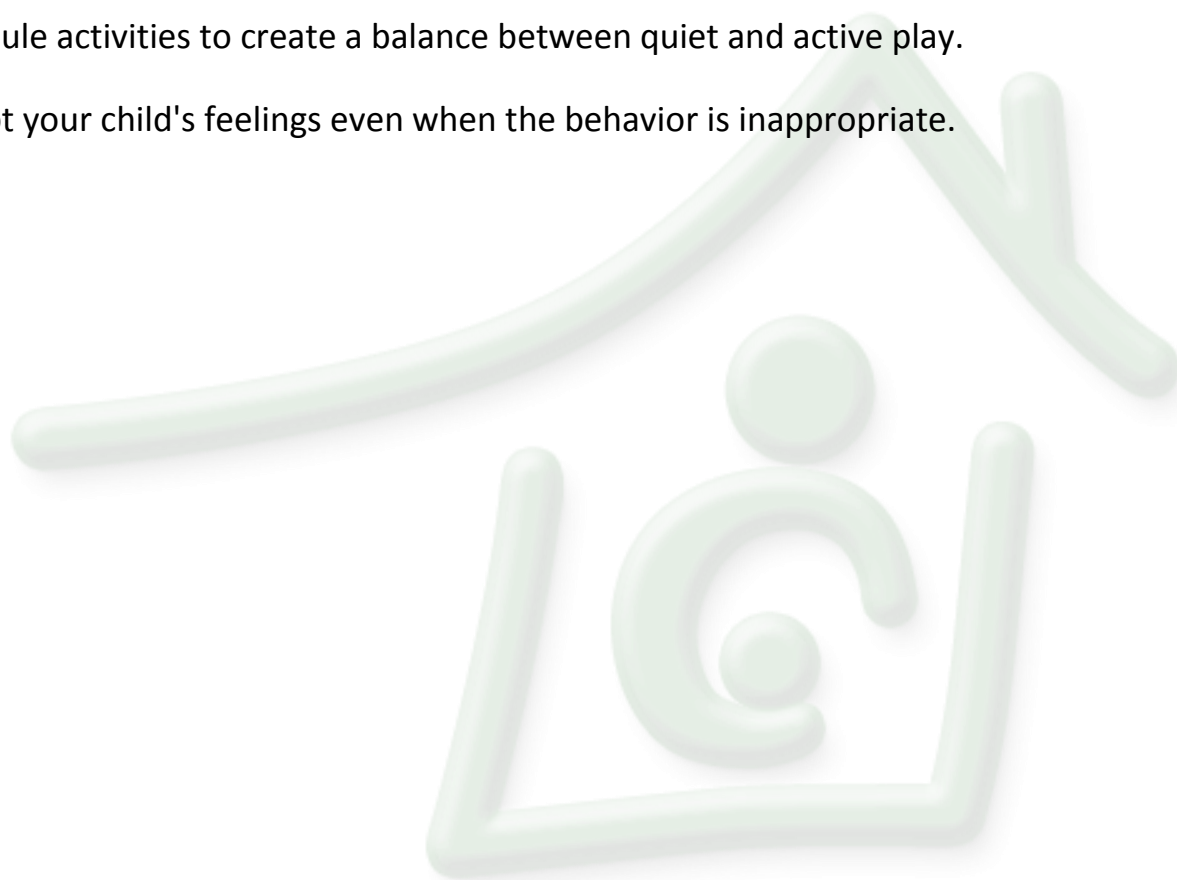
The purpose of discipline is to train a child. Therefore all guidance and discipline will be taught in a nurturing manner. Discipline is most effective when it is consistent and a team effort exists between the provider and parent.

Bethel Child Care Services provides training on recognizing age appropriate behaviors. Bethel teaches methods and guidance to encourage children to develop self-control. All guidance is based on age appropriate expectations on the individual child in care.

Providers are encouraged and trained to foster positive self-esteem in the children in their care. All actions by children are kept in confidence and discussed only with the parent or Bethel representative if needed.

Providers are encouraged to:

- Have age-appropriate expectations about children's behavior.
- Acknowledge and Encourage appropriate behavior rather than focusing on inappropriate behavior.
- Remember, it is what the child is doing that is the problem, not the child.
- State rules in positive terms
- Be consistent
- Redirect the younger child to another, more appropriate activity.
- Give children choices when possible
- Schedule activities to create a balance between quiet and active play.
- Accept your child's feelings even when the behavior is inappropriate.



Drop Off and Pick Up

Providers plan a variety of activities for all the children in their care. Schedules and structures are important in the lives of children. Disruptions can result in a number of problems throughout the day. Keeping the same schedule every day is important to you, your child, and the provider. Please try to give the provider advanced notice when you are running late or if your child will be absent from the program.

No one other than the parent(s) or designated person(s) will be allowed to pick up your child without prior notice or arrangement. If a new person picks up your child he or she will be required to furnish the provider with valid identification.

Parents should also note that the providers are not allowed to release a child to anyone including a parent if that person appears in any way to be impaired due to alcohol or substance use. In this case the parent or emergency person will be contacted.

Late Pick Up:

Providers are in the business to provide your child with the best quality care available, however they do have other responsibilities and families outside of day care and should be given the courtesy of picking up your children on time. If you are scheduled from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, please observe the contracted hours. Please give advance notice whenever possible if you are going to be late. Occasionally events occur which may prevent you from picking up your child on time. Remember to call the provider and try to make arrangements for a back up person to pick up your child. If you are running late in the morning, please call your provider so that she can schedule her activities accordingly.

Providers can charge a late fee. Please discuss the fee amount with your child's provider.



Emergencies

All day care homes are required by law to keep a clearly charted plan of action in case of emergencies posted by the phone and exit. Fire drills are conducted monthly and smoke detectors checked regularly.

All emergency phone numbers will be posted. Please take a moment to review this information with your child's provider. All providers are trained in First Aid and CPR. They are required to keep this certification current yearly.

If your child needs immediate medical attention, you will be contacted and if you are unable to be reached the child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest hospital. The child care provider or agency representative will stay with your child at all times until you arrive.

It is absolutely necessary that you let providers know how to reach you at all times in the event of an emergency. Therefore if you are going to be somewhere different than your regular daily schedule, you must give an alternate emergency number to the provider.

Fees

All assessed fees are to be paid on a timely basis. Fees are assessed by your income and the rates are set by the State. It is your responsibility to pay your fees one week in advance of care. Unless otherwise agreed upon, your fees should be sent directly to our office on a weekly basis.

Payment for the first week of care and a deposit equal to the last week of care must be submitted BEFORE care can begin for your child.

It is your responsibility as a parent to renew your voucher on time and to make adjustments in your payments if your fees increase or decrease. Failure to pay fees will result in a two week notice of termination sent to you. At that time you will have two weeks to catch up or make arrangements to pay back fees. Failure to do this will result in termination from the program.

If circumstances change in your home (change of job, change in family situation, new child etc), you should notify your voucher counselor immediately so that your fees can be adjusted accordingly. Fees may be dropped off at one of our local offices or mailed to the following:

Bethel Child Care Services
665 Rogers Street
Lowell, MA 01852

Providers can charge late fees when your child is in care over and above your contracted hours. Typically, providers charge \$5.00 for every 15 minutes that you are late. Every effort should be made to pick up and drop off your child on time.

Field Trips

Field trips will take place whenever possible. Parents will be notified of any outing taking place outside of the provider's home. Trips may include the park, zoo, museums and other child related places.

A field trip permission slip must be signed by the parents before your child will be allowed to go on the trip.

Forms

All forms must be completed at intake and updated annually. Parents are required to notify the office or provider with any changes of address, employment or phone numbers as soon as possible. It is imperative that you can be contacted at all times or that an emergency person can be contacted in your absence.

The following forms must be completed:

- Signed parent contract agreement
- Authorization of emergency medical care
- A completed medical form from child's doctor
- Field trip permission
- Fee Agreement
- Contracted/Community Partnership Intake Form or Voucher
- Authorization for anyone other than parent(s) to pick up your child

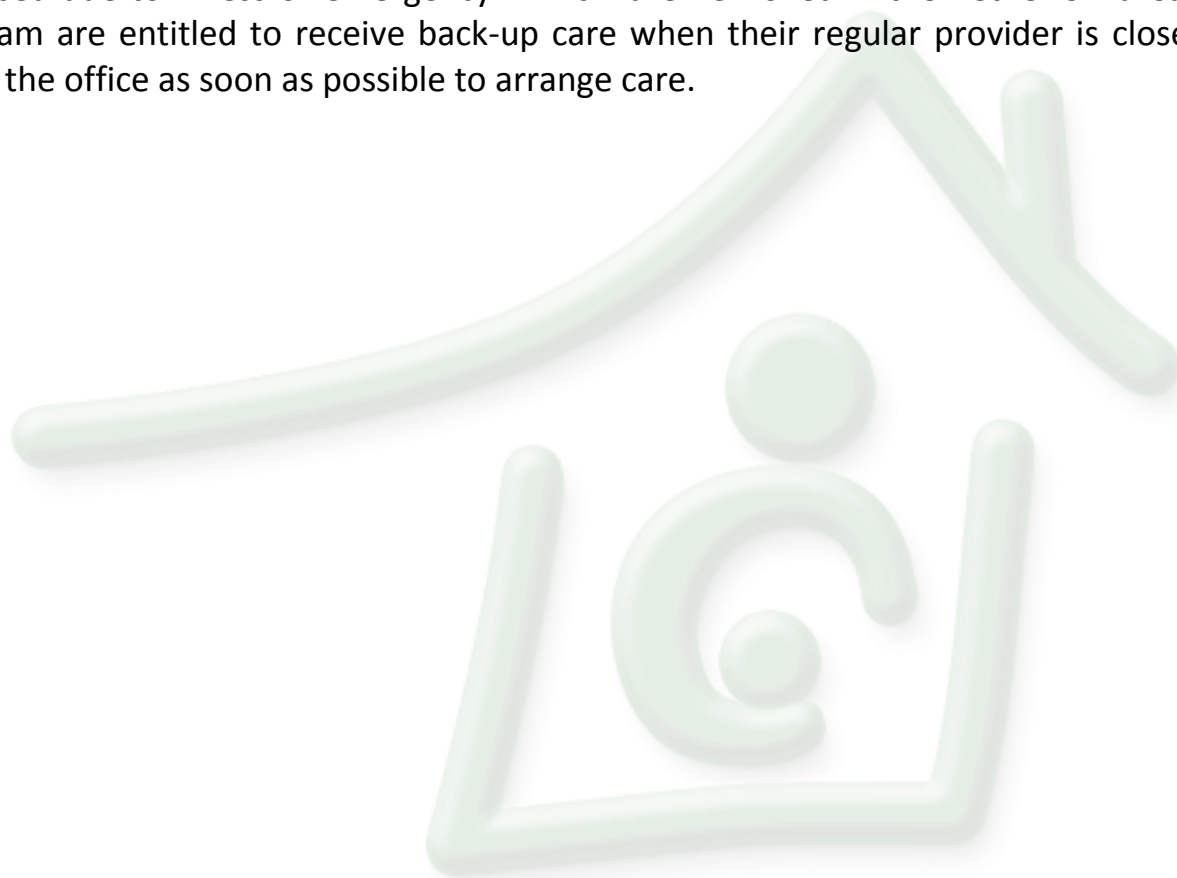
Any changes in policies or any updates pertaining to information in the handbook such as changes in rates, hours of operation or late fees will be given to parents at least two weeks in advance. Parents must also give providers a two-week notice when changes are being made such as drop off or pick up times.

Holidays and Vacations

The following are holidays on which Bethel Child Care Services and its providers are closed:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Patriot's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day After Thanksgiving: In-House Training
- Christmas Day

Please note that providers may also take up to 10 vacation days a year. Providers may also need to take time off for illness or emergencies. Parents should be given a ten day notice prior to a scheduled vacation by the provider. Parents will be notified as early as possible if a provider is closed due to illness or emergency. All children enrolled in the Bethel Child Care Services program are entitled to receive back-up care when their regular provider is closed. Please contact the office as soon as possible to arrange care.



Illness and Medication

Please do not send a child/children to care when they are sick. Please do not send your child if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

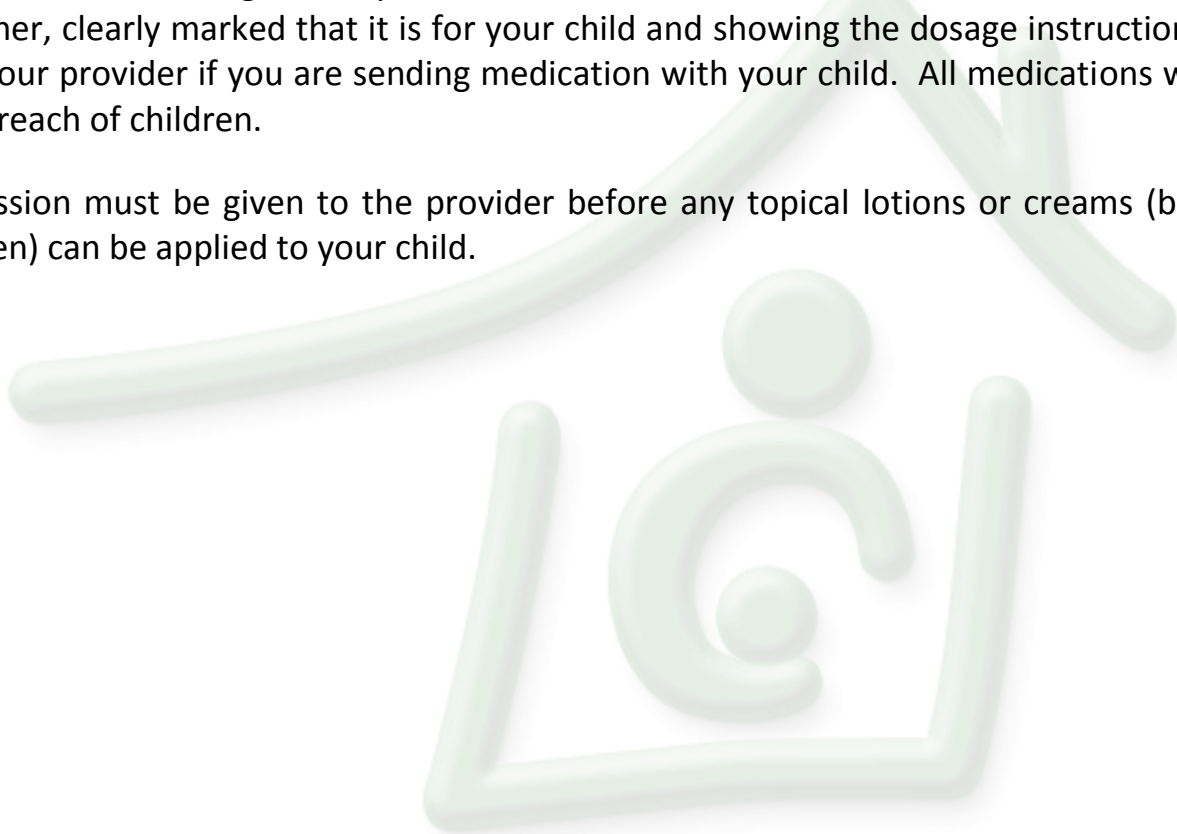
- Rash (contagious)
- Fever (100 F./higher) Child has to be fever free for at least 24 hours.
- Runny nose with colored discharge
- Diarrhea
- Discharge from eyes or ears
- Vomiting
- Communicable disease (chicken pox, conjunctivitis, measles, influenza, etc)

If your child develops any of the above symptoms while in care, you will be required to pick him/her up immediately. If your child is not picked up within an hour, your emergency contact will be called. A doctor must see your child and a letter submitted stating when your child can return to care.

Medication

If your child is taking medication, please be sure to sign a Release to Administer Medication form. Medications cannot be given to your child without it. Medication also has to be in the original container, clearly marked that it is for your child and showing the dosage instructions. Please notify your provider if you are sending medication with your child. All medications will be kept out of reach of children.

Written permission must be given to the provider before any topical lotions or creams (bug spray, sunscreen) can be applied to your child.



Initial Intake/Registration Policies

All parents will be required to complete necessary forms at an initial intake. At this time parents can meet with the provider to discuss the program. No child will be able to start unless all of the forms pertaining to your child's care are completed. Parents will be given two weeks to have a medical form from your child's doctor completed. If the form is not received within a week a letter must be submitted stating when the child will be seen. Failure to provide a completed medical form will result in the child's suspension from care until the medical form is completed.

Parents are also required to pay a deposit of the first and last week's parent fee for your child/children. If your account is past due or fees are not up to date the deposit will be applied to any fees owed.

Items Supplied by Parents

You will need to provide the following items for the child/children:

- ✓ Nap/Rest blanket (pillow if your child uses one)
- ✓ A complete set of clothing at all times
- ✓ Proper outerwear for outside play
- ✓ Diaper (disposable), wipes, and ointment (if needed)
- ✓ Empty bottles
- ✓ Summer Only: Swimsuit, towel, sunscreen, insect repellent

Clearly label all your child's belongings.

Personal possessions:

Please note that the provider will not be responsible for toys, jewelry, or possessions from home. If your child brings a toy, he/she will be required to share. If problems occur then the possession will not be allowed in day care. Parents, please do not allow children to bring in violent toys such as guns or swords. These types of toys will not be allowed under any circumstances.

Meals

Bethel Child Care Services' providers are contracted with a USDA food program. This program is an extension of the Federal School Lunch program. It allows for providers' to be reimbursed for meals served that are in compliance with the USDA approved meal patterns. It ensures that your child is receiving well-planned, nutritional meals and snacks, which meet specific guidelines. All providers are required to submit weekly menus. If you have any questions regarding your child's meals or eating habits, please feel free to talk to your provider or the office.

Providers should not request that Parents supply snacks or food items for their day care. As part of this program, your child is encouraged to try new foods; however your child will never be forced to eat food that is prepared.

Your provider receives ongoing training on nutrition and ways to encourage children to eat healthy. If you are aware of any food allergies, it is important to bring them to the attention of the Provider.

All parents are required to submit a meal enrollment form for each child. Please see your provider to complete this form. Providers may also request that the Parents supply an income eligible statement to assist your provider in receiving a higher reimbursement rate for the foods served to your child. All income statements are kept locked in a confidential file.

Providers may make their weekly menu plan available to the parents so that you are aware what is served each day.

Naptime

Family Child Care Providers require a rest period or quiet time after lunch for the children. Most children are up early in the morning and need that time to rest. Children are not required to sleep. They may lie quietly, look at books, or do a quiet activity so they do not disturb children who are sleeping.

Your child will be given his/her own mat or sleeping bag to sleep on. If your child is under two, he/she will be put into his/her own crib or portable crib to sleep. If your child has a special blanket or stuffed animal that they sleep with you will need to supply it.

No baby or toddler will be put to bed with a bottle. Providers will always be on the same floor as sleeping children, and will check on them every 15 minutes.

SIDS Notice: As required by the state, all Bethel Child Care Providers are trained in proper sleep methods for infants to minimize the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Feel free to ask your provider for assistance in avoiding this at home.

Problems and Concerns Procedure

If you have a concern about your child's care, you may address it directly with your provider. You may also contact Bethel Child Care Services (see list in back). A Bethel outreach worker is only in your provider's home once a month to provide on-going training, therefore if any concerns arise you need to make us aware of it so that we can look into it immediately.

All concerns and problems will be taken seriously and your Bethel representative will act as a liaison to try to remedy the situation.

All complaints are investigated immediately and a provider could be suspended or terminated with Bethel depending on the outcome of the investigation. If it is a licensing issue, Bethel Child Care Services' representative will notify the State licensing agency (Department of Early Education and Care) immediately and work together with the licensor to help rectify the problem.

Your child's safety and well-being are our greatest concern. We strive to bring the providers signed with our system the latest training and guidance regarding child development issues. We feel that your child's child care experience is a partnership between you and the care giver. Bethel will do all we can to encourage and implement that cooperation. We will not tolerate or refer any provider that we find in violation of any State licensing regulations, or with a record of complaints from parents.

Snow Day Policy

Bethel Child Care Services' providers do not close on snow days. Individual transportation services may decide that the road conditions are unsafe and cancel transportation. Bethel providers do not have to leave their homes, so if a parent can get the child to the provider, then care will be provided.

The only exception to the above policy is if the State of Massachusetts declares a state of emergency, and bans vehicles from the road, then providers would be closed. However, if parents are considered necessary personnel (nurses, doctors, fire and police etc.) and the provider has heat, electricity, and phone service and the parent can get to the provider's home, then the provider would accept the child.

Please note that your Parent fee is still due for such days!

Termination from Program

All parents are required to give a two week notice of termination to the provider or agency in writing. Failure to abide by this policy may result in the loss of deposit.

Providers are required to give you a two week notice if for any reason care for your child can no longer be provided. However, sometimes it is in the child's best interest to be placed immediately elsewhere. Each case will be determined on an individual basis. Bethel Child Care Services will do everything possible to assist you in finding alternative care.

Some causes for termination are:

- Continually late to pick up your child
- Failure to pay parent fees or make arrangements for payments
- Three unexcused absences within a month
- Over ten excused absences within a month
- Not home when your child is dropped off by transportation.

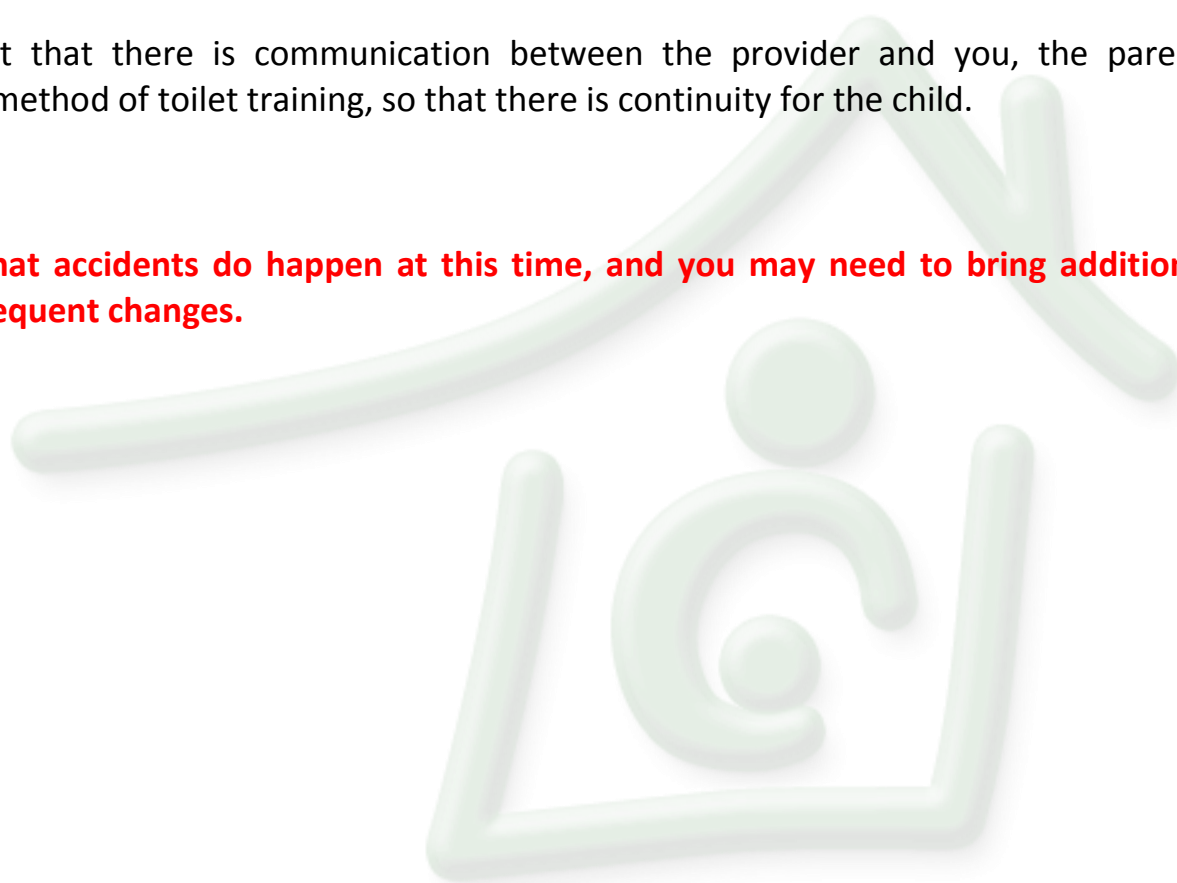
Bethel Child Care Services will try to work with sincere parents to ensure the continuation of care for your child.

Toilet Training

When your child shows readiness for toilet training, the provider will discuss the best method to use with you. Toilet training will be done in a relaxing non-punitive manner.

It is important that there is communication between the provider and you, the parent, regarding the method of toilet training, so that there is continuity for the child.

Please note that accidents do happen at this time, and you may need to bring additional clothing for frequent changes.



Transportation

Bethel Child Care Services contracts with over twenty independent transportation companies to provide transportation services for children contracted with our agency. All drivers are licensed in accordance with Massachusetts State Registry regulations for school transport. All children are required to be in car seats or seat belts according to age and size. No child should be transported longer than 45 minutes.

Transportation for all new clients must be requested at least two days prior to start. You must call the office and you will be given the names of transportation services in your area. In some cases you will be required to contact the transportation services; in others the transportation service will contact you. In either case you will be required to sign a contract with the transportation service. You will be required to give the service the following information:

- ✓ Pick up and drop off locations
- ✓ Pick up and drop off times
- ✓ Names of authorized persons to receive your child off the van.
- ✓ Emergency numbers

Transportation services will try their best to accommodate your requested times, however the Transportation Companies service hundreds of clients and you may have to be flexible. In some rare situations, transportation service may not be available to accommodate your needs.

The Transportation Companies that subcontract with Bethel set their own policies. They are on a tight schedule and cannot wait longer than 3 minutes for your child. If your child is going to be absent from care, you should notify your driver by 5am. If a driver repeatedly comes to pick up your child with no response, your transportation may be suspended or terminated.

In bad weather transportation may be closed. **Usually if schools are closed in your area, then transportation is also closed.** Your child's safety is the top priority. Patience needs to be displayed during bad weather; drivers may run late due to road conditions or traffic.

Transportation Companies should never charge you any extra fees for transporting your child as provided in your voucher. If any Company requests additional fee, then you should notify Bethel Child Care Services immediately.

Bethel Child Care Services does quarterly inspections of the vans used to transport children contracted with us. However, we do not see the vans on a day to day basis. If you have any concerns about your child's transportation, please call Bethel Child Care Services' office and we will look into it immediately.

Information Directory

Bethel Child Care Services, Inc.

Main Office

665 Rogers Street
Lowell, MA 01852

Phone: 978-458-6577

FAX: 978-441-1137

Boston Office

376 Norfolk Street
Boston, MA 02124

Phone: 617-822-7506

FAX: 617-506-6709

Springfield Office

1655 Main Street, #503
Springfield, MA 01103

Phone: 413-737-4777

FAX: 413-306-6068

Lawrence Office

70 Salem Street
Lawrence, MA 01843

Phone: 978-327-6578

FAX: 978-327-6580

Toll-Free calls:

1-800-244-8758

Visit us on the internet at:

www.bethelccs.com