



PARENT HANDBOOK

2018

Open Arms Buckhead
Lutheran Child Development Center
A Ministry of the Lutheran Church of the Ascension

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I. ADMINISTRATION

A. *History*

Lutheran parochial education has more than 125 years of rich heritage in the United States. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has over 60 early childhood education centers in operation in all 50 states. Open Arms Buckhead was the first Open Arms Child Development Center established. Since then, Open Arms Child Development Centers have spread countrywide and are often used in church planning.

B. *Mission Statement*

The mission of Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center of Buckhead is to reach out to families with young children. Open Arms is a place of Christian nurture with quality staff proclaiming the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. We believe parents are the primary educators of children and we strive to support the teaching role of parents by providing information and sharing insights on child growth and development.

C. *Vision of the Center*

It is our vision . . .

- ❖ To value each child as a unique and special child of God, encouraging individuality and promoting self-esteem
- ❖ To provide a balanced program to meet the total needs of the child to grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically
- ❖ To value a child's play experience as an avenue of learning
- ❖ To provide a developmentally-appropriate program for all children of any race, creed, nationality, or ethnic origin
- ❖ To provide a safe, stimulating, hands-on environment in which children can interact with others and increase in ability and knowledge within a small group experience
- ❖ Finally, to nurture the spiritual and professional development of our staff, thereby enriching their lives.

D. *Philosophy*

Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center is a not-for-profit ministry of The Lutheran Church of the Ascension, providing a child care program of the highest quality designed to meet the needs of concerned working parents. At Open Arms, each

child is guided to develop his/her potential in every aspect of life within the shelter and nurturing relationships of Christian love. We operate our Center assuming each child is an individual and must be allowed to grow and learn at his/her own pace and to develop a healthy self-image. Working with children is a sacred task. Open Arms will help each child grow spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

Childcare and preschool frequently represent the child's first separation from home, a first experience in learning that other adults can be helpful and loving. Children have much social learning to do. This is accomplished best in an atmosphere of love and concern for the needs of each child. Programs are planned to encourage and develop individual strengths and abilities, while helping your child to understand the value of cooperation and interaction with others. These abilities are developed through working, learning, playing, and sharing with other children as well as adults.

Play is the child's work. By taking advantage of this fact and the many facets of early childhood teaching techniques, a happy and strong foundation can be built. By balancing active time with quiet time, teacher-directed activities with child-selected ones, and structured learning with fun-time, Open Arms will encourage the child's natural curiosity and eagerness to learn about the Lord's creation.

This handbook provides detailed information about our facilities and programs. Our Executive Director and staff will be happy to tell you more about Open Arms and what we offer to you and to your child.

E. Accreditation and Memberships

Open Arms Buckhead is licensed by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care & Learning (DECAL). A copy of the State Rules and Regulations are posted on the parent bulletin board in the front entrance lobby. Our licensing record, including compliance report forms from the health, building, and fire departments, are available in the office. We are a Quality Rated child care center.

II. POLICIES OF OPERATIONS

A. Hours and Days of Operation

Open Arms Buckhead operate from 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, year round (excluding holidays/days as outlined below).

B. Holidays

Open Arms Buckhead will be closed for the following holidays:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

- Good Friday
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Independence Day (July 4th)
- Labor Day (1st Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following
- Christmas Eve (December 24th) through New Year's Day (January 1st)

C. *Days*

- Parent-Teacher Conferences/Teacher In-Service Day in November
- Parent-Teacher Conferences/Teacher In-Service Day in March or April (on Holy Thursday)
- Teacher In-Service Day in August or late July

D. *Tardiness*

To ensure that your child is able to participate in all academic portions of the school day, children should be in their classrooms no later than 9:00 a.m. Parents are required to call the center if their child will arrive after 9:00 am. Late arrivals will disrupt the normal classroom programming.

Children will not be admitted to the center after 12:00 noon.

E. *Inclement Weather Closings*

Open Arms Buckhead will be closed when Atlanta Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather or Acts of God (tornado, etc.). Any days following the initial closing day will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The administration will base this decision on safe access and ability to staff at the center. As always, the safety of the children, parents, and staff will be our first priority. In case of severe weather, fire, or physical plant problems, we will notify each parent of the problem so the children can be picked up. If necessary, we will move the children to a designated place of safety. Should minimal risk to staff and children be present, Open Arms will determine on a case-by-case basis the. Parents will be notified through the *Remind App* and will broadcast closings on the following news station websites: WSB-TV/Channel 2, WAGA/Channel 5, WXIA/Channel 11 and CBS46/Channel 46. Notices may also be posted on Open Arms Buckhead's website.

F. *Emergency Closings*

- Loss of residential utilities for more than two (2) hours (BFTS regulation).
- Snow/Ice beginning during the day which endangers the children's transportation.
- Local, regional, or national emergency.

G. Sign In/Out Procedures and Departures

Parents must clock their child (ren) in or out using the ProCare system, and notify the child's teacher when they are arriving or leaving with their child (ren). This process must be repeated each time a parent arrives and leaves with their child (ren). Children will not be allowed to leave with anyone except parents or those persons designated in writing to pick them up. If someone other than the parent is to pick the child (ren) up, the Authorized Pick-Up Log (located at the front desk) must be completed beforehand by a parent/legal guardian. Children will not be released to anyone under the age of 18 years old.

If for some reason your child will be out of school, please notify the office so that we can document it in the system. If a student is not properly checked-in, you will receive an email/call from Open Arms.

All visitors should report immediately to the office. Visitors will be required to show ID and sign-in on the Visitor's Log. Furthermore, each visitor will be required to wear a "Visitor" badge during their time at the school.

When the authorized person arrives, he/she will be required to show picture identification and sign the log. They will then be given a visitor's pass and allowed to enter the school.

PLEASE NOTE: We cannot refuse to release a child to a biological parent unless we have a court order on file.

H. Volunteering

Family members are always welcome to volunteer in the classroom and school. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact your teacher, as well as the Curriculum Coordinator. All volunteers must check-in at the office and sign-in at the front, and take a visitors badge.

III. FEES

A. *Application Fees*

All applicants must pay a non-refundable \$50 Application Fee in order to have their application processed at Open Arms Buckhead.

B. *Registration Fees*

The Registration Fee is an annual non-refundable fee and is paid in full at time of registration to ensure a spot for your child. Registration Fees also include the Activity Fees (this fee will cover any field trips (Pre-K class), special visitors and special events).

Registration Fees:

Infants and Toddler	\$125/year
EPS, Preschool, Pre-K	\$150/year
Summer Camp (School Age)	\$ 75

C. *Tuition*

Weekly tuition is due every Monday. Full tuition is due even if your child is not in attendance due to illness, vacation, holidays, or inclement weather. If a Monday is a holiday, the payment is due on the Tuesday. You may pay tuition for the month, if you choose to do so; however, you will be billed for the number of Mondays that are in that month (i.e. 5 Mondays = charged for 5 weeks that month).

Tuition may be paid with personal check, money order, or Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover. Cash will not be accepted as payment. Payments can be made at our Kiosk found on our check in monitor.

Checks should be made payable to: Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center

Any tuition that is not paid by 12 noon on Wednesday of that week will be subject to a \$35 late fee. Failure to pay in a 4 week period may result in the loss of your child's space in class.

Tuition is set by the Open Arms Board of Directors. Tuition is calculated as part of the annual budget and takes effect January 1st of the New Year. Parents will be notified of any increase at least 30 days in advance.

A 10% sibling discount off the oldest child is offered to families with more than one child. Additional discounts may be available to families according to payment type setup with business manager. Only one discount per family; no multiple discounts.

D. Late Pick-up Fees

Our goal is to care for the children in our school in the best possible way. Children become anxious when it is time to go home and no one has come for them yet. A stringent late pick-up fee will be assessed as follows: if you arrive after your scheduled pick up time (the official clock to be used will be the check in time on the office manager's computer), a late fee of \$15.00 per child/per quarter-hour (rounded up to the next quarter-hour) will be added. **City of Atlanta Police will be called to pick-up a child whose parents are more than 30 minutes late and have not contacted the center.**

If there is a late pick-up, the fee will be charged to the parent's account and is to be paid by the next weekly tuition due date. In the event there are three late pick-ups, it will be brought to the attention of the Executive Director and could result in termination of enrollment.

E. Returned Checks Fees

Any check returned from the bank marked Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) or unpaid will result in a \$35 charge per check. If a second check is returned, checks will no longer be accepted and all future payments must be made via certified funds or credit/debit card for a period of 365 days from the date of the most recent NSF returned check. If a credit card charge is declined, a \$20 bank fee will be charged.

F. Referral Fee

We encourage current families to refer Open Arms to their friends and families. For a referral that results in enrollment, we offer \$50 towards tuition to the referring family. The terms are as follows:

1. They must place your name on their enrollment form at the time they enroll.
2. The new family must be enrolled and active for three (3) months before the referral fee is applied.

G. Withdrawal Notices

You may withdraw from Open Arms Buckhead whenever you wish after giving our school four (4) weeks' notice. You are responsible for the full tuition over this period of time, if your child attends school or not.

Should you wish to apply for re-enrollment, the registration fee is payable, and admission is contingent upon availability of space in your child's group at that time.

H. Unpaid Monies

Any unpaid tuition will be reported to a collection agency. Open Arms will use the services of Martini, Hughes, and Grossman. After 120 days unpaid accounts will be turned over to collect any unpaid tuition, withdrawal fees, late fees and returned check fees.

I. Scholarship

A one-time scholarship may be available for any family that has a hardship that prevents them from paying tuition. A request may be made to the Executive Director and Business Manager.

J. Parents Social Evenings

Open Arms Buckhead may offer our families Parent Social Evenings throughout the school year for center parents and students. This is time where parents can have a date night or do holiday shopping. The cost for the evening is \$20 for the first child, \$10 for each additional child. Dinner will be provided and children may wear pajamas.

IV. ENROLLMENT

A. Application

All enrollment forms must be completed prior to the child's first day of school. The forms to be completed are the Application for Enrollment, Annual Parental Agreement, Emergency Medical Information & Authorization, Allergy Action Plan, Authorization to Dispense External Preparations, Photo Permission, ProCare Code, Acknowledgment of Parent Handbook, and CACFP paperwork. Infant paperwork include Infant Feeding Plan and Safe Sleep. School Age paperwork include Swim Form and Activities & Transportation. In addition, every child in the center must have a current Certificate of Immunization form 3231 and four year olds will need a 3300 form (this form can be obtained through your child's physician) on file. Open Arms do not discriminate against any child based on sex, religion, or any physical or mental disability. Children with a disability will be assessed by the Executive Director and along with the child's physician, will determine if the center can make reasonable accommodations for the child before the child is enrolled in the center. If it is determined that a child with a disability may be enrolled, staff will be trained on care for the child which includes any equipment.

B. Records

Each child's records will be maintained in a secure manner in the office of Open Arms Buckhead. These include the following:

- Child's identifying information (name, birth date, etc.)
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) name, address, home/business phone numbers (These MUST be current!)
- Name, address, and telephone number(s) of person(s), including child's physician, to contact in an emergency
- Name and address of person(s) to whom the child may be released
- A signed statement by the parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding any allergies and other known health problems (medical, mental, emotional) and any special procedures that should be used in caring for the child
- Parental agreements for obtaining emergency medical care for the child when parent(s)/guardian(s) is/are not available
- Parental agreements for transportation, field trips, and/or other activities away from the center if the child will be participating in these activities
- Description of accidents or serious illnesses occurring while the child is at Open Arms, including the date, time, and condition under which it occurred and the action taken
- Current Certificate of Immunization Form 3231

Personal and medical information pertaining to the child will not be disclosed to persons other than our staff or other authorized personnel unless the parent(s) have granted written permission to do so, or in an emergency.

C. Withdrawal

1. Voluntary Withdrawal

Please see *Withdrawal Notices*

2. Involuntary Withdrawal

A mutual decision may be reached between the parent and the administrative staff of Open Arms whereby both parties agree that the continuing placement of the child in Open Arms is inappropriate and the child would benefit from placement in another program. If a parent desires, the staff of Open Arms will assist the parent in finding information for alternate placement of the child.

When Open Arms cannot reasonably accommodate the special needs of a child without undue hardship or with current staffing patterns, parents are contacted to discuss the concern. Administrative staff will make every effort to

assist the parent in finding appropriate services available through other agencies in the community.

3. Termination of Services

Services will be terminated for any family that is four (4) weeks behind in payment. A payment plan can be worked out with the Business Manager before tuition is past due.

Open Arms reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment for violations of Policies and Rules of the school or of Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care & Learning (DECAL).

D. Year-End Balances

We are called to be good stewards of our money. With that said, we, as a faith-based school must cooperate for the good of the ministry. Therefore, payment policies have been set in place so that teacher salaries may be paid, supplies purchased and general costs covered. All accounts should be left in good standing prior to year-end (May). Should an account not be paid-in-full, the following may result:

- Academic and financial records will not be released
- Student will not be eligible to attend Pre-K graduation ceremony
- Student enrollment will be terminated

V. HEALTH PROCEDURES

A. Admission

We will promote the health of each child by providing a clean, smoke-free environment, safe toys, physical education, supervised physical activities, and a library of disease prevention resources for parents. For the protection of the children, we must enforce rules on illness and administering medicine. **A certificate of immunization is required for all children upon enrollment and must be kept current.** All four year children will need to have a 3300 form (vision, hearing, dental, and nutrition) within 90 days of enrollment. We will help parents/guardians with this by sending a reminder e-mail at least 30 days prior to expiration. We expect all parents and guardians to support Open Arms Buckhead in this important health requirement (O.C.G.A. Chapter 20-2-771). Open Arms is required by Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care & Learning (DECAL) to have the name, address, and telephone number of each child's physician in our files.

B. Sickness and Exclusion

For the protection of all children, parents, and staff, sick children are not allowed at our school. Please do not bring your child to school if he/she is showing any signs or symptoms of illness. Some clearly unacceptable signs and symptoms are:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Skin rash

Exclusion from school is required when the administrative staff feels the child is in the contagious phase of an illness, requires more care/observation than can be offered in school or the child cannot be comfortable at school. Children who become ill on the premises will be isolated from the other children and a parent/guardian will be contacted immediately. Please help us by:

- Letting us know how to reach you at all times while your child is at school. If you are off site and unreachable, please provide the number of someone we may contact on behalf of your child;
- Promptly responding to any message from school;
- Anticipating the inevitability of exclusion from school by having back-up childcare to call upon;
- Arriving promptly within 1 hour following a request to take your child home. When you are asked to take your child home, you will be informed of the level of urgency. Failure to comply with this request is deemed a serious matter and will be brought to the attention of the Executive Director.

Request for a child to remain indoors due to an illness will be allowed for 1 day depending on class ratios. It is highly encouraged for ill children to remain home to get adequate care.

C. Policy for Returning to Open Arms Following Exclusion

If we send your child home due to illness, he/she must remain out of school for at least 24 hours. This means that a child may NOT return to school the day after being sent home. After 24 hours, children excluded from school for health reasons may return to school with the Executive Director's approval and at least one of these conditions:

- The child is fever free for 24 hours without the use of Tylenol (or the other fever-reducing medication)
- The child's pediatrician has indicated in writing or by telephone contact with the Center that the child may participate in group care
- The child has completed one full course in antibiotic treatment (usually one day's worth) and is eligible for return because symptoms are within guidelines

- The child has fully recovered

If a doctor has seen the child, please bring a note with the doctor's diagnosis and recommended treatment upon the child's return to school.

D. Communicable Diseases

Some communicable diseases must be reported to the Public Health authorities so that control measures can be used. A copy of this list is posted on the Parent Information Board in the front lobby. Parents and staff are reminded to notify the Executive Director within 24 hours after the child or staff member have developed a known or suspected communicable disease or any other illness of any type. Parents of children who may have been exposed to a child with a communicable disease or reportable condition will be informed about the exposure according to the recommendations of the local health department.

E. Medication

Only prescription medication will be administered with written parental consent. **Medication will be administered at noon only.** The child's first dose of the day must always be given at home. The "Authorization to Administer Medication" form must be completed at the front desk by the parent. A separate form must be completed for each medication. Medication consent will be accepted for only a 2-week period. **MEDICATION CANNOT BE LEFT IN THE CHILD'S BAG OR CUBBY!** All medications must be in their original prescription container and, therefore, must be pharmaceutically marked with the child's name and dosage. Medication will be administered according to the dosage indicated on the prescription label. Delivery and retrieval of medication will be the responsibility of the parent. The medication log will be provided for parents to review if requested. Unused medication not retrieved by the parent after 30 days will be disposed of without notice. **Over-the-counter medications will not be administered without a physician note.**

F. Accidents

In the event of an accident, appropriate procedures will be followed and the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified. All accident reports are maintained in the child's file and copies are released to the parent/guardian upon pick-up of the child at the end of the day. In the event a child needs emergency care and we are unable to reach the parent(s)/guardian(s), the child will be taken to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Scottish Rite. If it is necessary to call 911, the decision of where to transport the child will be made according to the recommendation of the emergency response team.

G. Medical Emergency Plan

If a child is injured while at Open Arms and requires medical care, teachers are required to report it immediately to the office so that an Administrator can assess the

situation. If the child cannot be moved, the Administrator will call 911. The child's file will accompany him/her to the hospital along with an administrator. In either case, the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified **immediately** of the situation and the emergency procedure that has been implemented.

H. Evacuation Plan and Drills

The building is constructed of non-combustible material and is equipped with sprinklers and smoke detectors. Emergency exit routes are posted in each classroom and near each exit. Fire drills are conducted monthly. Tornado and Emergency evacuation is conducted twice a year. Access to the building is strictly controlled. Safety, security, and cleanliness are maintained at all times. If re-entry into the Open Arms Buckhead portion of the building is not possible, children will be evacuated, and parents will be notified. An Administrator is designated to carry attendance and emergency contact information from the facility to the new site and compare to the daily attendance records. Parents will be notified by email using the REMIND.com system. Information may also be broadcasted on WSB-TV/Channel 2 (on website only), WAGA/Channel 5 and WXIA/Channel 11 (on TV & website) in case of such an emergency.

I. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by state law (O.C.G.A. Chapter 19-7-5) to report to the Fulton County Department of Family and Children's Services any suspected evidence of abuse of a child.

VI. DAILY PROGRAM AND ROUTINES

A. Our Staff

Open Arms is committed to providing children with a caring and nurturing Christian staff who values the opportunity to share the love of Jesus with the children in their care.

The staff of Open Arms believes that each child is a precious gift from God with unique and special qualities. Our emphasis is to help children discover their God-given qualities while providing a safe, nurturing environment.

The staff selection process includes interviews, reference checks and fingerprint check (national data base). Our staff participates in continual professional staff development opportunities, which include staff meetings, Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care & Learning (DECAL) workshops, and first aid and CPR certification training.

Open Arms provides a “mutually happy” environment. We believe that the feeling and emotional well-being of our staff, parents, and children should always be valued. If a situation arises, that conflicts with LCA or Open Arms Buckhead’s policies and procedures, Open Arms reserves the right to dismiss a staff member.

B. Ratios

Our staff-child ratios and group sizes are established according to what early childhood experts believe is optimum for young children and are often superior to state licensing guidelines. While it is the intention of Open Arms to maintain ratios that are below the ratios set by the State of Georgia, as stated below, we recognize that there may be times when ratios may be slightly increased or decreased. Open Arms Buckhead follows the NAEYC guidelines for ratios. This policy clearly states that our program is designed to meet the total need of each child, which we believe is best accomplished by providing small class sizes and low ratios as outlined below:

<u>Class</u>	<u>BFTS</u> <u># of</u> <u>students</u> <u>possible</u>	<u>NAEYC</u> <u># of</u> <u>students</u> <u>possible</u>	<u>NAEYC</u> <u>Ratio</u>
Infant I	15	12	4:01
Infant II	10	8	4:01
TTots	11	8	4:01
Toddler I	12	12	6:01
Toddler II	12	12	6:01
EPS I	16	12	6:01
EPS II	15	12	6:01
Preschool I	21	18	9:01
Preschool II	18	18	9:01
Pre-K	19	18	10:01
School Age	25	20	10:01

C. Breastfeeding Policy

We provide a lactating area for mothers who would like to breastfeed at the center. Our lactating area provides a comfortable chair and an outlet for any breast pump usage. Just inform one of our infant teachers when you would like to use the area.

D. Curriculum

As a Christian childcare center, we help children learn compassion and respect for others and an awareness of the world around them. We teach and practice Christian

values through modeling good behavior, prayers, singing, and Bible stories. Religious concepts are woven into our curriculum and the daily activities within each classroom. The children are learning daily about God's love for them.

The One In Christ Curriculum is used to help guide children in the faith-based learning. The GELDS (Georgia Early Learning & Development Standards) guide children in physical development, social/emotional development, approaches to play, language/literacy, and cognitive development. The classrooms will provide varied materials and learning opportunities in accompaniment with the protective controls that each child needs for optimal learning. Activities are planned around age-appropriate themes. In addition to the daily classroom routine planned by the teachers for each class, our curriculum also includes music and interactive literacy.

E. Conferences

We recognize that because of your interest in the welfare of your child, you will on occasion wish to confer with the Teacher or Executive Director. Conferences may be arranged upon request. Parent-Teacher Conferences are regularly scheduled twice per year (fall and spring), to discuss your child's development and progress. These conferences include developmental benchmarks highlighting your child's strengths, social skills, and helpful tips for home, etc. Parents will be given a copy of their child's progress at the end of the conference.

The developmental checklist will be completed on a quarterly basis. Any questions which may arise should be discussed openly with the teacher. If satisfaction is not reached through the child's caregiver, please speak with the Curriculum Coordinator.

F. Chapel

Chapel is held every Wednesday morning in the LCA Chapel and is conducted by our Pastor. Chapel service may consist of a Bible story, songs, skits, puppet shows, and prayer. Parents are welcome to attend chapel once a week with the children. This is a good opportunity to observe your child in his/her peer group while being somewhat inconspicuous. We ask that you do not sit with your child during chapel but rather sit in the balcony. This will allow the children to get the most out of their chapel experience.

G. Transportation and Field Trip Procedures

Children four years of age (Pre-K) and older participate in field trips during the year. We will send home field trip permission forms prior to all field trips to inform parents where we will be going. No child will be allowed to attend a field trip without a signed permission slip.

Georgia law requires that all children under 40 lbs. use a child approved safety seat when in a motor vehicle. Parents are required to bring their child's car seat to school and install it in the van prior to the field trip in order for their child to attend the scheduled trip. All safety seats must be labeled with child's name. Children will wear an Open Arms t-shirt while on field trips.

H. Behavior Management

Open Arms Buckhead encourages and expects appropriate behavior for the children in our care. We will work with the parents /guardians of children in our center to determine the cause of misbehavior and deal with the behavior positively. When the behavior exhibited is not acceptable, we explain to the child what is expected of them and give them another opportunity to comply. We use strategies that allow the child to take responsibility for his/her action. If the unacceptable behavior persists or cause harm to others, the child will be removed from the classroom by an administrator to help with the child's behavior management. Parents are notified of persistent behavior problems or a behavior that causes safety or health concerns. We need to be sure both home and Open Arms are in agreement about the manner in which a behavior problem is being handled.

Teachers are directly responsible for the discipline of the children in their care. Teachers facilitate the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance techniques. If the customary techniques prove to be ineffective, it may be necessary to require a parent-teacher conference in which a classroom disciplinary plan is developed and reinforced in the home.

These include:

- Setting clear, consistent expectations for age appropriate classroom behavior
- Valuing mistakes as learning opportunities
- Redirecting children to a more acceptable behavior or activity
- Listening when children talk about their feelings and frustrations
- Guiding children to resolve conflicts
- Modeling skills that help children solve their own problems

Food or physical activities will never be withheld from a child who misbehaves.

I. Daily Attendance

We highly value any time your child may be able to spend at home with parents or relatives. However, if your child is ill or absent for any reason, please call the school.

J. Arrival and Dismissal

Because infant and toddler schedules are individualized, the children's arrival time is flexible. For the older children, arrival before 9:00 a.m. helps to keep curriculum and field trip schedules on track. Please call, if your child is going to arrive late. If possible, please try to avoid arrival times during class naptime, as it can be difficult for your child as well as disruptive for the rest of the class. Please be sure to check your child's folder in his/her classroom during arrival and dismissal times.

K. Dismissal of Children

For your child's safety, your child may only be picked up by those individuals listed on your forms. If you have not personally introduced them to us, we will ask for identification. The school requires written notification whenever the usual person is not picking up your child. Email is acceptable. If we do not receive written notification from you, as parents, we will not release your child to another parent. We ask that you not share your ProCare codes with others. An administrator will clock your child out for the day.

If an unauthorized person or one who is incapacitated attempts to pick up a child, the center will not release the child to that person. If the person attempts to use force, 911 will be called.

In the event that custody becomes an issue for your family, a court order stating that a non-custodial parent **may not** pick up a child at school needs to be submitted to the Open Arms office. Without a copy of the court order on file, staff members cannot refuse a parent the right to take his/her child from the school. Law enforcement officials are called immediately in the event that a custody battle arises at Open Arms Buckhead.

L. Changes in Enrollment – Moving to a New Class

The Open Arms school year begins every August. Students begin in their class based on their age at the beginning of each year. Transitions will take place in August, January, and end of May – unless your child is in the Infant program. The Transitional Toddler classroom is for children ages 8 months to 15 months to help children transition from infancy to toddler stage. A transition period may take place for at least 2-weeks before any move ups take place.

M. Child's Personal Items

1. Clothing

Children should wear play clothes to school that are comfortable and easy to manage (i.e. zippers, snaps, Velcro, etc.) as we encourage children to do as much for themselves as possible. This is part of the learning process and helps to build self-esteem. It is important that a child be allowed to get dirty and to

get wet (for water play times indoors and out). Therefore, we require each child to have a complete change of clothing, including socks, at school. Please remember that this clothing should be updated with each season and change in the child's size. Soiled clothing will be placed in the child's cubby in a plastic bag. Each item of clothing should be clearly labeled so that clothes are not misplaced. Please place the clothes in a clearly labeled Ziploc bag to be kept in the child's classroom. Jackets or sweaters sent to school should also be clearly labeled. Close-toed, rubber-soled shoes are required during all activities. This rule is vitally important to avoid falls, which could result in injury. Sandals and Crocks are not recommended because of the possibility of splinters from cypress chips on the playgrounds.

2. Book Bag

Children do not need a book bag at school. If you do bring one, this may contain a change of clothing and a place for personal belongings during the day, to be sure they get home in the evening. The tote will be kept in the child's cubby. **DO NOT PLACE ANY MEDICATION IN THE BOOK BAG.** Infant parents may bring in diaper bags.

3. Other Personal Items

We require blankets from home for rest-time only. Toys should not be brought to school. Replicas of weapons are not allowed. Safety considerations dictate that cosmetics and money, particularly coins, and other items which might easily be swallowed should never accompany your child to school unless requested for curriculum reasons.

4. Infant Needs

To help us successfully meet all of our goals, the following guidelines have been set: all personal items must be labeled (bottles, bottle tops, baby food, diapers, clothing, car seats)

For infants and toddlers, an ample supply of diapers, formula, and/or baby food must be provided. Parents will be called to the center if the child's supply has been depleted.

A fresh change of clothing, including socks, is required for each child each day. This is because we engage in sand and water play, as well as in case of accidental soiling. Dirty clothing must be taken home each night.

N. Food from Home

Children should not bring food into school. Nutritious meals and snacks are served each day. **Food exceptions are not permitted for individual children, except in the case of allergies or a special written diet prescribed by a physician.** In that case, please send to school the necessary food your child must have. We

request that each family label all food items with the child's name and date. If your child requires a special milk other than Soy Milk, parents will need to supply enough milk for at least 3 meals per day. If a toddler requires a special sippy cup, parents must supply enough cups for 3 meals per day. Please discuss any specific concerns with your child's teacher and executive director.

O. *Nut Allergies*

Please be aware that Open Arms Buckhead is a Peanut Free center. Exposure to any nut product could result in serious medical complications, including death. For the safety of any child that may have a nut allergy, we ask that no foods containing any nut products be brought into the center. Although we cannot guarantee a completely nut-free environment, we feel a tremendous obligation to do everything within our power to keep children safe and healthy.

P. *Meals*

Open Arms participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) based on our non-profit and faith-based status. Parents are required to fill out an enrollment form with CACFP although family income disclosure is not necessary.

Infant parents may choose for Open Arms to provide Similac formula and baby food during the course of the day.

Breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack are provided for the children every day, according to their schedule. Breakfast is served 8 am to 9 am. Lunch and snack times vary according to classroom. The menu is planned to provide a nutritious diet that is low in salt, refined sugar, preservatives, artificial flavors, and coloring. Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) Guidelines are followed to promote optimal growth and development. The children are served meals in their classroom or dining room to promote a family environment. Teachers are encouraged to sit and eat with their children during meal times. As children adjust to sitting at tables, they can also begin to learn to serve themselves small portions of food and drink. This form of family style meal serves to teach the children self-help skills and responsibility.

Q. *Birthday Snacks*

Birthday snacks should be arranged in advance with your child's teacher, and should be celebrated at snack time. Please check with the teacher about appropriate food and activities. All treats **MUST** be store bought, and may not be homemade. ***IMPORTANT: Due to the sensitivity levels of peanut allergy children, we are a Peanut-Free facility. Any birthday treats brought into the center must be inspected by an Administrator or the nutritionist.***

Latex balloons are a choking hazard and are, therefore, prohibited (Mylar balloons are acceptable). All invitations should be left at the front desk to be given

via e-mail, to the parents. If you choose to do a small goody bag, they must be distributed from the front desk as the children leave for the day.

R. Media Policy

Children under three years of age are not permitted to watch TV or videos while at Open Arms. Children three years and older may view a video program if it is related to the current theme and approved by the Curriculum Coordinator.

S. Nap Time Procedures

In accordance with the DECAL rules and regulations, supervised nap or rest times are provided at school during the day for all children under five (5) years of age (DECAL 591-1-1-03e2). Nap time is provided after they have eaten their lunch. Time and duration will vary according to the age and needs of the children. Children who do not sleep during nap or rest time will be allowed to read books or participate in quiet activities after lying down for one hour. A pillow, soft stuffed animal, and a blanket from home are allowed at school for rest time only.

T. Outdoor Activities

Outdoor activities shall be provided daily, weather permitting, in accordance with rules and regulations as stated in the Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care & Learning (DECAL) guidelines. **Weather permitting** means that the outdoor play period must be carried out if the weather allows children to play outdoors. Children will be taken outdoors every day to get fresh air and to be more active and noisy than they can be when indoors. If children are unable to go outdoors, they will use the indoor multi-purpose room so that their physical activities can be carried out.

If there is a medical reason that your child cannot participate in outdoor activities on a given day, parents may provide a written note stating the reason. The note is only valid for a short period of time usually 1 or 2 days.

Please be sure your child has the appropriate outdoor attire available at school every day (light/heavy weight jackets, hats, mittens, and gloves, etc.). Due to weather changes throughout the day, layering is suggested.

BABYSITTING

Staff who provide babysitting service for families enrolled at the center must do so during hours not associated with the centers work schedule for the staff. Open Arms will not be held liable for any agreement between a staff member and enrolled family who employs a staff for babysitting in their home. If a staff has permission to take an enrolled child home from the center, the parents must list the staff on their child's

authorized pick up list. Parents will need to notify an administrator in writing when a staff will be authorized to take a child home.

VII. LAST, BUT NOT LEAST

A. *Parent Visitations*

Parents are free to visit at any time and have access to all areas of the facility. However, we request consideration when visiting so as not to disrupt our programs. Since children have little concept of time and think that when they see you, it is time to go home. A parent's departure after a short visit can be very unsettling to a small child.

View windows are installed near the door of each room.

Our greatest gift is to share the love we have received from Christ with the children in our care. The policies established by Open Arms Buckhead are for the welfare and safety of each child in our facility.

If you are concerned or uncertain about anything relating to our care of your child, please speak with the Curriculum Coordinator or Executive Director at once. Do not keep it to yourself. If there is a problem, we want it corrected as quickly as you do.

Important DO's to remember for the parent(s):

- *Do* accompany your child to their classroom and say good-bye positively and quickly.
- *Do* try to bring your child to school at the same time each day.
- *Do* voice appreciation and make it possible to display your child's creative work at home.
- *Do* feel free to discuss with us anything that may be troubling/concerning you regarding your child. Behavior, language, health problems, or family changes can affect attitude or behavior in school. We also welcome positive comments and suggestions.

B. *Parent Responsibilities*

To be successful, Open Arms needs and expects the cooperation of its parents, who must support the school's philosophy and policies. We are all stewards of our school's reputation and we each have an obligation to advance our good name in the community. Below states what we expect from our parents:

1. In selecting Open Arms, parents are seeking a match based on the needs of their children, their own expectations, and the school itself, taking into account Open Arms' philosophy, programs, curriculum, policies, practices, procedures, and schedules.
2. Parents will provide a home environment which supports the development of positive attitudes and habits (modeling civility, honesty, and respect).
3. Parents will seek and value the Open Arms' perspective on the child, recognizing that, at times, there are differences in the child's behavior at home and at school.
4. When parents have concerns involving the school, they should seek information from and consult with the adult who is closest to the situation (teacher or administrator). These concerns could be personal (such as an issue involving your child) or communal (such as a rumor they hear in the community). Parents are expected to operate using the directives outlined in
5. The Ten Commandments, being especially mindful of the fact that operating otherwise is destructive to their child's school.
6. Parents will involve themselves in the lives of Open Arms (volunteer, stay informed, attend performances and events, attend conferences, and contribute financially).
7. Parents will disclose any personal, medical, or academic information that is necessary to best serve the child.
8. Parents will accept their financial responsibility to Open Arms: make tuition payments on time and consider additional contributions to the school.

C. Parent Involvement

Communication between staff and parents is specifically encouraged. Although daily reports are submitted, we urge parents to speak with caregivers. Keep us informed on significant home events. This will allow us to deal with all situations in a sensitive manner.

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to volunteer in the classroom. We ask that arrangements be made in advance with the teacher so plans can be made to utilize parent availability. It is also important to limit the number of parents in the classroom on a given day. Please make other arrangements for siblings while you are volunteering at school.

It is part of our philosophy to bring together the child's school and home environment. It is to the child's advantage that we work together cooperatively. A child receives a great deal of satisfaction when parents are interested in and involved in the life of the school. For these reasons, we request that each family stay abreast of school events through our calendars, newsletters and website. Monthly we have events that your family can partake in like Muffins for Moms, Donuts for Dads, Fourth of July Parade, Grandparent Day, Easter Egg Hunt, Fall Festival, and the Christmas Program.

Our Parent Representative Group meets each month to plan family events, and to promote staff appreciation through special activities. The parent representative group also organizes fundraisers each year. Fundraisers are used to enhance the program for the children. If you are interested in joining the parent representative group, please let the office staff know and we will put you in communication with the committee. We appreciate the time and dedication of the parents who support Open Arms Buckhead in this way.

Parents have no responsibility for or authority over any portion of day-to-day operations, policy or governance.

VIII. OWNERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center at 4000 Roswell Road is a ministry and community service of The Lutheran Church of the Ascension. A Christian atmosphere permeates the school. There are morning devotions, prayer is said before meals, religious holidays are celebrated, Bible stories and songs are shared, and there is a weekly chapel for the all of the students. The school is operated as a not-for-profit institution, licensed by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, for children of any race, color, or creed aged six weeks to four years old.

Open Arms is governed by the Open Arms Board of Directors. This Board is appointed by the President of The Lutheran Church of the Ascension and approved by the board of directors of Lutheran Church of the Ascension. The Executive Director of Open Arms reports to the Open Arms Board, attends meetings, and has a voice at the meetings. Parents are welcome to bring special concerns to the Executive Director, who will take appropriate action. This may include referral to the Board.

The Pastor of The Lutheran Church of the Ascension is the spiritual head of The Lutheran Church of the Ascension and of Open Arms Child Development Center. The pastor takes no active role in the administration and operation of the school. However, the pastor does sit on the Open Arms Board of Directors in an advisory capacity and does assist (and/or advise) the faculty and administration of the school as appropriate.



Dear Open Arms Buckhead Parent:

An integral part of each child’s education experience is the partnership between parents, teachers, and school administrative staff. At Open Arms Buckhead, we treasure the opportunity to work closely with our families to ensure the best communication possible for the benefit of each child.

To that end, we have enclosed copies of our Parent Handbook. Please take a few minutes to read over these important resources. These guides, however, have been designed to cover the majority of questions we receive from parents. If there is anything that needs clarification, we would be happy to chat with you in person.

When you are finished reviewing the guides, please complete the bottom of this sheet and return in to the Front Desk. We look forward to a rewarding school year with you and your child at Open Arms Buckhead.

Thank you for entrusting your child to us!

Barbara Collins
Executive Director

Rachael McKenzie
Curriculum Coordinator

Sig Johnson
Business Manager

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

I, _____ (please print), have read the Open Arms Buckhead Parent Handbook. I agree to comply with all policies and procedures established in these documents. If age appropriate, I have explained the rules and regulations to my child(ren).

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please print your child(ren)’s name(s):

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____