

Firefly
Children's
Center

PARENT
HANDBOOK

Our Mission

To provide a natural, loving, nurturing environment that inspires and supports the whole child. To promote lifelong learning, acceptance of others, a love and respect for the Earth and nature, and to create a community of families that work together for the betterment of Firefly, Family, and Society.

What makes Firefly unique?

- organic, whole foods
- nature based, Waldorf Inspired Curriculum – Little Acorn
- creative learning – hands on, interactive approach including Yoga, music, art, movement, Sign Language, regular presentations from visitors
- emphasis on development of emotional intelligence – teach rather than punish
- children learn by making choices
- a focus on each child’s individual gifts
- toys made of natural materials such as wood, fabric, wool, etc. (not plastic)
- well educated, nurturing, consistent teachers – nurturing relationships
- large outdoor play area - outdoor play every day, as much as possible!
- our location – 5,000 SF building on 2 acres

Table of Contents

Enrollment Procedures and Tuition	3
Licensing, Policies and Procedures	5
Child Guidance Policy	7
Staffing, Curriculum and Development	8
Food and Nutrition Policy	11
Parent Responsibilities	13
Health Care Policies	14

Non Discrimination Policy

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Enrollment Procedures and Tuition

Parents should read over the parent handbook and application materials which are available online at our website www.fireflymt.com. If you agree with all center policies and desire to enroll, call the center to set-up a tour. Once enrolled, we will setup an intake interview that will include parents, the child, and the child's lead teacher.

Enrollment is not guaranteed; Firefly reserves the right to refuse to enroll any child.

When staff and parents assess that Firefly can meet the needs of their child and family, then the parents return all items from the following registration check checklist:

All Children

1. _____ Child Registration Form
2. _____ Annual Registration Fee (\$100 for first child, \$50 per / child)*
3. _____ half month Deposit**
1. _____ Emergency Contact and Parent Release
2. _____ Immunization Record
3. _____ Food Program Agreement
4. _____ OTC (Over The Counter) Medications Form
5. _____ Tuition Express Form

Infants Only (under 24 months)

1. _____ Child Health Report (signed by doctor)
2. _____ Infant Feeding Schedule

Additional forms for vaccination concerns:

1. Conditional Enrollment Form (for children getting up to date on vaccinations)
2. Hib Religious Exemption Form

* annual registration fee is due at time of enrollment and September 1st each consecutive year

**half month deposit - after 6 months of enrollment, the deposit applies to the last half month of care when notice is given on the 1st or the 15th. It also goes to cover any unpaid balances before it is refunded or applied.

Hours and Days of Operation: 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, Open year-round
Closed on the following major holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and day after, Christmas Eve, Christmas, and New Year's Eve
A Calendar will be posted at the front desk.

Weather Related Closures - We close for winter weather when Kalispell School District #5 closes. No refunds are given for snow days.

Staff Training Days - We have limited enrollment the last week of August and 2 days off in February for staff training. These days are not included in your yearly / monthly tuition. You can sign up for those days at the beginning of that month but space is limited to very few children. Please see the yearly calendar for days off.

Parent Volunteer Hours - Parents are required to volunteer 1 hour / month that their child/ren are in attendance, during the school year, September – June for a total of 10 hours. Volunteer hours can be filled numerous ways: doing a demonstration for the kids, cleaning, painting, baking, repairing items, making something for the kids or teachers, attending parent meetings, etc. We really want parents to be involved at Firefly and the kids are so thrilled to have their parents around and being seen by the other kids. Please fill out the Parent Volunteer Hours Questionnaire so we can get an idea of where we can use you! We look forward to getting to know you better! If you choose to pay for hours instead of volunteer it will be billed in June at \$15 / hour.

Firefly Tuition Rates and Policies 2016

Our tuition is billed on a monthly basis and is due on the 1st and 15th of each month – for that month. Payments are completed through electronic funds transfer, from a checking account each month either in full on the 1st OR half on the 1st and half on the 15th. A \$25 late fee will be assessed on the 5th and 20th of the month. If your payment has not been received, your child may be unable to attend Firefly until the balance has been paid. Monthly tuition remains the same whether children attend or not. We bill for 49 weeks a year, leaving 15 days off for major holidays, training days for Firefly staff, and sick days. WE DO NOT CREDIT SICK DAYS OR VACATION DAYS, unless special circumstances are present. It is your responsibility to find alternate care for your child on days we are closed or when they are sick. We do our best to accommodate extra days / times needed when you are not already scheduled. We ONLY trade days during the same week and ONLY if we have availability. Please contact the front desk to check for availability and you will be billed at the time of service for additional days / hours. You will be charged according to the Extra Charges section below.

Best Beginnings-As a licensed child care we DO accept the Best Beginnings scholarship. They will not cover your application fee and may not cover the entire amount / day. Contact the nurturing center to see what they cover for your child. Please note you are responsible for paying your monthly copay, and any amount that Best Beginnings does not cover, and these amounts are due on the 1st and 15th of the month.

<u>Monthly Tuition – Full Day 6 hrs +</u>	4-5 yrs	2-3 yrs	under 2 yrs
5 days / wk	\$775	\$825	\$925
4 days / wk	\$625	\$675	\$750
3 days / wk	\$475	\$525	\$575
2 days / wk	\$325	\$350	\$400

<u>Monthly Tuition – Half Day (9-3)</u>	4-5 yrs	2-3 yrs	
5 days / wk	\$675	\$725	-----
4 days / wk	\$550	\$575	-----
3 days / wk	\$425	\$450	-----
2 days / wk	\$300	\$325	-----

<u>Monthly Tuition – 9-12 Preschool Only</u>	4-5 yrs	2-3 yrs	under 2 yrs
5 days / wk	\$525	\$650	-----
4 days / wk	\$425	\$525	-----
3 days / wk	\$325	\$400	-----
2 days / wk	\$225	\$275	-----

<u>Extra Charges:</u>	School Age	4-5 yrs	2-3 yrs	under 2 yrs
Extra Full Day	\$37	\$40	\$42	\$48
Extra Half Day	-----	\$37	\$40	-----
Extra Preschool A.M.	-----	\$28	\$32	-----
Hourly	\$6 (after school only)	\$6.50	\$7.00	-----

Annual Registration Fee of \$100 for 1 child or \$150 / family

Half Month Deposit - after 6 months of enrollment, the deposit applies to the last half month of care when notice is given on the 1st or the 15th. It also goes to cover any unpaid balances before it is refunded or applied.

Multi-Child Discount - families receive 10% the oldest child/ren or the child that attends the least.

Late Pick-up Charge - There will be a charge of \$1.00 per 1 minute late for parents who pick up their child after closing time. This fee will be charged on the next month's invoice. Please do not pay the caregiver directly.

Termination of Enrollment - Parents may terminate enrollment as needed, but they are required to give the center half month written notice prior to termination, on the 1st or 15th of the month. After 6 months of enrollment your deposit can be applied to the last half month of care. Failure to give notice will result in the deposit not being applied to the final weeks of childcare. In the unlikely event that Firefly terminates your child's enrollment, as much notice as possible will be given and your deposit will be first applied to the remaining time allowed and any left will be returned, unless termination is due to failure to pay. In this case the deposit will be retained.

Unpaid Balances - In the rare circumstance that there are unpaid balances, we do our best to work out a payment plan that is a minimum of 10% of the balance each month. If payments plans aren't followed through with and balances are sent to collections, all collection fees (25-50% of the balance) are added to the balance.

Licensing, Policies and Procedures

Licensing - Firefly Children's Center is licensed by the State of Montana. If you have any questions or concerns about licensing or Firefly you can ask Julie or Libby and if your questions are not satisfied you may contact Fern Sutherland, Child Care Licensor, with the Quality Assurance Division for the State of MT at 406-751-5932. You may find a copy of the licensing requirements online at our website www.fireflymt.com or we have a copy at the front desk.

Stars Program – We are a part of the Stars to Quality Program which is funded by the State of MT in order to improve the quality of child care and preschool programs in the state. We are currently at Star 2. We accomplish bench marks for each star level and in turn the state awards us with funding to continue meeting higher bench marks. These benchmarks include standards of quality for the building and property, toys and equipment, and staff training and education.

Daily Connect is a program that is used to keep track of your child's naps, meals, diapers / potty throughout the day. Once enrolled we will send you an email to sign up for notifications when information is entered about your child.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up - Transitions are usually challenging for children. In our work with the children, we plan ways to ease transitions from one activity to the next. Certainly the most impacting transition of the day is when the child is being dropped off or picked up. The more routine and rhythmical we can make that, the easier it is for the child.

At drop-off, briefly help your child settle in by helping them hang up their coat and exchange their outdoor shoes for slippers. Once the settling-in phase is completed, bring your child to her caregiver and let her know about anything that might affect your child's day (sleep, health, an event, etc.) Finally, after saying good-bye to your child, quietly take your leave. We find this whole process is best done in ten minutes or so. A longer process is often more difficult for the child.

At pick-up time, your child is your responsibility from the time you arrive. As previously stated, it can be difficult for your child when both parent and caregiver are "in charge". The caregiver will share with you important information pertaining to your child's day. Please pick up any art projects daily from the cubby areas.

Daily Attendance Records will be kept through a check-in system called Procare on tablets located at the three entrances. It is a requirement to check your child in and out each day. If the tablet is not working for some reason please ask to sign in and out on paper. If we do not have a record of your child being signed in or out in the ProCare System or on paper, but know your child was in, you will be charged \$10 / time for us to find you to get the signature. We give 2 freebies as we know people occasionally forget!

Schedule Change Request Forms are located at the front desk and at check in stations. Fill out this form to let us know if you would like to add days to or drop days from your regular schedule. We require half months' notice to drop days and can add days as soon as they are available. Fill out this form to request drop in days, to let us know when your child will be absent, and to see if we have availability to switch days. Any days that your child will be absent or late call Firefly to let us know!

Dismissal Policy - All efforts will be made to retain the child at Firefly.

However, if either the parent and/or staff believe that placement is inappropriate, enrollment may be terminated. The center reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for one or more of a:

1. If a child has needs the staff members are not able to meet.
2. If non-payment of fees or repeated late payment of fees occurs.
3. If a parent knowingly fails to observe the center's policies.
4. If physical or verbal abuse of children or staff by a parent occurs
5. If the staff feels that a child's behavior is harmful to himself or others.

Fire and Emergency Drills and Procedures - To insure readiness in case of emergency, regular fire drills will be conducted. It will be the responsibility of the caregivers to escort all of the children to a designated area outside in a calm and orderly manner and then conduct a head count. In case of emergencies, we do keep bottled water and emergency kits on hand. Parents will be notified in case of emergencies.

Information Changes - Please let us know immediately about job changes, work schedule changes, phone number and address changes and any changes in the designated contact person(s).

Items Parents Provide - Parents will provide the following personally labeled items (we recommend labeling with a permanent marker or sewn-in/iron-on labels). Firefly is not responsible for lost or missing clothing. We appreciate your understanding.

- two full sets of spare clothes for children regardless of age – these will be kept in bins in the bathrooms (2 shirts, 2 pants / shorts, 2 or more underwear, 2 pairs of socks)
- an extra sweater or sweatshirt
- one pair of slippers or thick slipper-socks with non-skid soles, NO SHOES are worn past the cubby area
- cap for infants up to one year old
- hats for all seasons – hats are not worn inside except on infants
- appropriate outer wear for each season to include: (The children go out in all weather, so they need clothing to keep them comfortable in rain, snow or sun.)
 - warm coat, boots, hat, mittens and snow pants for winter
 - jacket, rain coat, rain pants and rain boots for other seasons
 - warm hat for fall, winter, spring
 - sun hat for summer

- proper footwear for play outside when boots are not needed. Please no dress-up shoes, or other impractical shoes for vigorous outdoor play.
- 2 bottles for infants
- diapers and 1 pack of wipes / month
- wet bag for cloth diaper users and label your cloth diapers
- any special dietary food that is different than that supplied by the center
- a pillow with a cotton pillow case and blanket for sleeping (these are meant to be as simple as possible with no characters or caricatures on them) – blankets will be sent home to be washed each Friday
- Water bottle or sippy cup for outside use in the summer and
- toothbrush

If your child’s clothing becomes soiled while at Firefly, it will be set aside in a plastic bag for you to take home and launder. Please re-stock your child’s bin at least every time soiled clothes is sent home, make sure clothing still fits your child, is appropriate for the season, and that there is enough for needed clothing changes.

We’ve learned that the way children are dressed directly affects their experiences.

- Comfortable clothing made of **natural fibers**, like cotton, are best.
- Layers** of clothing are preferred.
- The best clothing for children is **free from media images**, like TV or movie characters. These images can sometimes affect the children’s play.

Toys from home - We recognize that young children often have a “beloved” blanket or sleeping companion that brings them comfort. This can be especially so for children under age three. We welcome these toys for naptime. Generally, we prefer that they be kept on the child’s cot or in his/her cubby and used only for napping.

We ask that all other toys that do not fall into the category of comfort object for naptime be kept at home. Toys from home are more difficult for children to share. They often create unnecessary conflicts. If a child earnestly wants to show something to his caregiver, he may bring it to show her and then the parent can take it. We thank you for your cooperation on this.

Food and Drink from home – no food or drink from home unless it is a dietary need.

Child Guidance Policy

Our discipline policy is intended to be proactive rather than reactive. Caregivers will move to situations that could be potentially problematic and try to diffuse them before they are out of hand. Caregivers will use redirection, positive encouragement, and act as models of the behaviors we wish to have the children imitate. We teach the children breathing exercises and visualizations to help them calm themselves. We want children to ask to go to a quiet area when they are stressed, so we don’t want a quiet area to be a punishment. Because of this we do not use time outs. We do have quiet time which is often facilitated with an adult. The teacher will walk the child through what they could do differently next time and is encouraged to talk to the other child once ready to leave quiet time.

Prohibited Punishments - The following activities will not be tolerated by any caregiver or staff member even at the request of parents: hitting, shaking, pinching, screaming, biting, spanking or threatening.

Staffing, Curriculum and Development

Firefly Staff - All Firefly Staff have current First Aide and CPR certifications for infant – adults, background checks have been completed, anyone working with infants has completed the Back to Sleep Safety Class. We hire staff that believe in empowering children, are nurturing, well spoken, dedicated, and well educated. Primary Caregivers all have at least 2 years experience in a licensed facility or an AA or Higher in Early Childhood Education or a related field. Most of our classrooms have 2 Primaries, and aides are used to assist with cooking, cleaning, project set-up etc. This provides children with well experienced caregivers.

Staff Ratios - Licensing requires staff to children ratios of 1:4 for under 2 years, 1:8 for 2 and 3 years, 1:10 for 4 and 5 years, and 1:14 for 6 years and older. We try for 1:7 or 8 in our preschool area. Each classroom has 2 teachers, one to start the day and one to end the day, but both for the majority of the day. This is helpful if a teacher is out sick or on vacations, as there is always at least 1 person with the kids that they know well. We have regular substitute teachers and extra aides around the building that know the children well and are able to help out as needed.

Classrooms - All ages are approximate and children are placed where they will best fit developmentally, emotionally, and academically. Children will transition into the next classroom when they are ready, there is space, and traditionally at the beginning of September as our oldest Fireflies head off to Kindergarten.

Caterpillars – 3- 9 months

Butterflies – 9-14 months

Crickets - 14-24 months

Dragonflies – 2 and 3 years

Fireflies – 4 and 5 years

Once Enrolled but before a child begins at Firefly, we meet with the parents and child to ensure that we know about family structure, culture, and development of the child, emotionally, socially, spiritually, academically and physically. We are an educational facility and are here to help!

Parent Interactions and Breastfeeding – We encourage parents to stop by during the breaks to nurse or snuggle their babies! We are a breast feeding friendly facility! We have 3 rocker / glider chairs in the infant room with boppys for your comfort. You can also use Julie’s office if you would like privacy.

Developmentally appropriate activities for infants and toddlers - Our focus with infants and toddlers is on the healthy development of movement, language and physical growth. Children are sung to and spoken to articulately throughout the day. Recognizing that the young child learns by imitating the adults in the environment, Firefly caregivers work on their own speech and music development on an ongoing basis.

Development of movement is encouraged through the child’s own natural processes. Children are not placed in exersaucers, car seats or any other apparatus meant to hurry development. Rather, they are provided protected spaces in which to practice rolling over, crawling, pulling up and walking. Children will have opportunities to interact with and observe older siblings and friends at the beginning of the day, lunch time, and afternoons.

Toilet Training - Caregivers begin naturally teaching infants about the potty at a very young age. We will take off the child’s diaper and set them on a child sized potty and read books to them and sing to them. We go to the bathroom in pairs / groups so they are more inclined to try to use the potty. We make this a fun and interactive experience and it is never forced. We believe children

will naturally learn something when they are ready. We just plant the seeds and support them in their learning! Ideally, children will have completed toilet training by 2 ½ to 3 years of age.

Developmentally appropriate activities for preschool aged children- Our developmental practices will enhance growth and development in the following areas: language, social, emotional, physical, cognitive and creative. We use Little Acorn Nature Based Curriculum at Firefly.

Rest periods - All children in care for more than 4 hours will have at least one nap or rest period. Children who do not sleep after 30 minutes or who awaken will be allowed to play quietly until rest period is over. Each child will have their own blanket and pillow from home for nap/rest time; these will be sent home weekly for laundering.

Handwashing procedure for staff and children - Children's hands will be washed with soap and warm running water before meals and snacks and after toileting or diapering. Faces and hands will be washed after meals. Staff members will wash hands after assisting with diapering or toileting, before meals and snacks, and before handling any food.

A sample schedule is as follows:

7:30	Creative indoor play
8:00	Breakfast and clean up
9:00	Story, Music, and Movement
9:45	Art and Creative Play
10:30-11:15	Outdoor play
11:50	Lunch and clean up
12:00	free play and story
12:30	Nap and Quiet Time – Live singing, music, story, backrub
2:30	Children aren't already awake are roused gently
3:00	Snack Time
3:30	Outside play (in the Spring, Summer and Fall) Indoor playtime (in the dark Winter months)
5:30	Good-bye

Learning opportunities at Firefly - Firefly Children's Center is based on the understanding that they young child learns through imitation, sensory stimulation and active participation. The following opportunities will be available to children in these areas:

- large/small motor skills- infants will be allowed free movement which is the healthiest way for them to exercise large muscle activity. The best and most available manipulative for them to explore is their own body, fingers and toes, etc. They will have a few simple toys made of natural materials as they begin to learn grasping and holding.
As the child grows older, s/he will be allowed to do extensive building, creating and climbing, both indoors and outdoors with blocks, chairs and tables, wooden play stands (indoors) and tree limbs and stumps (outdoors). Through simple sewing, finger knitting, woodworking, folding, washing, and other practical skills, they will develop their fine motor skills.
- creative activity – almost everything in the environment will be allowed to be transformed through the child's play. They will build their own environments rather than having fixed and finished play centers. Manipulatives such as silk and cotton play cloths, building blocks, objects the children find in nature, dishes, baby

dolls, etc. will be available for them to create their own scenarios. Infants and toddlers will be exposed to the creative play of the older “siblings” as well as having their own protective environment to explore.

They will have opportunities to paint with watercolors, draw with natural beeswax crayons, and have simple craft projects throughout the year that have to do with the seasons and holiday gift giving.

- social – a primary focus of Waldorf Early Childhood Education, from which Firefly draws much of its inspiration, is to help the child develop a healthy social foundation. This is especially supported through the creative playtime. Social challenges are handled on an individual basis, often through the use of stories, redirection and modeling of the appropriate behavior. Finger games, transitional tools, and games are also used as redirecting tools.
- intellectual – recent brain research indicates that the kinds of activities listed above are the necessary foundation for healthy synaptic connections. Through touching, feeling, and doing, the child’s budding intellect is allowed to unfold at its own appropriate pace. The caregivers have ongoing speech, voice and movement training during in-services. Through their own growth and development, the caregivers model healthy speech and movement for the children to imitate.
- cognitive – Growing a healthy body is of primary concern in the first seven years of life, and will be a primary focus at Firefly. Although the children will be read to, and they will see their caregivers writing and reading, there will be no formal academic drills or intentional academic instruction time. Research indicates that early academic training can create a type of burnout by third grade. As the child’s natural interest in letters and numbers awakens/ he will be helped to explore them.

Outdoor Curriculum - At Firefly, an essential part of our curriculum is expanded nature exploration. Studies show that children who regularly spend time in nature are healthier – physically and emotionally – and exhibit longer attention spans, heightened creativity and better developed social skills. If your child is not well enough to go outside in the elements, they need to stay home that day.

Celebrations and festivals - There is no religious training connected with Firefly. The faith backgrounds of the children will be honored through the celebration of festivals that the parents may wish to bring to the child care in a simple way. We will also celebrate seasonal festivals for families, honoring the universal qualities of the season (for example, a fall harvest festival in October, a festival celebrating new life in Spring). The child care will also celebrate some holidays during the day with the children, and will celebrate each child and caregiver’s birthday.

Cultural diversity - All families are encouraged to share the festival life of their particular culture in a simplified version for the children. The prints and artwork, as well as children’s books, will be chosen to represent a variety of ethnic groups, particularly those represented among the families at the center. Tolerance will be taught through example rather than through contrived programs.

Toys and children's play - One of the first things that people will notice about our center are the beautiful and creative toys. The toys are simple and open-ended. We believe the best toys are 90% child and 10% toy. In other words, we try to find toys that will invoke the child's natural creativity, imagination and healthy development. We also strive to provide playthings that are from natural materials, as they provide more and varied sensory experiences, are non-toxic, and are created from living, renewable resources.

Food and Nutrition

We provide organic, whole, non GMO foods.

Caregivers will be expected to learn the minimum meal requirements and offer balanced, natural meals and snacks, prepared fresh on site from whole foods.

Mealtime routines

Caregivers will eat family-style with the children at both snack and mealtime. After children wash their hands, they will help to set the table. After a blessing and thanks, the children will help to serve themselves and others as they are able. Preschool aged children will be especially encouraged to practice the skills of serving and passing. Children will be given one serving of everything that is being served. They will be encouraged to try each item before having seconds of any item. When children are finished, they will be expected to clean around where they were sitting and wash their dishes in warm, soapy water.

Children under one and able to sit up on their own will sit at a high chair. Then they will be moved to a booster chair at the table until they are tall enough to sit on their own. Infants not yet able to sit in a high chair will be in the lap of a caregiver or playing in a secure spot on the floor if they are awake at mealtime.

Food allergies

Cooks, staff members, caregivers and substitutes having direct contact with the children shall be informed about food allergies and other allergies of specific children, and food allergies will be posted in the kitchen. Parents will be expected to supply the food for children requiring highly specialized diets. They will be asked to supply a physician's note that a special diet is necessary.

Infant feeding

We encourage nursing moms and will do whatever we can to accommodate nursing and bottle feeding of breastmilk. Breast milk must be labeled and dated.

Infants will be fed according to the schedule provided by the parents. Our medical advisor has suggested the following:

0-6 months – Breast/formula only

6 months and up – introduce bland vegetables such as banana, avocado, yams, squash, carrots; preferably unprocessed foods (i.e. cooked and mashed at home) or healthy jarred baby food (such as Earth's Best)

6-9 months – pears, apples, non-acidic fruits; grains and vegetables to include greens

9 months and up – easily digestible pastas, cottage cheese, yogurt

end of first year – breads, table food

We encourage Baby Led Weaning. This is allowing the child to feed themselves. The child will quickly learn to gauge how much they can handle in their mouth because they are feeling themselves. Starting with slices of pears, avocados or bananas is the easiest for them to hold yet still mushy enough for them to gum without many teeth.

Bottle to Cup

Our goal is to help children make as smooth a transition as possible. There are windows of opportunity when it is simpler to wean a child. Our suggested practice is as follows:

- Introduce lidless cup at 12 months. We start by pouring in a little amount of liquid and gradually increasing as the child's ability not to spill grows.

One year to fifteen months is optimum time to wean a child from a pacifier as the physical need to suck is not so strong anymore. If the child is in need of a comforter, we recommend a soft cloth or soft, simple doll that can be cuddled while falling asleep.

MT Food Program - Firefly Children's Center participates in the U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP.) The Montana CACFP is administered by the State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Early Childhood Services Bureau, PO Box 202925, Helena MT 59620. The MT CACFP can be reached by phone at 1-888-307-9333. By participating in the MT CACFP, our center receives federal financial assistance toward the cost of serving nutritious meals and snacks to the children (or adults) in our care. Meals served meet the nutrition requirements established by the USDA. In accordance with Federal law and the U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Parent Involvement

Parent responsibilities:

1. bring your child in on time
2. communicate with Firefly when your child will be late or absent
3. communicate with your child's teachers about their progress and what's going on at home as well
4. get to know other parents and the staff – we are a community!
5. support Firefly by spreading the word to others
6. complete your parent volunteer hours to help improve our children's experiences!
7. pay your bill on time

Parental notices will be kept near check in areas and sent to your email address on file in weekly newsletters, through our ProCare check in stations, and our Facebook Page.

Communication with parents - Parents are welcome at any time during operating hours. Brief conversations will take place with each child's parents at pick-up and drop-off times.

There will be an open-door policy at the center with a request that parents be respectful of the types of activities going on and that parents make sure their children follow the expectations of the center staff. Sometimes it can be difficult for children to know who is in charge when both parent and caregiver are present. Please help your child's caregiver by making sure that your child follows the rules and expectations put into place for all of the children (for example, sitting at the table while eating, helping clean up, or other things you hear the caregiver ask of the children.)

Although there is an open-door policy for parents, it is helpful to the caregivers if they know ahead of time if you plan to visit outside of normal pick-up and drop-off times. Because Firefly

is “family-style” childcare, when another adult enters, it is like walking into someone’s living room. All of the children recognize that someone “new” has entered their environment, and their attention is partly on you as long as you stay. It can take them awhile to get back to their normal play and learning focus. If you do come to visit, the following suggestions will make the visit more enjoyable: If you’d like alone time with your child, bring him or her to a quiet space where you can nurse, read, sing, etc. and not be interrupted.

If you’d like to see how your child interacts with other children, please ask the caregiver what work needs to be done. Children thrive when the adults in the room are engaged in meaningful activity, such as washing toys, sweeping, mending. When they see you quietly engaged in your work, they can take up *their* work, which is play.

The caregivers are responsible for every child in their care, and unexpected interruptions or too much adult conversation can keep them from focusing on the children. Please don’t think your child’s caregiver is intentionally being rude if they don’t seem to have much time for conversation. If you have something to discuss that will take a while, please set up an in-person or phone conference with the caregiver.

Parent involvement in promoting positive behavior - Through participation in the various activities at the center and open dialogue with parents and caregivers, it is our intention that the home life of the child will support the child’s life at Firefly, and vice versa.

When a child’s behavior is such that the child or other children could be harmed, the child’s caregiver will request a meeting with the parents to work out a plan for use both at home and at Firefly to help change the behavior. All efforts will be made to retain the child as long as it is clear that the family and staff are working healthily together toward a resolution and that progress is being made. If there is no significant change in behavior, or staff and parents are not supporting one another in a healthy way, the child will be exited from the program

Pick-up person under the influence - No child will be released to a person who is identifiably under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Another pick-up person on the child’s list will be called. If that fails, the child will be kept at the center until someone can be reached. The parent will be charged for any additional childcare fees incurred. If it is time for the center to close, the pick-up person will be given the option of calling a cab to pick them up and take them to a place where a responsible party will take care of the child. If all else fails, the police will be called.

Health Care and Emergencies

Childhood illness is a natural part of early childhood whether the child stays at home or is in childcare. It is not unusual for young children to have fevers, occasional colds or even illnesses such as chicken pox. Some physicians feel that such illnesses help to build the natural immune system. Many pediatricians also recognize the importance of allowing children to have fevers to help fight infections. For this reason, we encourage parents to stay home with their children when they become ill in order to allow the illness to follow its natural progression. Studies indicate that children are being given far too many antibiotics partly because parents feel a need to return to work and need “quick” remedies to get their child back to childcare.

We require that children stay home who have influenza, painful sore throats, fever, diarrhea, pink eye or have been vomiting. If they develop any of these symptoms while in care, they are to be picked up immediately. **Children who have any of these symptoms may not return to childcare until these symptoms have been gone for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication.**

Please establish a backup person for your child's care if they are ill. Ideally, when a child is ill the most important place for the child to be is at home. Healing comes from more than prescription medicine. More important is the sense of wellbeing that comes from being with one's loving parent and in one's own surroundings. If that is absolutely impossible, please do not ask Firefly to make an exception; it is against State regulations. Thank you for your cooperation on this.

Communicable Diseases - A child with a reportable communicable disease will be sent home and asked to remain home during the period the disease is communicable. Parents of other children will be notified via the message board. The appropriate public health officials will also be notified. The child may be admitted when his/her condition is no longer contagious.

Communicable diseases that must keep a child home include: pink eye, coxsackie virus, cold sores with drooling or fever, impetigo, head lice, ringworm, scabies, Hib, measles, mumps, meningococcal disease, fifth disease with fever, whooping cough, RSV, strep throat, TB chickenpox, diarrhea, hepatitis A.

Immunizations - All infants and children attending Firefly will be required to have at least the minimum required immunizations by the state of MT. If your child is NOT immunized and you would like them to attend Firefly, they will need to have at least 1 of each required immunization before starting and a Conditional Enrollment form signed by their doctor with a plan of getting caught up. We audit all immunization files every 6 months in January and June to ensure all kids are keeping up.

Dispensing medications - Caregivers may give a prescription or non-prescription medication to a child or apply skin creams or sunscreens to a child only under the following conditions:

1. A written authorization dated and signed by the parent is on file.
2. The medication is in the original container and labeled with the child's name, and the label includes the dosage and directions for administration.

Tylenol or other fever-reducing drugs will not be dispensed to any child for fever, because children with fever need to be at home.

Medical log - A written record, including type of medication given, dosage, time, date and the name of the person administering the medication, shall be made in the medical log on the same day the medication is administered.

Minor injuries - When a child receives a minor injury, the caregiver will spend a brief time soothing the child with a moist clean cloth, hugs and kisses, and a bandaid if needed, then encourage the child to return to what he or she was doing. Parents will be notified upon pickup regarding the nature of the injury.

First Aid - All caregivers will be required to learn first aid procedures, and all staff members will be required to be CPR certified.

Emergency medical facility and procedure - In case of a serious accident or injury, 911 will be called and the child will be transported to the nearest hospital by ambulance or by the parent if it is determined that an ambulance is not necessary. Parents will be notified as quickly as possible.