



2016/2017

MyFirstPlace Parent Handbook

Revised August 2016

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Mission Statement

At MyFirstPlace we care about your child's mind, body and soul!

Philosophy

We believe in a holistic approach to care. We care for your child's mind with learning activities, fuel their body with healthy organic food, and encourage their zest for life by recognizing their individuality and helping to build self-confidence. We never try to be replacements for parents. We see ourselves as your partners in their care.

At MyFirstPlace, we believe communication, music and movement are very important to your child's development. Arts and crafts are also important components of the curriculum. Additionally, we believe that children need to develop skills to prepare them for school and a lifetime of learning.

We accept children starting at three months of age through preschool age.

The Reggio Emilia Approach

At MyFirstPlace, we follow the fundamental approach of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. In adhering to this approach, we consider children as active participants in their own learning; use the environment as another educator, providing many materials for children to manipulate and explore through hands-on experiences; involving parents to assist in the learning process by collaborating with them, hosting events and conferences, and having special lectures; as well as using teacher observations as a way to document daily life at school.

Objectives

It is our goal to provide the best quality of care for your child in a safe, healthy, loving, nurturing, and stimulating environment. Our program is designed to:

1. Meet the needs of both the parent and the child.
2. Consistently provide safe, healthy and sanitary conditions.
3. Help children learn and develop in a happy, loving, atmosphere at their own developmental pace.
4. Help parent and child feel secure and comfortable.
5. Maintain effective communication with parents.
6. Assist children in exploring their surroundings and natural environment.
7. Help children feel secure and confident during the potty training process.

Hours of Operation

Our regular business working hours are M-F 8:00 am to 6:00 pm for full time students, and M-F 8:30 am to 1:30 pm for the preschool half-day program.

Sign In/Sign Out

It is the parent's responsibility to sign their child in and out everyday. Please sign your entire name, not just your initials. Please let a teacher or staff member know if someone else will be picking up your child at the end of the day. This person must be authorized by the responsible party in advance, and will be required to show a photo ID.

Drop-Off

Please sign your child in during drop off time.

For children attending the full day program, and who are only taking one nap per day, we encourage that they be dropped off by 11:00 am. This is to ensure a smooth transition into lunch and naptime, and so that it doesn't disrupt the rest of the class while we go through this process.

For infants, we encourage that they be dropped off before 10:00 am, to ensure a smooth transition into their first nap.

Due to the emotional nature of leaving a child, we ask that when you bring your child in the morning you be as quick as possible in your departure. It is much easier on the child if the impending separation is not long and drawn out. Lastly, please communicate with the teachers about how your child's previous night was at home, so that we can better attend to their needs during the day.

Pick-Up

Please sign your child out at the end of the day.

We ask that children who are taking one nap per day be picked up after 3:00 pm, as your child may still be sleeping. For children who are on a two-nap schedule, we encourage parents to pick them up before 3:00 pm or after 5:00 pm, so that their afternoon nap is not disrupted. We understand that this may not always be the case, due to appointments, etc., but ask that you please let a staff member know in advance if you will be dropping off/picking up your child/ren outside of the recommended times.

Please be on time for pick up. Children start to worry when they feel you have forgotten them. Please collect all your child's belongings from their cubby, including artwork, at pick up time. Please take the time to communicate with the teachers regarding how your child's day was. If anything out of the ordinary happened, a teacher/staff member will communicate it to you.

Please call the school to notify us if you are running late or if an emergency has arisen and you won't be able to pick up your child by 1:30 pm (for half-day program) or 6:00 pm (for full-day program).

No child will be released to a person who is not authorized by the parent on the pickup list or emergency card. We must have a written authorization for changes in this regard, including a description of the person responsible for your child. On those special occasions where a different adult is picking up a child, please call the school to be sure they have been picked up on time. A valid driver's license or current picture ID will be requested before a child is dismissed from school by anyone. Anyone other than a parent/guardian picking up a child must be 18 or older. Please inform grandparents, friends, and relatives of this policy to avoid any confusion.

Regular Attendance

Children can benefit from the opportunities offered by the school when they attend regularly. Therefore, consistent and prompt attendance is advised. If your child will be late or absent, please notify the school no later than your child's regular arriving time in the morning. While it is understandable that you may want to spend days off, vacations, and holidays with your child, we ask that you inform us of these absences in advance.

MyFirstPlace will be closed on major holidays/staff development days, which will be announced ahead of time.

Clothing

Please bring your child/ren in clean clothes and ready for the day. If your child is still in diapers make sure they come in a new and clean diaper. Dress your child in clothing appropriate for the weather, including shoes and socks. Please do not send your child in their dress clothes, as we will be playing and they may get dirty. Make sure to bring an extra set of clothing for your child including socks and underwear. Please bring clothes that pertain to the season. For a child who is ready to be potty trained, bottoms that are easy to pull up and down for successful potty experiences is best.

Please make sure to **label ALL of your child's belongings**, including all clothing, jackets, shoes and food.

Toilet Learning/Diaper Supplies (must bring as needed)

The school will provide toilet learning as needed. In order for toilet learning to work, *parents must be able to assist their children at home on a consistent basis*, to encourage and continue the progress they make at preschool. MyFirstPlace will work with each child in a patient and nurturing way to make the child feel secure and confident. We will only begin this process when we believe the child is ready. Some doctors and professionals believe that a child is mentally and physically ready between the ages of two and half and three years old, but each child is different and will show their own signs of being ready.

For each child, please bring a box of flushable wipes, regular wipes, enough clothing for the week (including extra socks and an extra pair of shoes), and adequate diapers/pull ups to be left at school. Make sure that these items are always replenished in a timely fashion. Have all items marked with the child's name. Also, please make sure to provide a sealable bag for us to send home soiled clothing. We will also provide a detailed list of items to bring before the child's first day of attendance.

Please keep in mind that for the children who are not responding well to the initial toilet learning experience, we will postpone the process until they show more signs of readiness. At this point, we recommend that parents talk to the pediatrician and encourage the child to use the potty at home. We will only start the toilet learning process with children who have had success using the potty at home.

Toys and Accessories

Please do not let your child bring toys to school. We say this because personal toys can become a source of conflict amongst the children. A stuffed animal that will only be used at naptime is suitable. If any other items are brought they will be put away and sent home when the

child/ren leave for the day. MyFirstPlace will not assume any responsibility for loss or damage to your child/ren's personal items.

When bringing your child with hair clips/jewelry please make sure that items are large enough that they won't be a choking hazard.

We are a violence-free site. No toy guns or other toy weapons will be allowed at our facility.

Health and Illness

Your child's health is very important to us. Upon enrollment, parents will be asked to provide an updated immunization form.

MyFirstPlace can **ONLY ACCEPT CHILDREN IN GOOD HEALTH**. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Parents have the obligation to inform the director if your child has been exposed to any viruses, such as measles, tuberculosis, roseola, pink eye/eye infection and hand mouth and foot disease. We will notify you if your child has been exposed to a contagious illness due to another child while at school. In the event that this happens, parents must provide proof that a test has been done and your child has been cleared. Children cannot attend MyFirstPlace without clearance.

Unexplained Rash

If your child develops an unexplained rash we ask that they be picked up and seen by their pediatrician. We take this matter very seriously because rashes can sometimes be associated with very contagious viruses, such as hand mouth and foot disease, roseola, etc. Children cannot return to school until the rash has cleared and we have a clearance note from your pediatrician.

Fever

Normal temperature is 98.6. If a child has a temperature higher than this we consider it a fever. If your child develops a fever while at school a parent/guardian will be called and informed. You will be responsible to pick up your child ASAP. We do not administer any fever-reducing medications without parents' permission. If medication is administered, you are still required to pick up your child ASAP.

Head Cold/Runny Nose/Coughing

Runny noses are common throughout certain times of the year, and can spread easily. If your child has a head cold, runny nose or cough we ask that you consult your pediatrician before

sending them to school. If your child is unusually tired, continuously coughing/sneezing and has green mucus we consider them contagious and ask that they stay home.

Diarrhea/Vomiting

If your child has 3 or more loose stools in 24 hours and/or has vomited 2 or more times in 24 hours we ask that you please keep them home. If this occurs while at school we will contact a parent/guardian to have your child picked up.

Allergies

If your child has any allergies you are required to leave at least 1 EpiPen on site. We also request that you also keep Benadryl or any other medications prescribed on site, with the doctor's prescription and dose amount to be given in the event of an emergency.

Head Lice

If your child is found with head lice and/or nits s/he must be picked up from school immediately, and cannot return to school until they are lice and nit free. All parents will be notified in the event that one child is found with head lice/nits, and we will have a lice check daily until the problem has cleared.

Asthma/Nebulizer Treatment/Inhaler

If your child has been diagnosed with asthma by his/her pediatrician, we require you to have a Nebulizer Care Consent Form on file, as well as the Parent Consent for Administration of Medications and Medication Chart Form. If your child uses an inhaler, we ask that one be kept on site, along with a prescription, to use if necessary. If a nebulizer treatment should be administered during school hours, we ask that parents hand the medication to a teacher/staff member in a Ziploc bag, with the prescription from the pediatrician.

Medications

Do not place medications of any sort in your child's lunchbox, backpack, etc. Hand any medications to a teacher/staff member in a Ziploc bag with a copy of the prescription from the pediatrician.

Do not bring your child/ren in if they have any kind of fever, vomiting, diarrhea, unexplainable rash, head lice, discharge or other obvious signs of illness. When sending medication with your child/ren please, fill out the medication request form. *All prescribed medication must come with a label with information of the doctor, dose amount, description of medication, child's name, and administration instructions.* Medications must be given to a staff member and may not be stored in your child's cubby or lunch box. Medication will be disposed of if it is not picked up by

the parent on Friday of each week. Please bring the medication in a labeled bag with a dosage spoon. If your child is sent home due to illness s/he may only return to school the next day if all the symptoms are clearly gone. In the case of head lice the child must be nit-free to return to school. In the event of an accident or illness you will be notified immediately and will be expected to pick up your child/ren from school promptly. Upon notification, you must make arrangements to have the child picked up within 30 minutes. If you cannot be reached, your additional contacts will then be called in the order you list them to pick up your child.

MyFirstPlace is not responsible to take care of sick children. Please have backup plans for childcare in the event that your child gets sent home or is unable to attend school that day.

Injuries and Accidents

Every effort is made to ensure the safety of your child. Unfortunately, minor accidents do occur. Each staff member is CPR/Emergency First Aid trained. When a simple injury occurs, the staff member on duty will care for your child and a “Boo-Boo Report” will be filled out and sent home that day. We always inform parents at the end of the day of any injuries, big or small. If the injury needs medical attention we will attempt to contact the parents/guardians of the child. If you cannot be reached in the event of an emergency your child will be transported to the doctor/hospital listed in your enrollment packet.

We ask that parents inform us at drop off or by email if a child has had an accident at home, causing a cut, scrape, bruise, etc.

Children’s Schedules and Meals

Please give your child breakfast in the morning before coming to school. For those who don’t have a special diet, we will provide a healthy hot lunch, along with the option of a hot dinner for an extra fee. However, if your child attends our full time program, please pack a lunchbox (and icepack) with healthy snacks (at least four snacks total) for your child to be provided throughout the day. If your child is attending our half-day program, please pack at least 2 snacks to be provided throughout the day.

If your child is on a special diet and will not eat or drink the beverages here at school, you will be required to bring your child a nutritious meal from home. Parents who have children with identified food allergies should provide alternative snacks and meals.

Please make sure to label all lunchboxes, Tupperware and snacks.

If we happen to have a child attending our school who has serious allergies to certain foods, we will inform ALL parents to refrain from packing those specific foods.

Children with serious food allergies must have at least 1 EpiPen onsite.

****PLEASE ADVISE US OF ANY ALLERGIES YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE.****

Parent Involvement

Here at MyFirstPlace, we believe that parent involvement is key in creating our school's community and enhancing each child's educational experience. We welcome parents to volunteer and participate in a variety of ways offered:

- Attending special events and celebrations
- Reading all communications from the teachers and directors
- Sharing special celebrations in the classroom
- Sharing talents by helping with projects or activities in the classroom
- Participate in parent/teacher conferences
- Planning and participating in teacher appreciation days

Child Custody

MyFirstPlace has no legal authority to refuse either parent the right to pick up their child unless a court has granted temporary or permanent custody to one parent or to a third party. MyFirstPlace will not voluntarily become involved in child custody suits. We must have a copy of any court-dictated arrangements regarding your child.

Suspected Child Abuse

The State of California requires that all members of a day care or preschool institution be on the lookout for, and report to the state, any and all cases of suspected abuse.

Birthdays and Special Occasions

Birthdays are very special to children, and we enjoy celebrating them in the classroom. Parents are welcome to send healthy treats to share with their child/ren's friends on birthdays, or other special occasions. Please let us know in advance if you will be bringing treats.

When a birthday or special event occurs, snacks brought from home may be substituted for celebratory treats.

Please be aware of what you bring for any celebration and ensure that it is age-appropriate.

Conflict Resolution

At MyFirstPlace, our goal is for children to respect and consider others and their environment, while learning to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. Teachers offer guidance and support in aiming to achieve this goal.

We believe that conflict resolution correlates to a respectful image of the child, to setting limits, to a child's development, as well as to our developing relationships. This process takes time. Because children at this age are still learning how to socialize and be apart of a community, conflicts become learning opportunities for problem solving, self-regulation, and acquiring language and social skills.

When a conflict arises, teachers will first assess the situation, then calm the situation by separating children, taking care of an injury, offering water and/or a tissue, and encouraging children to use their words to express problems and feelings. Teachers then help mediate while each child has an opportunity to explain what happened.

Discipline means guidance in the form of helping children change undesirable behavior into more acceptable, satisfying behavior. Guidance is a process. It is our policy that discipline be in the form of guidance that improves, strengthens, molds and helps a child. For that to happen we must have consistent guidelines for children to follow, give positive re-enforcement, provide acceptable choices, set realistic limits, encourage a child to express feelings with words when they are able to, use consequences that are age-appropriate and related to the behavior, and listen carefully to what children are trying to communicate to us. We include parents in our procedures and parents are notified when frequent or serious conflicts occur while at school. We will consult with parents and use time outs if other avenues have been used and have not worked.

Enrollment and Tuition

A non-refundable Application Fee is payable when applying for admission. This fee is also required to place your child on the waiting list. Once a space becomes available you will be notified by email or by telephone.

Registration Fee

Upon acceptance into one of our programs, there is a one-time registration fee, which can be found on our price list.

Annual Materials Fee

This fee is due every September 1. Upon enrollment, this fee will be prorated on a monthly basis to families starting after September. This fee is used to buy new materials and maintain a well-kept school.

Returning Student Registration Fee

This form must be filled out and turned in no later than May 30 of each year if continuing on with us into the next school year (starting in September). This helps us to plan for the upcoming year and admit children on the waiting list if possible.

Annual Family Donation

MyFirstPlace asks for a suggested (non-mandatory) \$400.00 annual family donation. The donation pledge form can be found in the registration packet, where you can indicate your payment option. The annual donation is in lieu of a yearly fundraiser/required parent involvement and helps fund our enrichment programs such as music, movement, art and other special activities.

Online Payment System

MyFirstPlace uses an online payment system, OnCare, to process tuition payments on a monthly basis. Upon enrollment, families will be asked to create an account through the online portal. **Payments are due on the first of every month.** Tuition is considered late if received after the 7th of the month. A 5% late fee will be assessed for late payments.

Vacation / Absences

No credit is given for holidays, vacations or any absence for any reason. Tuition is based on enrollment (space), not by attendance.

Supplemental or Optional Services

Dinner Program

MyFirstPlace offers an optional dinner program for an additional fee. Families who opt into this program will be provided a monthly menu. Additional dinner program information will be given to families upon request.

Extracurricular Enrichment Activities

MyFirstPlace from time-to-time may offer families the option of afternoon enrichment activities, for an additional fee, for those families who attend the morning half-day preschool program.

Field-trips

In the event that a field-trip is planned (such as a local library visit), parents will be notified in advance and be provided with a Field-Trip Permission Slip to either give their approval or opt out.

Transportation Arrangements

MyFirstPlace does not provide transportation to/from school and/or other events. All families will be responsible for arranging their own transportation.

Vacation

If you have time off during the year and would like to keep your child with you, you will still be responsible for the full tuition in order to hold your child's space. MyFirstPlace does not care for a large group of children therefore stability of income is important to maintain our staff. This applies to the scheduled school holidays as well (see holiday calendar for specific days).

Termination of Services

You must give one-month (30 days) notice before termination of the year contract (September through August) and will be responsible for all final payments through the end of the notice period. You will be charged for one-month in the event of "lack of notice". Should the need for a claim to be filed in small claims court arise, you will also be responsible for all court costs, collection costs, postage and additional fees related to the collection of your outstanding debt. The contract is subject to early termination by the school without prior notification in the event that the child/ren become disruptive or ungovernable in the opinion of the school providers, and/or if the parent/guardian breaches the contract or fees have not been paid.

Immunization Records

Upon enrollment, you are required to provide a copy of your child/ren's up to date immunization records to MyFirstPlace. You must keep your child/ren current on all required immunizations and update records accordingly. When planning a visit to the pediatrician, please notify a staff member and we will give you the immunization card that we have on file for your child to be updated at the doctor's office.

Please read, sign and return this page.

I/We have read, understand, and by signing and returning this page do agree to the policies stated in this handbook. I/We understand that should there be updates to this handbook, I/We will be given a copy of this page with the updated information and a new copy of this page to sign and return. I/We will fill out, sign and return the enrollment form and contract in their entirety. By doing so I/ We are enrolling my/our child/ren at MyFirstPlace.

- If my child is enrolled in the full time infant, toddler or preschool program, our contracted hours will be no earlier than 8 a.m. and pick-up will be no later than 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- If my child is enrolled in the preschool half-day program, our contracted hours will be no earlier than 8 a.m. and pick-up will be no later than 1:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Child's name _____ Age / DOB: _____

Child's name _____ Age / DOB: _____

Mother or Guardian Name printed _____

Signed _____ Date: _____

Father or Guardian Name printed _____

Signed _____ Date: _____