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**Nature’s Path**

*Dear Parent:*

*All of us at Nature’s Path would like to welcome you and your child(ren) to our community. We are excited about helping your child develop his/her God given potential.*

*This handbook outlines our policies and describes what we are all about. We are state licensed and our policies and procedures are in full compliance with Virginia regulations.*

*Thank you for choosing us to care for your most priceless possession – YOUR CHILD. We take this responsibility seriously. Therefore, you are encouraged to visit us in order to observe your child at work and play.*

*Working together, we can be a positive factor in the development of your child. Should you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call.*

*We look forward to providing you with many years of quality experiences*.

*Sincerely,*

*Nature’s Path Staff*

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

**At Nature’s Path, we recognize that children are born with the natural ability and a desire to explore, learn and develop their God given potential. It is our responsibility, as facilitators, to guide them on their journey of discovery. Using the world as our curriculum and through a program rich in literacy, creativity, problem solving, as well as physical and spiritual well-being, we will provide opportunities for growth in all areas of development including social and emotional**.

***ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITY/OPEN DOOR POLICY***

1. Enrollment is open to all children. There is no preference extended based on religious affiliation or race. Although special education services are not available at our school, every effort will be made to accommodate children with special needs. Vacancies are filled on a first come first served basis.
2. The program is designed to provide socialization skills and elementary school preparation for children ages six weeks to school age. Full and part-time programs are available.
3. We have an open-door policy which states parents may visit our school at any time.

***CHILD ADMISSION/REGISTRATION***

1. Complete an Enrollment Form.
2. Pay the Enrollment fee. This fee is non-refundable if the child does not attend or withdraws.
3. Provide:
   * An up-to-date immunization record
   * A proof of birth letter or birth certificate
   * A completed Physical Form **(#MCH – 213C**) at time of enrollment
4. Tour the facility with your child and meet his/her teacher.
5. Obtain/Adhere to the attendance schedule provided at the time of enrollment. Please, No “drops-ins” are permitted.
6. Make arrangements and receive approval from the director for ANY changes in the initial agreement of enrollment.

***TUITION***

1. There is a tuition discount for families with more than one full-time child. Full tuition is charged for the first child. A 10% discount will be given for additional children.
2. **Tuition is due at time of registration and every Friday thereafter. Tuition is due the Friday prior to the week it covers.**
3. **Payments are made by check, money order or cash.**
4. **There will be a late fee of $15.00 if tuition is not paid by noon on Monday.**
5. All returned checks will be subject to a $25.00 fee. The parent/guardian will be notified by the director and is expected to bring the account up to date within two weeks for the child to continue attending. After three incidents, you will be required to pay by money order or cashier’s check.
6. The parent/guardian is responsible for the full payment regardless of attendance. There will be no tuition credit for days missed.
7. Agreement for each child’s attendance schedule is made at the time of enrollment.
8. Children will be warmly welcomed in their classes whenever they arrive. However, parents are encouraged to have children at school by 9:00 a.m. to benefit fully from the program.
9. Parents are asked to contact the director if a child will be absent.

***TYPICAL DAILY ACTIVITY SCHEULE***

The daily schedule varies according to classroom. All classrooms offer a variety of experiences to engage the children in many different styles of learning.

Daily activities include, but are not limited to;

* Morning Meeting
* Art
* Outside time/gross motor
* Fine motor
* Learning centers (math, science, social studies, dramatic play, blocks, writing, literacy, creativity, etc.)
* Story Time
* Music and Movement
* Morning snack
* Afternoon snack (full time only)
* Lunch (full time only)
* Rest time (full time only)

***ARRIVAL / DEPARTURE***

1. The teacher will complete the “Sign In/Sign Out” sheet before the child is dropped off or picked up.
2. The child is to be escorted by an adult into the building and brought to a staff member, preferably the child’s teacher and child’s belongings be placed in their classroom.
3. The parent/guardian must clearly indicate on the Enrollment Form who may pick up their child. In case of an emergency, the parent/guardian can give a one-time only verbal permission by telephone for pick up by an individual not on the authorized list. All permanent changes, additions, and omissions must be made in writing to the director.
4. Appropriate documentation of legally enforceable custodial directives must be provided to the director by the parent when requesting restrictions on the other parent.
5. Proper identification will be requested before any child is released to an adult, if there is any question of identity.

***PERSONAL ITEMS***

1. Each child is provided with an area for their belonging. In most classrooms, it is a hook for backpacks.

2. Parents of full time children are to provide each child with a crib sheet and lightweight blanket which are to be laundered by the parent each week. Pillows and stuffed animals are not allowed.

3. Each child should have a complete change of clothes provided by the parent. Also, parents of children not yet potty-trained should provide a supply of diapers/pull-ups and diaper wipes.

4. Everything from home must be labeled.

5. Children are not permitted to bring personal toys to school.

***DRESS CODE***

The children run, jump, play and get messy every day. Play clothes are best for school. Easy to manage pants with elastic wastes are best for small children who are working on being independent on the potty. Girls are encouraged to wear shorts under their dresses. Closed toed shoes are the safest choice for play (ex.: sneakers/tennis shoes).

***Communication***

Communication is vital to a successful program. There are several ways that we will communicate with families including email, Facebook, website and school phone. We ask that parents refrain from contacting staff via text, personal email or personal Facebook. Staff have been instructed not to answer these communications.

We understand that communication with the proper parties is important so we wanted to provide the following guidelines:

* For classroom situations or questions about your child’s education or development, please speak to your child’s teacher. If the conversation will be more than a few minutes, we can schedule a conference so you will be given ample time and attention.
* For questions regarding your account, please contact Ryan via phone or email. His email is [exec.director@one-stepministries.org](mailto:exec.director@one-stepministries.org)
* For all other concerns or questions, please contact Donna via phone or email. Her email is [naturespathacademy@one-stepministries.org](mailto:naturespathacademy@one-stepministries.org).

***TIMES OF OPERATION***

We will be open Monday through Friday**, 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.** except for designated holidays.

***DESIGNATED HOLIDAYS***

We will be closed for the following holidays:

* Labor Day
* Thanksgiving Day and the day after
* Christmas Eve
* Christmas Day
* New Year’s Day
* Memorial Day
* July 4th
* Two staff development days during the school year

**\*\*\*\*\*There will be no reduction in weekly tuition for holidays.**

***INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSINGS***

**Nature’s Path will NOT follow the Virginia Beach City Public Schools closing announcements. We understand that families need to go to work and will make every effort to be open. We will announce closings on WTKR, Facebook, and our web site. We will also change the message on our school phone.**

***Emergency Parent Communication Policy***

In the event of an emergency requiring the school to close, parents will initially be notified by phone. Once notified, parents will be required to pick children up within one hour. Once all families have been contacted, they will be kept updated via social media and email if we have internet access. In the event that all emergency contacts have been exhausted and no contact has been made within two hours, Child Protective Services will be contacted.

In the event that there is an emergency that does not require the school to close, a letter will be sent home the same day to inform parents.

A copy of our **Emergency Preparedness Plan** is available in the front office.

***ACCIDENTS / INJURY***

1. Accidents/injuries will be treated with standard first aid procedures by First Aid Certified personnel.

2. Each accident/injury, its circumstances, and treatment administered will be documented on an “Accident Report.” This report will be signed by the witnessing staff member (s), the parent/guardian, and the director. They will be kept in the child’s file.

***TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT***

1. We reserve the right to terminate enrollment of any child, giving appropriate notice to the parent/guardian. Termination of a child is at the discretion of the executive director.

2**. The parent/guardian must give a two-week written notice of withdrawal prior to termination date. The parent /guardian is financially responsible for these two weeks whether the child attends or not.**

3. Children’s files will be kept for three years after termination. Only records for the previous year are immediately available. Parents/guardians can obtain copies of their child’s file from the director at the parent’s expense.

***CHILD ILLNESS***

1. KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME if you suspect your child is contagious.

2. We will notify the parent/guardian when a child is ill. The parent shall pick up their child within an hour of the notification. A child is considered ill with a temperature of 101 ◦ F or above and/or has symptoms including vomiting, chills, notable pain, diarrhea, discomfort, or an unidentified rash.

3. **The child must be symptom/fever-free and/or on an antibiotic for 24 hours before returning to school.**

4. No child will be allowed to return after an illness until he/she can participate in regular activities (including outdoor play).

5. A doctor’s note of non-contagious condition may be requested.

6. Please contact Donna via the school phone or email if your child will not be attending school.

***TRANSPORTATION***

Nature’s Path does not currently provide transportation to children nor does it offer “out of house” field trips. In house field trips occur throughout the year. Signs will be posted and visitors will be listed on the monthly calendar. If special trips are planned in the future, signed permission slips will be secured for each child.

***MEDICATION POLICY***

1. The Written Medication Consent Form must be completed by the parent/guardian. Forms are available in the school office.

2. Administration of the medication is the responsibility of Medical Administration Training (MAT) personnel. If MAT certified staff is absent, the teacher in charge will notify the parent to come and administer the medication at the CDC. If an emergency occurswewill call 911.

3. Prescription medicine must have the doctor’s label with the child’s name, date, frequency, and dosage.

4. “Over the Counter Medicines” must be in the original box and must have the medicine’s paper insert.

5. Medications must be left in the school office. All medications and forms will be reviewed for expiration on a weekly or monthly schedule.

6. Sunscreen, insect repellent, and diaper ointment may be applied to a child if the

parent signs the permission form. These ointments must be in the original container

and labeled with the child’s name.

***FOOD POLICY***

1. **PARENTS ARE TO PROVIDE LUNCHES AND SNACKS FOR THEIR CHILD(REN)**
   1. **Each child will need the following every day**
      1. **Morning snack**
      2. **Lunch**
      3. **Afternoon snack**
      4. **Water**
2. Parents are asked to send healthy choices and avoid excessive sweets, juices etc. We want to promote a healthy lifestyle.
3. All children are encouraged to feed themselves. Staff supervise the children while they eat.
4. If a child has any food allergies notify the director, who will notify appropriate staff.

***VACATION FOR CHILDREN***

1. Each child will receive one week of tuition-free “vacation” each school year. Vacation weeks may not be carried over to the next year and will not be financially reimbursed if not used.

2. The child may not attend the Center any part of the vacation week. The week must be Monday through Friday: no partial weeks.

3. The Center must be notified in writing two (2) weeks in advance of the intended vacation.

***DISCIPLINE POLICY***

The purpose of good discipline is to aid the child in gaining better control over his/her behavior. It should help him/her to find acceptable and productive ways of functioning in social and learning situations.

Positive reinforcement is ongoing throughout all activities. Children are praised and rewarded for positive behavior on a consistent and continuous basis. A child understands that positive behavior gains respect and social acceptance of others. Positive encouragement and discipline help the child move from a self-centered individual to one who respects the rights and needs of others.

If a child does not respond well to the positive reinforcement technique and should continue to display negative behavior, he/she will be removed from the group or situation.

The director and the staff members will work closely with the parents/guardians and put forth every effort in promoting positive behavior for every child. In doing so, we have realized the importance for discipline and its effect on the children we serve. In addition to conforming to discipline guidelines set forth by our state licensing authority, we have established the following guidelines for ourselves:

* Never use Corporal/Physical punishment.
* Maintain behavioral expectations that are developmentally appropriate.
* Maintain consistency in discipline.
* Act with confidence, fairness, and patience in disciplining.
* Praise and encourage good behavior, recognizing that you serve as a role model for appropriate actions.
* State suggestions or direction in a positive form. Give a child a choice only when you are willing to accept the choice he or she makes.
* Focus on the child’s action rather than the personality. Make the child feel worthwhile and liked.
* Use a kind, firm voice when disciplining. Use words and a tone of voice which will help the child feel confident and reassured.
* Use “Quiet Time” and “Cool Down” when a child needs time away from the group. It provides the child an opportunity to take a break and reset. The child should be allowed to reenter the group when he/she feels ready.
* Make sure consequences of misbehavior are immediate, of short duration, and appropriate for the act.
* Refrain from punishment that is associated with food, naps, or bathroom procedures.
* ALWAYS remind the child that you like her/him. It is the behavior that is in question, inappropriate, or disliked.

***REFERRAL***

* 1. A child who, on a consistent basis, exhibits behavior that is not age appropriate and/or does not respond to typical behavioral management techniques, will be referred to the director.
  2. The director will refine methods used with the child and notify the parents/guardians of the concern.
  3. Should further evaluation be deemed necessary, parents/guardians will be referred to an appropriate agency.
  4. Should a child’s behavior continue to be dysfunctional to the extent that a classroom cannot operate safely or the care and development of other children is being impeded when the child is present, the Director will notify the parents and the child’s enrollment will be terminated. Every effort will be made to provide as much notice as possible so that alternative care arrangements can be made.

***LATE PICK-UP***

* All children must be picked up by 6:00 p.m. A charge of $10.00 for each 15 minutes, or fraction therein, will be charged after that time. This fee must be paid before the child returns to school.
* Should a child remain after 6:00, attempts will be made to contact the parents/guardians and alternate contacts. At 7:00 p.m., if the school has not been contacted by the child’s family, Child Protective Services will be notified. Re-admittance of the child to the school will be decided on an individual basis.
* Chronic incidents of late pick-up will result in termination of enrollment.

***REGULATORY STANDARDS***

Nature’s Path is fully licensed by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The school’s standards, health, safety, and fire code policies are those set forth or exceeding the follow publications:

1. Minimum Standards for Licensed Day Care Centers

(Published by the Virginia Department of Social Services)

2. United States Department of Agriculture Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

3. Regulations of the Board of Health Governing Restaurants

Copies of these publications are available for review in the Center office.

***LICENSING INFORMATION***

Employees of Nature’s Path are designated by the Commonwealth of Virginia as being an obligatory profession, which requires them to report all suspicions of child abuse or they can be charged with the crime of not reporting it. There is no statute of limitations for this charge, which means, that an employee can be charged for not reporting their suspicions any number of years in the future.

The Commonwealth of Virginia helps assure parents the child day programs that assume the responsibility for the supervision, protection, and well-being of a child for any part of a 24-hour day are safe. Title 63.1, Chapter 10 of the code of Virginia gives the Department of Social Services authority to license these programs. While there are some legislative exemptions to licensure, licensed programs include child day center, family day homes, child day center systems, and family day systems. The state may also voluntarily register day homes not required to be licensed.

Standards for licensed day centers address certain health procedures, adequate play space, a ratio of children per staff member, equipment, program, and record keeping. Criminal records checks and specific qualifications for staff and most volunteers working directly with children are also required. Standards require the facility to meet fire, health, and building codes. The Code of Virginia law, 63.2-1509 requires that we report any suspected incidents of child abuse.

Compliance with standards is determined by announced and unannounced visits to the program by licensing staff within the Department of Social Services. In addition, parents or other individuals my register a complaint about a program which will be investigated if violates a standard.

Three types of licenses may be issued to programs. Conditional Licenses may be issued to a new program to allow up to six months for the program to demonstrate compliance with the standards. A regular license is issued when the program substantially meets the standards for licensure. A provisional license, which cannot exceed six months, is issued when the program is temporarily unable to comply with the standards. Operating without a license when required constitutes a misdemeanor which, upon conviction, can be punishable by a fine of up to $100 or imprisonment of up to 12 months or both for each day’s violation.

If you would like additional information about licensing of child day programs or would like to register a complaint, please contact the Regional Office of Social Services closet to you. The Virginia Beach Regional Office can be reached at:

Eastern Regional Office

Pembroke Office Park

Pembroke Four Office Building, Suite 300

Virginia Beach, VA 23462-5496

(757)473-2116

***Mandated Reporting***

**All staff of Nature’s Path are mandated to report suspected child abuse/neglect to Child Protective Services.**

**After School Program**

Nature’s Path offers after school care. Children who attend neighborhood schools in the same zone as the school will be bused by the Virginia Beach Public School system buses. Transportation will have to be provided for all other children. We offer care for kindergarten through fifth grade students.

**Children are welcome at Nature’s Path on days that the public schools are closed or have early dismissal. This includes holidays and staff days that Nature’s Path is open.**

**All Nature’s Path policies apply to the aftercare program.**