parent handbook

ChildrenFirst®
Excellence in Backup Child Care
Welcome to ChildrenFirst!

We are delighted that you have decided to register your family with ChildrenFirst. You are joining thousands of registered families who use our backup child care centers every day to help balance the competing demands of work and family.

The entire ChildrenFirst team takes pride in delivering the highest quality child care. We serve families when their regular child care arrangements breakdown or become unavailable. We recognize that these circumstances are stressful and may be unexpected, so we have designed our services to help make you and your family as comfortable as possible.

Your child’s experience will be safe, educational and fun, supported by our highly professional staff of early childhood educators, sound educational programming, and a unique environment.

In order to provide the best and most efficient service to you, we have developed this Parent Handbook. The Handbook is designed to familiarize you with our services and to answer frequently asked questions. Please keep it as a reference.

Thank you for giving ChildrenFirst the opportunity to serve you. We look forward to meeting you and your family soon.

Sincerely,

John Marvin
President and CEO
what is ChildrenFirst?

ChildrenFirst is the national leader in the design, development and operation of corporate-sponsored backup child care centers. We provide high quality child care in an educational, safe and secure setting. ChildrenFirst is available to employees of our participating clients to assist them with the balance of work and family responsibilities.

ChildrenFirst centers are intended to supplement, rather than replace, regular child care arrangements. The centers are available to working parents when existing child care arrangements breakdown, when a regular caregiver is ill or temporarily unavailable, when schools are closed, during business travel, or other breakdowns in regularly scheduled care.

ChildrenFirst centers are designed to provide comprehensive child care services for infants through school-age children. The centers feature:

- Special play areas for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children, with activities designed specifically for each age group
- Dedicated space for infants that includes a sleeping room and an area for active play
- Dedicated classrooms for toddlers and preschoolers that includes an art area, block area, dramatic play area, as well as quiet spaces for reading
- Computers, books and games for school-age children
- A climbing structure, gross motor room and/or school age loft along with planned activities to provide gross motor experiences

ChildrenFirst maintains high quality educational programming standards for children. Our quality programs are based on a developmentally appropriate environment and curriculum that embraces the unique cultural and individual needs of each child and family. Our belief is that each child is unique, precious and unrepeatable.

ChildrenFirst centers are staffed by professional early childhood educators. All eligible centers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Our experienced staff encourages each child's individuality in order to promote a positive self-image. We believe that children experience learning through play. Based on this belief, ChildrenFirst provides a wide variety of activities in all the curriculum areas where children can experience “hands on” learning. The program is designed for children to have fun while learning and to look forward to returning.

ChildrenFirst does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, disability or any other basis that is prohibited by federal, state or local laws in the administration of center policies or the admission of children.

ChildrenFirst centers meet all local and state licensing requirements.
Our Professional Staff

The staff at ChildrenFirst are our greatest asset, and they are ready to serve you. They are trained professionals who have expertise in educating young children and supporting working parents. Center directors hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in education and teachers have a four-year bachelor’s degree or equivalent experience in early childhood education. Prior to joining ChildrenFirst, all staff members go through an extensive interview process and background and reference checks, including drug and alcohol screening.

Upon joining ChildrenFirst, all staff are trained in the unique characteristics of backup child care, including the environment and curriculum. Special emphasis is placed on safety and security, hygiene, health and sanitation, first aid and CPR, and life safety procedures. All ChildrenFirst teachers are provided with opportunities for ongoing professional training.

“At 12 months, my daughter brought home her first painting. I would have never thought to introduce paints so young, and we have not stopped painting since.”
- Parent Survey
reservations

Once your child is registered, a reservation is required in order to visit the center. Parents should be aware that centers experience high demand periods that are usually consistent with public and private school closings. We reserve the right to prioritize families from the same client company who have not yet accessed the center on these busy days. (See your center for a listing of high demand days).

• To make an advance reservation, call your center’s 24-hour voicemail system or access the online Registration and Reservation Management System. ChildrenFirst begins accepting reservations one month in advance. All requests for advance reservations will be evaluated as soon as possible, generally within one business day. During high demand periods it may take up to five business days to evaluate all requests for care placed one month in advance.

• To make a reservation two days or less in advance, call the center’s 24 hour automated voicemail system at any time. All calls received during center business hours will be returned as soon as possible within the same business day. All calls for next day care received between center closing and 9:00 pm will be returned beginning at 9:00 pm. All calls requesting next day care that are received after 9:00 pm will be returned the next business morning beginning 30 minutes prior to center opening. All reservations must be verbally confirmed before using the center.

cancellations

If you have a confirmed reservation and your plans for care change, please contact your ChildrenFirst center immediately. Cancellations before the business day prior to the scheduled date of care can be placed via the center’s 24-hour voicemail system or by accessing the online Registration and Reservation Management System. Cancellations after the business day prior to the scheduled date of care must be made via the center’s 24-hour voicemail system. ChildrenFirst makes every effort to accommodate all requests for care and therefore will offer your reservation to another family. Reservations must be cancelled no later than 5:00 pm on the business day prior to the day reserved for care. No-shows and late cancellations will be counted as a utilization. Co-pays (if applicable) will apply.

All children must be registered to use a ChildrenFirst center. To register your child to use the center, and to meet local child care licensing requirements, you must provide the following:

• ChildrenFirst Registration Form
• Background Information
• Parental Authorization for Release of Child and Emergency Medical Treatment
• Medical/Dental Insurance and Physician Information
• Parental Consents
• Registration Agreement
• Labeled Photographs of:
  - Child
  - Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
  - Authorized Release Person(s)
• State/City Medical Forms (including physician’s report and immunization history)

There are three ways to register your child to use a ChildrenFirst center:

• Online at www.childrenfirst.com
• By phone at 866.273.2773.
• Via paper registration packet available through your Human Resources Department or your ChildrenFirst center.

ChildrenFirst will process your child’s registration promptly. Formal notification that your child’s registration is complete will be forwarded to you by telephone, e-mail or mail. We encourage you to schedule a tour of the center and/or an introductory visit for your child so that both you and your child have an opportunity to become familiar with the quality of care at ChildrenFirst.

*Additional/updated information may be required based on the regulations of local licensing authorities. Contact your ChildrenFirst center to ensure that your child’s registration file is complete and up-to-date.

“My son speaks about the teachers long after he has been at the center.”
-Parent Survey
What to bring

Food
For infants and toddlers, parents should bring an appropriate number of pre-mixed bottles of formula or milk for each feeding—labeled with the child's name. Bring enough baby food for the day, along with a written feeding schedule (indicating amounts, temperature and times for feeding). Parents are responsible for providing lunch for their child.*

All children are welcome to bring their breakfast to the center and eat it upon arrival. Please refer to your center fact sheet for details.

Clothing
Children should wear play clothes, as they will be involved in projects that use paint, glue and water. A change of clothing for all children is recommended.

Toys
The center has a wide variety of toys in each classroom. Children are welcome to bring a blanket, pacifier or special toy that may ease their adjustment to the center. While every effort will be made to make sure older children's toys from home are safe, it is recommended they not bring any toys or personal items from home. Please check with the center staff concerning their guidelines.

Diapers/Bibs
Please bring enough disposable diapers and wipes for the day. No cloth diapers will be used. Please provide a bib for your child.

Identification
Please label all clothing and other belongings, such as bottles, cups, and toys, with your child's full name.

Schedule of daily activities

The activities for the day will vary, always taking into consideration the needs of the individual child and the importance of providing a variety of activities and quiet times in a child's day. A complete daily schedule of activities for each age group is posted in each classroom.

Snack Time
ChildrenFirst provides two nutritious snacks with milk or juice each day. Snack menus are posted in each center.

Lunch Time
You are welcome to have lunch with your child at the center or take your child out to lunch when possible. If you are unable to have lunch with your child, please indicate so on your daily information sheet, and ask the staff to serve the lunch you have provided.* Bring any special foods needed due to allergies, religious customs or health conditions. No candy, gum or soda please.

Quiet time
Children rest or have quiet time after lunch. Cribs, sheets and blankets are provided for infants. Mats/cots, sheets and blankets are available for children under six. Children over age six may engage in quiet activities such as reading or quiet games. All sleeping items are laundered and/or disinfected after each use.

Outdoor activities
Weather permitting, the daily schedule may include taking children outside for a walk. Parental authorization is required.

*Illinois licensing regulations require parents to purchase a lunch from the center or take the child out to lunch. Illinois also requires that infant formula be brought to the center in a new unopened container.
“The ability to take my children to such a wonderful place is like a gift from the firm each time they are at ChildrenFirst.”
- Parent Survey
Arrival
Arriving at ChildrenFirst is an exciting time for children. All children must be accompanied by a parent or other authorized person at the time of arrival. You are welcome to stay with your child as long as necessary to help your child adjust to the center.

Sign-In
When you enter, you will need to sign in and introduce yourself and your child to the staff. You will be asked to fill out a daily information sheet indicating where you will be during the day, including a current phone number where you can be reached. Please include any pertinent information about your child with regard to current medications, allergies or food restrictions. A personalized cubby space will be waiting for your child. If you have not visited the center previously, be sure to ask the staff for assistance in storing your child’s personal belongings.

Adjusting to the Center
Separation from parents may cause young children to have difficulty adjusting to a new environment. ChildrenFirst teachers are well-trained to provide support during this sensitive time. If a child is having difficulty because a parent has left, the teacher will allow the child to express his or her anger or sadness, offer comfort and try to engage the child in an activity. If the child continues to be upset, and cannot be consoled within a reasonable time, or refuses to participate in the program, the parent will be called and asked for suggestions on how the staff might help the child. The goal is to help the child adjust and have a successful day. You are encouraged to visit your child at any time during the day.

Departure
Children will only be released to a parent, guardian or other person previously authorized in writing (with a photo on file). At pickup time you will receive a daily report informing you about your child’s day. Children are required to be signed out by the close of center business hours. At this time, children are the responsibility of the parent, guardian or other authorized person.
ChildrenFirst is committed to providing an environment where children feel safe and comfortable. Our staff uses a positive approach to discipline. Children are encouraged to use those skills that will allow them to resolve conflicts and have their needs met without the use of aggressive or destructive behavior. When situations occur that require intervention, teachers will provide children with clear explanations as to why specific behavior is inappropriate and help them find an alternative behavior that fits within classroom guidelines. If a child is having difficulty and is unable to manage his or her behavior, the Director may need to contact the parent and ask him or her to intervene or to remove the child from the center. This will only be used as a last resort if all other means to help the child control his or her behavior have failed.

- No child shall be ridiculed or verbally abused or subject to cruel discipline. Physical restraint is prohibited, unless necessary to protect the health and safety of the child or other people.

- No child shall be hit, spanked or subjected to any corporal punishment.

- No child shall be denied food as a consequence of behavior. Neither will food be given as a reward for good behavior.

- No child shall be punished or criticized for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.

A copy of ChildrenFirst's complete behavior management policies will be made available upon request.

Behavior Management

“On the way home she said, ‘Oh mommy, I love my school!’”
- Parent Survey
health & safety

“This is a wonderful service. Without it, I might have missed critical days at work or been forced to make less satisfactory and more costly arrangements.”
Parent Survey

Did you know?
Every ChildrenFirst Center has a Parent Resource Library! Check out books, tapes and software about all kinds of parenting issues and topics.
Administering Medications
Parents must administer all medications, whether prescription or non-prescription. In emergency situations, parents may make specific arrangements with the center Director to administer their child's medication if they are unable to do so. These arrangements must be made in advance, as they require specific written directions from the prescribing health provider. All medications will be stored in a locked box in either the Director's office or the refrigerator labeled "medications". Prescription medications must have a pharmacist label, along with name of health provider who prescribed, with the child's full name, date of prescription and expiration date, and instructions for administration. All over-the-counter medications must be in their original container, labeled by the parent with child's full name and be accompanied with specific instructions from health provider for administration. Please do not leave any medicine, whether prescription or non-prescription, anywhere in the center (including diaper bags or backpacks). Unused medication must be sent home with the parent, guardian or other previously authorized person. No medication may be disposed of in the center.

Emergency First Aid Procedures
Minor Injury: ChildrenFirst staff maintains current first aid and CPR training. In case of minor injury, the staff will administer basic first aid and will notify parent/guardian as soon as possible.

Injuries Requiring Medical Attention: For injuries that require medical attention, the staff will call the parent/guardian(s) as soon as possible. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, the staff will call the emergency medical contact person specified on the child's Emergency Release Form. Staff will also continue to try to contact the child's parent/guardian(s).

If the above parties are not immediately reachable and the staff feels that medical attention is imperative, the child's pediatrician will be contacted, and the center Director or a teacher will accompany the child to a local hospital. An ambulance will be called to transport the child. The cost of any emergency medical treatment and related transportation for the child will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Security
ChildrenFirst is a secured facility and admittance is granted to the following individuals upon photo identification:

• ChildrenFirst personnel
• Parents of children using the facility (photo on file)
• Authorized alternate release persons (photo on file)
• Visitors with pre-approved authorization to enter
• Licensing officials and others at the discretion of the Center Director

Illness
The health and safety of each child is of paramount importance to ChildrenFirst. In consideration of other families, we do not permit sick children to use the center.

We will contact you if your child becomes ill, and keep your child comfortable in a quiet area until you can arrive to take your child home. Children may occasionally seem ill without any clear cause. Please do not bring your child to ChildrenFirst if your child seems “under the weather.”

Children with the following symptoms may not use the center:

Temperature
An axillary temperature of 100 degrees or more. Children should be fever-free for at least 24 hours before returning to ChildrenFirst.

Respiratory Infections/Severe Colds
Respiratory infections, such as colds and bronchitis, are usually caused by viruses. A persistent "loose" cough and a runny nose is considered a severe cold. It is advisable that children remain home until symptom-free.

Vomiting or Diarrhea
Children should remain home for at least 24 hours after vomiting or diarrhea has stopped.

Other Contagious Diseases
Children should be symptom free or have verification from a health provider that they are no longer contagious. Communicable diseases include, but are not limited to: chicken pox, coxsackie virus, german measles, haemophilus influenza, measles, meningococcus, mumps, strep throat, conjunctivitis, impetigo, tuberculosis, whooping cough, giardia lambilia, hepatitis A, salmonella, shigella, impetigo, lice and scabies. ChildrenFirst reserves the right to require verification from a doctor that a child is not contagious before allowing them to return to the center.

If your child has recently visited ChildrenFirst and becomes ill with a contagious disease, we ask that you inform the ChildrenFirst staff so that we can notify other parents whose children may have been exposed. ChildrenFirst staff will provide information regarding the type of communicable disease, symptoms and precautionary measures that may be taken, in addition to information about when an infected child may return to care.

Please notify ChildrenFirst of your child's condition as soon as possible.

The policies and procedures described in this handbook are subject to change without notification. Any changes to policies and procedures will be posted at the center as soon as possible, and included in a Parent Handbook amendment available at the center.
ChildrenFirst is the national leader in the design, development and operation of corporate-sponsored backup child care centers. Backup child care is used by employees of client companies when their primary child care is unavailable.

ChildrenFirst centers are located throughout North America. Our goal is to continue to expand to meet the needs of our corporate clients and their working families across the country.