Open arms
LUTHERAN • CHILD • DEVELOPMENT • CENTER

Family Handbook

Kisha Torres, Executive Director

Pastor Aaron Sterling

Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church

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Openarmspreschool.org

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Welcome to Open Arms! Our Philosophy and Mission

Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center opened its doors in 1990 and is a ministry partner with Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church (CTS). Together, the Church and Center provide opportunities for families in Alpharetta and surrounding communities to learn about Jesus Christ, worship, and grow in Christian faith.

Our Center is located at 4655 Webb Bridge Road in Alpharetta, Georgia. A Christian atmosphere permeates the school: prayer is offered before snacks and lunch, religious holidays are celebrated, Bible stories and songs are shared, and all children participate in weekly chapel.

Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation licensed by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. We welcome children of all races, colors, and creeds, ages eight weeks through 11 years. To ensure quality and compliance, the school undergoes a minimum of two reviews annually.

Open Arms is proud to be a Georgia Quality Rated program, meeting the state's highest standards for early childhood education. This rating reflects our commitment to providing a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment where children can grow, learn, and thrive.

Dear Families,

Welcome to Open Arms! We are truly delighted you have chosen our Lutheran-Christian preschool for your child's early learning journey. Our mission is to provide a nurturing, faith-centered environment where children can grow spiritually, socially, and academically.

At Open Arms, we embrace a play-based approach to learning, guided by Christian values. Each day, children are encouraged to explore, discover, and develop a love of learning while building confidence, curiosity, and kindness. Our goal is to foster both creativity and a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Our dedicated staff is committed to working in partnership with you to support your child's development and well-being. Together, we create a community where faith, learning, and love come together, helping each child reach their fullest potential.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child. We look forward to a wonderful year filled with growth, joy, and discovery.

With blessings,
Kisha Torres
Executive Director, Open Arms

PHILOSOPHY

At Open Arms, we are proud to offer a preschool program rooted in our faith tradition while fostering a love of learning through play. Our curriculum emphasizes hands-on exploration, creative expression, and social-emotional growth, all guided by Christian values. While we celebrate and share our faith, we also honor each child's unique journey and background, helping them grow spiritually, emotionally, and academically through meaningful, play-based experiences.

It is our philosophy to:

- Value each child as a unique and special child of God because Jesus Christ died and rose for all children,
- Nurture individuality and diversity,
- Instill respect in each child for themselves, others, and the world around them,
- Promote life-long learning, creativity, and Christian values.

Scripture reference:

Proverbs 22:6	Train a child in the way he/she should go, and when he/she is old, he/she will not turn from it.
Matthew 18:5	And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.
Ephesians 5:21	Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Mission Statement

Open Arms LCDC , (Lutheran Child Development Center) will provide tender, loving care to young children while reaching out to them and their families in various ways with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We will seek to carry out Christ's mission to "let the little children come to me" (Mark 10:14) by encouraging faith development in children and their families by incorporating Christian emphasis into each day's lessons as well as modeling the examples Jesus gives us in His Word.

We believe that parents are the primary educators of children, and we will strive to support the teaching role of parents by providing information and sharing insights on child growth and development.

Oversight & Governance

Open Arms is governed by the Open Arms Board which reports to the Church Council of Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church. The Board members will be members of CTS. The purpose of the Board is to ensure that Open Arms is functioning as established and to provide direction and support to the Director when needed. The Board assists the Director in the areas of policy, personnel and finance.

Dear Families of Open Arms,

I want to take a moment to extend a heartfelt welcome to you. Whether you've been with us for years or are just beginning your journey here, we are so grateful for the opportunity to care for your child and support your family.
Open Arms is the longest-standing ministry of Christ the Shepherd, and it's a place we're deeply proud of—because it is built on a foundation of love, grace, and the hope we have in Jesus Christ. It is our joy and privilege to serve you not only through education and care, but also through the life of our church family.
We warmly invite you to join us for worship on Sunday mornings—to share in the peace and encouragement that comes from gathering in faith. Whether you're exploring spiritual questions, seeking a church home, or simply looking for a supportive community, there is a place for you here.
If you or your family ever find yourselves in need—spiritually, emotionally, or practically—please don't hesitate to reach out. Our pastors and congregation are here to walk with you.
We believe every family is a gift from God, and we would be honored to get to know yours more deeply. Please feel free to stop by, ask questions, or simply come as you are. There is grace enough for all.

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Aaron

Email: pastoraaron@cts.org **Website:** cts.org **Worship Times:** Sundays 8:30 & 10:45 AM

Staff Qualifications

At Open Arms, we are committed to maintaining a team of highly qualified, caring, and experienced educators. All employees undergo thorough background checks and interviews to ensure their experience, skills, and values align with our school community. Staff must demonstrate a genuine love for, and respect toward, working with children.

To maintain the highest standards of safety, all staff receive bi-annual First Aid and CPR training, as well as mandatory child abuse reporter training. Employees complete orientation training in accordance with *Bright from the Start* and *Open Arms* policies and participate in annual professional development and early childhood education training to ensure best practices are consistently refreshed and applied.

Staff must meet all position-specific requirements outlined by *Bright from the Start*, which may include, but are not limited to, supervision, supporting age-appropriate learning and relationships, and health and safety training.

Teachers and Assistant Teachers

- **Lead Teachers** hold the required educational credentials in Early Childhood Education (such as a CDA or a degree in Early Childhood Development) or a related field, or are actively working toward them, and participate in ongoing professional development.
- **Assistant Teachers** support lead teachers in classroom management and instruction, meet state requirements, and complete mandatory safety and child abuse training.
- **All staff** adhere to *Bright from the Start* guidelines for classroom ratios, curriculum, and health and safety.

Georgia Pre-K Teacher Qualifications

At Open Arms, our Georgia Pre-K classrooms are led by caring, qualified educators who meet all requirements set by *Bright from the Start (DECAL).*

- Lead Teachers hold a degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field. Many also have a Child Development Associate (CDA**)** credential, showing specialized training in early learning.
- Assistant Teachers support classroom instruction and meet state requirements, which may include a CDA, paraprofessional certificate, or college degree.
- Each classroom always has two qualified adults present throughout the school day.

A CDA is a nationally recognized certification that demonstrates a teacher's specialized knowledge and competence in early childhood education, often specific to an age group. We actively support our staff in maintaining their CDA credentials and encourage others to pursue and earn theirs as part of their professional growth. This commitment ensures that our classrooms are led by educators who are both well-trained and passionate about creating nurturing, developmentally appropriate learning environments for young children.

General Information and Operations

Our Administrative Leadership Contact:

Executive Director, Kisha Torres: director@openarmspreschool.org

Finance Administrator: Laura Gerlach: finance@openarmspreschool.org

Office Assistant: assistant@openarmspreschool.org

Home Away from Home

Open Arms is unique in that it was built by a church specifically for the comfort, education and care of young children. The physical structure of Open Arms was designed to take advantage of our unique site. The building was planned with attention to the little ones and with more space than required. Older children are in a separate hallway from the younger ones. The building is secure, cheery, warm, childlike, open to the outside world, and provides fun in the function.

The fenced playground takes advantage of the natural beauty of the site, including the forest, and surrounding fields. Resilient surfaces are used.

The building is constructed of non-combustible material and equipped with sprinklers and smoke detectors. Emergency exit routes are posted in each classroom and near each exit. Fire and emergency evacuation drills are conducted regularly. Each room has two exits, one each to the outside. Building access is strictly controlled. Fobs are provided to enrolled families. Cameras have also been installed in each classroom and in some common areas for management to review for safety and quality assurance.

Facility Maintenance

Open Arms regularly performs maintenance and upkeep, including landscaping and building care, to ensure the facility remains safe, clean, and compliant with all health, city, and licensing requirements. If you notice any concerns with the facility, please inform the director so that we can address the issue promptly, based on urgency or need, and make any necessary repairs or improvements.

Hours of Operation

The center operates from 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM, Monday through Friday, year-round. Please check our website for the current school year calendar. A copy is also available at the front office and should be posted outside your child's classroom.

Schedule options are outlined in our Tuition and Schedule form. Please request a copy if needed. It is also included in the enrollment packet.

Early drop-off is not permitted without prior approval for special circumstances. Students may arrive no earlier than five minutes before the start of their registered schedule. For example, an 8:00 AM student may be dropped off no earlier than 7:55 AM. Fees for early and late drop off/arrivals outlined in the Financial Agreement.

Open Arms follows the inclement weather closing policy for Fulton County Public Schools. If Fulton County closes schools due to inclement weather, Open Arms will also close. State or federal orders (such as a State of Emergency) will also be observed. Emergency closures will be announced on local radio, TV, and streaming services. Open Arms will make every effort to communicate closures via email and brightwheel.

Building Security & Fob Use

Our campus entrances are secured with key fobs to ensure a safe environment for all children and staff. Each family will receive access materials upon enrollment, which must be returned when your child's enrollment ends.

Guidelines for Families:

- Every person entering must use their own fob; please do not allow others to enter with you ("piggybacking").
- Staff are present in the lobby during peak drop-off and pick-up times and may use a buzzer to unlock doors for known individuals.
- Always communicate any security concerns to the Director or an administrator.

Visitor Protocols:

All visitors and vendors must sign the Visitor Log and wear a Visitor Badge while on campus. Identification may be requested and copied if necessary to verify identity and maintain accurate visitor records. Vendors working directly with children must have cleared background checks in accordance with school policy.

Our building is equipped with secure entry points, surveillance systems, and staff monitoring. Families play an essential role by following all security procedures to help keep our campus safe.

Entrance and Security

Entrance into the school requires a fob provided by the office. A charge per fob of $25.00 will be placed on each account upon enrollment. When your child has graduated or withdrawn from Open Arms, the charges will be credited on the account upon the last week of enrollment with the fob (s) being returned to the office. Families who do not return or lose fobs will not receive the credit back to their account and/or will be charged per fob not returned.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Our goal is to provide the best care for your child at all times. Children can become anxious when it is time to go home and no one has arrived, and it also impacts on the teacher's ability to complete their closing and cleaning duties.

- If a child is not picked up by 6:30 PM, Open Arms staff will attempt to contact parents or legal guardians between 6:30–6:45 PM.
- If parents cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called between 6:45–7:00 PM.
- If no one can be reached by 7:00 PM, staff will contact the local police department and/or Bright from the Start**.**
- Fees in accordance with late pick-ups are outlined in our Financial Agreement. Fees begin to accrue at 6:31 PM

Enrollment and Tuition

Admission Policy

The Center admits children regardless of race, color, or faith. Each child must be at least eight weeks old. We serve children up to 11 years old for aftercare, and summer camp for children who have completed 4th Grade. To confirm enrollment, a parent or legal guardian must complete an enrollment packet and submit the registration payment. Enrollment is rolling and placement is based on availability. Waitlists will be established when classrooms are filled.

Required Student Records

Your child's records will be maintained in a secure, accessible manner in the office of Open Arms. A completed file must contain the following and be submitted prior to your child attending, and may be asked to be updated annually to obtain current contact information and update families on revised school policies:

1. Open Arms Enrollment Form
2. Schedule Agreement
3. Parent Agreement
4. Financial Agreement
5. Emergency Contact Information Form

6. Food and Allergy Restriction Form
7. Classroom Information Form
8. Immunization 3231 or Exemption Form
9. 3300 Forms (GA Pre-K students only)
10. Medication Authorizations
11. Field Trip Forms
12. Van Transportation Agreement

Information pertaining to your child will not be disclosed to people other than the center staff or other authorized personnel unless you have granted written permission to do so, or in an emergency.

Hours and Cost

Schedule options and Tuition are reviewed and subject to change annually. Please ask for a current tuition and schedule form for details.

Registration

An initial registration fee will be assessed per child at the time of enrollment. This non-refundable fee secures your child's space. A reduced fee will apply for additional children, with a family maximum registration cost in place.

Supply Fee

- An **Annual (non-refundable) fee** will be assessed per child each August and upon initial registration for the school year (August-May). For children enrolling after August, the fee will be prorated based on their start date.
- A **Summer Supply (non-refundable) fee** will be assessed on June 1st for all enrolled families. This fee is not prorated. Full details and rates are outlined in the Financial Agreement and/or Tuition and Schedule Form.

Summer campers will pay a weekly activity fee based on the weeks they are registered and will not be charged the summer supply fee.

School Entry and Fob Policy

Entrance to the school requires a key fob issued by the office. A $25 charge per fob will be added to each family's account at the time of enrollment.

When a child graduates or withdraws from Open Arms, the fob(s) must be returned during the final week of enrollment for the charge to be credited or refunded. Families who do not return their fob(s) or who lose them will forfeit the credit and/or be charged for any unreturned or lost fobs.

Tuition and Payments

Regular tuition is due each Monday by 6:30 PM for the current week. Monthly tuition is due on the first of each month. Tuition must be paid in full and will not be reduced or prorated for absences, regardless of the reason.

This policy is in place because staff compensation and other operational expenses are based on our current enrollment levels, which remain the same even if your child is absent. Tuition is calculated on an annual basis and already accounts for planned closures, holidays, and other events.

A past due payment penalty will be assessed by Wednesday mid-day if there is a balance due at that time. This provides a sufficient grace period for both full and part-time families.

Open Arms accepts Visa, MasterCard, Discover (credit/debit cards), and ACH payments. Families may make payments by:

- Visiting the school office
- Paying over the phone
- Setting up Autopay through Tuition Express (preferred and most convenient method)

Enrollment for Tuition Express can be completed through your student enrollment packet, or a link to set up automatic recurring tuition can be emailed upon request.

For any other billing questions or concerns, please contact the **Finance Administrator** at finance@openarmspreschool.org

Checks can be made payable to: Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center. A charge of $30.00 will be applied to all returned checks. After the second returned check, fees will be accepted only as cash or certified funds.

If an account remains delinquent for three weeks, and no arrangement has been made regarding bringing the account current, the children may be withdrawn until the debt is resolved.

Financial aid and scholarship opportunities may be available. Needs should be discussed with the Director. An application or contract may be asked to be submitted or completed, as well as proof of hardship to qualify.

Absences, Vacation, and Billing Policy

There are no make-up days, credits, or refunds for absences, holidays, weather-related closures, or illness, with the following exception: families are granted **one week of vacation/absent credit per school year**. School year is considered August-July as to include the summer months for families attending.

To qualify for this benefit:

- Your child must be enrolled for at least 90 days prior to the requested absence.
- Your account must be current on all payments.
- Written notice must be provided at least one week prior to the start of the vacation week.
- Children cannot be in attendance to receive the credit.

Extended Absences:

For absences longer than four consecutive weeks between August and May, families may request extended leave under the following terms:

• A new registration fee will be required prior to the child's departure to hold their spot according to our first-come, first-served policy, with a return date provided for planning purposes.
• A new supply fee will be required based upon the child's return date.
• Tuition will not be prorated based on the child's return date. Families billed monthly are responsible for the full month, and families billed weekly are responsible for the full week.
• If other prospective families have already paid their registration fee and is waiting for a spot during your child's absence, your child's space is not guaranteed and will be placed on a waitlist based on the order received (enrollment forms and registration payment).
• Families utilizing this option forfeit their one-week vacation/absence credit for the school year.
• Any unique discounts or scholarships will be nullified, and re-application may be required.

This option is intended only for special circumstances. Frequent enrollment interruptions are not encouraged, as they can disrupt classroom consistency during the academic school year and your child's placement.

Summer Note: For the months of June and July for our year-round programs (all classrooms except GA Pre-K, PPK, and Aftercare), the extended absence guidelines above do not apply, as we recognize this is a time for family travel and time away. A registration fee is required to hold your child's spot for an August start. Tuition will be prorated, if necessary, but your child must return to begin school no later than the end of August. Scholarships will remain in place if it falls within the dates of the scholarship terms.

After-School Students (School Age and GA Pre-K):

- No charges for extended day care or meal fees (GA Pre-K) will be applied when Fulton County Public Schools are closed according to the Fulton County calendar (e.g., Fall Break, Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break. Spring Break).
- Drop-in rates still apply for optional attendance.

Early Drop-Off and Late Pick-Up

Open Arms has an Early Drop-Off and Late Pick-Up policy in place to ensure smooth operations and fairness for all families. A five-minute grace period is allowed for arrivals or pick-ups outside of scheduled times. After this grace period, the applicable fees will be charged as outlined in the Financial Agreement. For closing hours, no grace period applies, and late fees begin promptly at 6:31 PM. Please refer to the Financial Agreement provided at enrollment for the full fee structure. Policies and terms are subject to change with prior notice.

Withdrawal Policy

If it becomes necessary to withdraw your child from Open Arms, a written notice must be submitted to the Finance Administrator.

Full-Day Students:
A two-week notice is required. If proper notice is not given, two additional weeks of tuition will be assessed.

Half-Day Students:
A 30-day notice is required. The last month of tuition must be paid in full, and your child is welcome to attend during that month.

Written notice can be emailed directly to **finance@openarmspreschool.org**. Withdrawal forms are also required and will be provided when notice is given.

Delinquent Account & Collection Policy

<u>Compassion & Confidentiality</u>
We understand that financial hardship can arise unexpectedly. Our goal is to work collaboratively with families to find fair and reasonable solutions while maintaining confidentiality and treating all parties with dignity and respect.

<u>Collection Agency Referral</u>
Accounts that remain 90 days past due, with no response or established payment plan, will be referred to a licensed collection agency for recovery. Families will receive a minimum of two written notices (via email and certified mail) and one final courtesy call before the referral occurs.
• If a family is actively communicating and making timely, consistent payments, their account will not be sent to collections.

Reinstatement After Collection

Families wishing to return after an account has been sent to collections must first pay all outstanding balances in full, including any applicable collection fees, before reenrollment will be considered. A pre-payment plan may also be required prior to reenrollment to ensure that future payments remain current and prevent recurrence of non-payment.

School and Parent Partnership

Parent Participation and Conduct

Open Arms welcomes parent participation and values parent input. Parents play a crucial role in the academic, social, emotional, and physical development of their children. Our program is committed to ensuring that our families, children and staff feel happy, safe, and secure, while having the maximum opportunity to learn and grow.

As members of our school community, parents are expected to conduct themselves in a lawful, ethical, safe, respectful and responsible manner. This includes:

- Respecting the rights of all children, families, and staff.
- Recognizing the expertise, experience, and qualifications of our staff.
- Following school policies and procedures.
- Refraining from harassment, inappropriate behavior, or romantic relationships with staff.
- Respecting school property and the property of others.

Consequences of a Breach of the Parent Code of Conduct

Any parent or staff member of Open Arms may bring concerns about a possible breach of the Parent Code of Conduct to the attention of the Director, Office Manager, or a member of the Board. Once a concern is reported, it will be reviewed and investigated. If it is determined that a breach has occurred, the following actions may be taken depending on the severity and circumstances:

- **Warning:** A first and/or final warning may be issued, making clear that the behavior is not acceptable and that further breaches will not be tolerated.
- **Mediation/Resolution:** In some cases, the situation may be addressed through mediation, which may include a private apology or other appropriate resolution between the parties involved.
- **Notice of Withdrawal:** If the breach involves behavior deemed unacceptable or poses a risk to the safety and well-being of others, the Director or Board President may issue a notice of withdrawal from Open Arms.

- **Escalation to Authorities:** In extreme cases, where behavior threatens safety or violates the law, law enforcement or government agencies may be contacted.

The individual who raised the concern will be notified that the matter has been addressed, though details of the investigation may remain confidential to protect privacy.

Parent Information and Involvement

Parents and family members receive information in several ways. There is a parent table and bulletin board in the common area with licensing information, emergency procedures and other program information. On the bulletin board by each classroom door your child's teacher will post any pertinent information she/he may have for you. Each month, there is a newsletter available on the parent information table from the Director with important updates. Teachers will update brightwheel daily with news and information, typically specific to the classroom. Lastly, parents are always welcome to call the office with any questions or discussion items. Please be sure to keep the office updated with email and phone number to ensure that communications are deliverable.

It is part of our philosophy to bring together the child's school and home environments. It is to the child's advantage that we work together cooperatively. A child receives a great deal of satisfaction when parents are interested and involved in the life of the school. Towards this end, we have an open-door policy and invite you to come and share your special talents. Visits to Open Arms by parents are always welcome. We do require that if you wish to visit your children's classroom, you first make arrangements with the Director or an office administrator.

Communication with Families

Open Arms value clear and consistent communication with our families. We use multiple channels to keep you informed and engaged:

- **Email:** Important updates, reminders, billing and announcements are sent via email. Please check your inbox regularly.
- **brightwheel:** Brightwheel is a childcare management app that lets staff track attendance, daily activities, and communicate with parents. Daily reports, messages, pictures, videos, and classroom updates are shared through the app. We encourage families to check brightwheel at least once per day for updates on their child's activities, meals, and milestones.
- **Open Door Policy:** Parents are always welcome to speak with teachers or administration in person. We encourage scheduled meetings for in-depth discussions, but brief questions or updates can be addressed as needed.
- **Newsletters:** Monthly newsletters provide information about classroom activities, upcoming events, themes, staff highlights, and other important school-wide news.
- **Facebook:** Photos, events, and announcements may be shared on our official Facebook page. Families should follow our pages for updates and fun highlights. Group is Open Arms Lutheran CDC-Alpharetta GA.

- **Bulletin Boards and Front Table**: Important notices, calendars, menus, and other school information are posted in visible areas throughout the school, including classroom doors and the main entrance (Grace Place). Families are encouraged to check these areas regularly to stay informed about events, deadlines, health notices, classroom updates and more.

Frequency:

- Daily updates via brightwheel.
- Weekly reminders or alerts via email as needed.
- Monthly newsletters for school-wide information and upcoming events.
- Social media updates regularly to showcase classroom highlights, reminders and community activities.

We encourage families to reach out proactively if questions or concerns arise. Open Arms is committed to fostering open, transparent, and timely communication to support your child's growth and well-being.

Grievance Procedure

All grievances should be brought to the attention of the Center Director. Caregivers are responsible for implementing Open Arms policies. Open Arms has a Board of Directors that supports the Administration and Teaching Staff by establishing policy and helping with conflict and decision-making. If a family is not satisfied with the Director's response to a grievance, they are invited to contact the President of the Board of Director's for further discussion. The Board can be contacted at: board@openarmspreschool.org

Daily Procedures

Arrival Time

The school is open for care starting at 6:30 AM for full-time families. Children should be dropped no later than **9:30 AM** each day unless a doctor's note or other official notice from an agency is provided, or a late drop off fee is applicable. Late arrivals disrupt class routines and impact the learning and focus of our students.

Attendance

Teachers record attendance daily with a physical check in and out roster and through brightwheel. Consistent attendance is important for your child's growth and success at Open Arms. A regular routine helps children feel secure, build strong relationships, and fully engage in the learning opportunities provided each day. The Georgia Pre-K Program has its own specific attendance requirements and policies. Families with children enrolled in GA Pre-K should refer to the GA Pre-K Parent Handbook for full details and expectations.

Parking Lot Safety

- Please drive slowly and use extra caution in areas where children may be present.
- Cell phone use is not permitted while driving near the school.
- Please hold your child's hand and ensure they cross the parking lot safely.

General Carline

- Pull up under the school portico for drop-off and pick-up and quickly drop off your child to keep the line moving.
- If you need more time dropping off or picking up your child, please park in the parking lot to prevent blocking other cars.
- We appreciate your patience, and please attempt not to pass other vehicles. Alternatively, you may park in the front portion of the church lot.

GA Pre-K Carline

- Morning carline runs between 7:50 – 8:00 AM by the church portico. Please drive slowly and stay alert, as families and staff may be walking in the parking lot.
- Afternoon carline runs approximately between 2:25 – 2:45 PM. Follow safety procedures outlined above.
- Morning drop-off: Please allow the teacher to help get your child out of their car seat.
- Afternoon pick-up**:** Please exit your vehicle and assist your child in getting buckled if needed.

Drop-Off Procedures

- Always ensure the teacher is aware when you are dropping off your child. A verbal exchange or eye contact with the teacher is necessary for proper supervision.
- Staff will greet each child warmly at arrival and support a smooth transition into the classroom.
- Please say goodbyes lovingly and promptly; lingering can create additional separation anxiety. Affirm to your child that you (or another trusted and approved pick up) will return to pick them up later.

Pick-Up Procedures

- Only adults 18 years and older who are listed on the child's approved pick-up list may pick up.
- Photo ID may be requested at any time to verify identity.
- For security reasons, children will only be released to authorized adults listed in the enrollment file.
- Always ensure the teacher is aware when you are picking up your child. A verbal exchange or eye contact with the teacher is necessary for proper supervision.
- Please ensure any used or soiled items are taken home each day.

- Review your child's clothing and items in their cubby to ensure they have all items needed for the upcoming day.

Custody & Legal Considerations

- If there is a custody issue or legal restriction preventing a parent from contact with their child, a current legal document must be provided to the school leadership.
- Without such documentation, the school cannot deny a parent's right to pick up their child if they were listed on the enrollment documentation or can prove legal custody.

Calendars

- The Open Arms School Calendar and the GA Pre-K Calendar are posted in each classroom, available on our website, and copies are available at the front office. Families are encouraged to keep a copy for reference.

Daily Activities, Lesson Plans & Schedules are posted outside each classroom and available upon request.

Naptime

All younger children are required to rest quietly after lunch. The length of time will depend on the child's age, and nap schedules will be on the classroom daily schedule posted outside of the classroom. The room is quiet, lights are turned off or lowered, and the teacher discourages extensive talk or physical activity. A restless child may be soothed with a back rub or given a quiet activity that will not disrupt the classroom. Please bring your child a comfort blanket for Pre-toddlers (12 months +) and older and take it home Friday to be washed. In the unlikely event of an emergency situation, children may not have time to put shoes on and may be at risk from broken glass or other hazards. For this reason, children must keep shoes on at all times, even during naps.

What to Bring

All personal items should be labeled with your child's first and last name, including sleep sacks, blankets, clothing, bottles, and bags. Open Arms is not responsible for lost or broken items.

Children should come to school in comfortable play clothes that allow for movement and independence. We encourage self-help skills, so especially during toilet training, please dress your child in bottoms that are loose-fitting and easy to pull up and down.

- **Change of Clothes:** 2-3 complete sets of clean clothing (including socks) must be kept at school daily. Please place items in a labeled Zip-loc bag for your child's cubby.

- **Soiled Clothing:** If clothing becomes wet or dirty, it will be placed in a sealed bag in your child's cubby to be taken home daily.
- **Outdoor Play:** Children participate in both indoor and outdoor activities, including water play. Clothing should be weather-appropriate and able to get dirty.
- **Outerwear:** Jackets, sweaters, or other seasonal items must be labeled.
- **Shoes:** Safe play shoes are required. Dress shoes, cowboy boots, rubber boots, flip-flops, or backless sandals are not permitted, as they pose a safety risk and may prevent participation in playground activities.

Rest Time Items

Small pillows, sleep sacks, and blankets from home are welcome for rest time only. All rest items must be labeled, sent home each Friday, and washed before returning on Monday.

Other Personal Items

- **Toys from Home:** Toys should not be brought to school unless specifically requested by the teacher for a special activity.
- **Water Bottles:** A labeled water bottle may be brought daily and must be taken home for cleaning each evening.
- **Prohibited Items:** Weapons or replicas of weapons are not permitted on campus at any time.

Lost and Found

A Lost and Found bin is located in Grace Place, our main entrance and multi-purpose chapel area. If your child is missing an item, please check this area regularly. Unclaimed items will be donated after advance notice is sent to families.

Infant Care & Daily Schedules

We recognize that infants thrive on consistency and familiar routines. Families will be asked to complete the infant daily schedule form for their infant, including feeding, sleeping, and other care routines. Teachers will follow this schedule as closely as possible and will communicate with families about any necessary adjustments.

Schedules will need to be updated as your child grows and their needs change. Feeding schedules are required for all children 12 months and younger. Please also refer to the Safe Sleep Requirements outlined in our Health and Safety section.

Teachers will provide updates through brightwheel throughout the day, including:

- Foods your child has eaten
- Length of naps
- Mood and activity levels
- Symptoms of illness or discomfort, if observed
- Special experiences or achievements (such as a first step or new word)

This ensures you remain connected to your child's day and milestones.

Infant Supplies

Families with infants are asked to provide the following items for daily care. All items must be clearly labeled with your child's first and last name. Open Arms is not responsible for lost or damaged items.

Bottles & Feeding Supplies

- Enough prepared bottles of either breast or formula milk for the entire day, labeled with your child's name, date and order of when to provide each bottle
- Bottles will be warmed as needed or requested
- Baby food jars/pouches or cereals as your child's diet advances

Diapering Supplies

- A full supply of diapers
- A full package of baby wipes (restocked as needed)
- Diaper creams/ointments with a signed medication form (if applicable)

Clothing & Comfort

- At least 2-3 complete changes of clothing, including socks available daily.
- A sleep sack (blankets are not permitted in infant cribs per state regulations)
- Pacifiers (if used), labeled and stored in a clean container

All bottles, food, and other used or soiled personal items must be taken home each day for cleaning and replenishment.

Programs and Learning

Open Arms & Christ the Shepherd: A Partnership in Faith and Learning

Open Arms works in partnership with Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church to spiritually enrich the lives of each child in our care. This meaningful collaboration is led by Pastor Aaron Sterling and Aubrey Rathke, Director of Children's Ministries. Together, we strive not only to support each child's spiritual growth but also to care for the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of Open Arms staff and families.

At the heart of Christian education at Open Arms is the Word of God. Each week, children engage with a new Bible story or lesson, both in the classroom and during our Wednesday chapel services. We use the *Wonder Ink* curriculum, a Christ-centered program designed to teach four core truths:

- God knows me
- Jesus loves me
- The Holy Spirit leads me
- I am a child of God

Wednesday chapel provides a special opportunity for children to grow in faith through biblically rich teachings, foundational faith songs, a predictable and comforting structure—and of course, time for fun with friends.

We believe that faith is a journey, and at Open Arms, we are dedicated to helping children build a strong spiritual foundation grounded in God's Word.

In the Classroom

Open Arms' program involves teaching, storytelling, sharing, music, playing, and chapel in an informal, Christian home-like environment. We believe that hearing Bible stories is an important part of the development of a child because of what it teaches about God's love for the world, especially shown through Jesus Christ. We also believe that each child's personality is unique. We promote individuality, confidence, kindness and self-discipline both in individual and group situations.

Our curriculum is designed to provide experiences and activities to meet your child's spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual, and physical needs. Your child will be guided to take part in small and large group activities. This combination of experiences will broaden your child's aptitude for future school experiences, while allowing freedom for imagination and creativity. Children are attended to at all times by trained and experienced caregivers.

We will guide your child to:

- become aware of and have an interest in the world about him/her
- develop a sense of pride in his/herself, school, church, and nation
- make a happy transition from home life to school life

- talk to God through a regular practice of prayer
- work and play comfortably with other children
- manifest some degree of self-discipline and self-control
- hear basic Bible stories and relate them to living now
- grow in verbal, sensorimotor and conceptual skills
- observe and use simple health and safety rules
- help think and act for self while growing in common courtesies

The program offers daily outdoor play through games, exploring and exercise. Indoor activities include both teacher and child-directed opportunities, including play with developmentally appropriate toys, sensory play, prayers, Bible stories, music, chapel, story time, nature study. Classroom have learning centers including Science and Sensory, Home-Living, Blocks, Math and Manipulatives Language and Writing. The ages of children determine which centers are appropriate for each classroom.

Class Size

The population of each classroom depends on the age of the child. While classrooms may at times operate at the state-required ratios, Open Arms strives to maintain lower ratios whenever possible in order to support quality care and individualized attention.

Ages of Children	Staff to Child/Ratio	Max Class Size
Infants/children under 18 months who are not walking	1:6	12
One year old (1) who are walking	1:8	16
Two years old (2)	1:10	20
Three years old (3)	1:15	30
Four years old (4)	1:18	36
Five years old (5)	1:20	40
Six years old (6) and older	1:25	50

Infants, Toddlers, and Two's

An infant's capacity to learn is present from birth. Infants learn about their world primarily through social contact. Every infant is an individual with a unique temperament, possessing abilities which change with development. Although the rate, pattern, and quality of development vary from child to child, all infants progress through similar stages of development. Our infant and toddler program are closely attuned to the predictable sequences of normal infant development in the areas of motor skills, communication, cognition and socialization. This occurs through the caregivers playing with the children, talking to them, making faces, responding to them. Consistency in response makes the child's environment more predictable and comfortable. Varied experiences such as textures, different foods, shapes and sounds, going for strolls outdoors, watching birds and animals, helping to stimulate your child.

Throughout our Center, no child is ever left unattended, even when asleep. Our staff is highly qualified, loving, and patient. Because of our low child/staff ratio, a great deal of time is allowed for holding and cuddling the children. We do our best to minimize/avoid "cry it out" but rather try to comfort the child in every way possible. We encourage nursing mothers to continue as their individual schedule permits. Bottles should be pre-made and labeled each day. No glass bottles are permitted.

Each child has his or her own crib and linens are changed each day. When the child is not asleep or eating, he/she is free to move about the room, explore and interact with others. The children are held, rocked, talked to, sung to, and taught basic concepts of language. You can supply sleep sacks for children in Infant 1 and 2. Blankets can be supplied to children who are 12 months or older and in the Pretoddler class or higher.

For infants and toddlers, an ample supply of diapers, wipes, and baby food must be provided. Teachers will update parents on what is needed.

Diapering

Children are checked frequently throughout the day and changed at the first sign of wetness or soiling. No child is knowingly left in wet or soiled clothing. Parents are responsible for providing disposable diapers, wipes, and ointment (if desired). The changing table is disinfected after each use, and staff wash their hands with disinfectant soap after each diaper change.

Potty Training Readiness and Process

We believe that toilet training is a natural developmental milestone that occurs when a child shows both interest and readiness. Typically, this occurs between 18 months and 3 years of age, but every child's timeline is unique. We will support the parents' initiative regarding potty training once readiness signs are consistently displayed.

Signs of readiness may include:

- Staying dry for longer periods of time (2 hours or more)
- Showing awareness of a wet or soiled diaper
- Demonstrating curiosity or interest in the toilet
- Following simple directions and communicating needs
- Attempting to pull pants up or down independently

Our Potty-Training Process:

Family Partnership: We will discuss your child's readiness and develop a consistent plan between home and school. Consistency between both environments is key to success.

Routine and Encouragement: Teachers will take children to the bathroom at regular intervals throughout the day and offer gentle reminders. Positive reinforcement will always be used — never punishment.

Clothing: We recommend easy-to-remove clothing (elastic waistbands, no overalls or belts) to help encourage independence.

Accidents: Accidents are expected and part of the learning process. Children are changed promptly, and teachers respond with patience and reassurance.

Transition to Underwear: Once a child is consistently using the toilet at school and home, we will discuss transitioning to underwear together.

Setbacks: Occasional regressions are normal, especially during transitions. We will communicate with parents and adjust the approach as needed.

PRESCHOOL (AGES 3 - 4)

As children continue their experience at Open Arms, new considerations are given to their increased attention span, activity level, and natural curiosity. A more structured environment is created to support their growing independence, and opportunities for exploration are expanded. Emphasis is placed on developing cognitive skills through a curriculum that focuses on pre-reading, early mathematics and science, creative arts, and music. Planned activities are designed to reinforce the natural learning that occurs throughout each child's day.

We encourage children to learn by doing and experiencing in a safe and well-supervised environment. All activities are presented in a positive, caring atmosphere by trained professionals. Consistency is provided through routine, while variety is promoted through engaging activities that stimulate all areas of development. Social interaction is encouraged, communication and cognitive skills are strengthened, and emotional and spiritual growth are gently nurtured. Creativity is celebrated in a relaxed and supportive environment.

Spiritual values are modeled through daily interactions, Bible story time, prayers before meals, and weekly chapel praise and worship. Our main objective is to show love and provide individual attention through thoughtful, developmentally appropriate experiences.

The children select activities from a variety of interest centers that reflect the weekly theme. Learning activities alternate with indoor and outdoor play periods. The preschool wing at Open Arms is designed to provide children with both the security of a "home" room and the flexibility of structured learning centers.

Preschool Age Toileting Guidelines (Children 3 and up)

Beginning in the Preschool hallway, and generally by age three, children are expected to be potty independent. We understand that occasional accidents may occur, and staff will handle them with patience and care. However, accidents should be an exception rather than the rule.

In practice, potty independent typically usually means:

- The child can recognize when they need to go.
- They can get to the toilet in time and use it properly.
- They can manage their clothing (pull pants up/down).
- They can wipe (with minimal reminders or help if needed).
- They can flush and wash hands afterward.
- Children may not always come home perfectly clean as they continue developing independence with wiping and learning proper toileting skills. Occasional mishaps are a normal part of this process.

If your child has ongoing medical or developmental factors that affect toileting, please disclose this information to the Director and your child's teacher at enrollment or as soon as it becomes known. This allows us to create a supportive and individualized plan to meet your child's needs.

Children should not come to school in pull-ups by age 3 . Please ensure your child has several changes of extra clothing available each day in case of an accident. If frequent accidents occur, staff will communicate with parents so that a consistent plan can be developed between home and school.

PRIVATE PRE-KINDERGARTEN (Ages 4 – 5)

The Private Pre-K classes begin to develop pre-reading skills and lay the groundwork for kindergarten programs. We round out our program with art, music, dramatic play, and motor skill activities. Our well-rounded curriculum incorporates Christian content in all areas of learning, providing a stimulating and fulfilling pre-kindergarten experience. This classroom is for children who have missed the GA Pre-K cut off (Age 4 after September 1st) or by family request.

STATE FUNDED GEORGIA PRE-KINDERGARTEN (Ages 4 – 5)

The purpose of the GA Pre-K program is to provide a minimum of 180 full days (6.5 hours of instructional service per day) of high quality educational/instructional services for eligible four-year- old's (date of birth by or before September 1st). Positions for GA Pre-K are first offered to currently enrolled families in our preschool program before opening up enrollment to the public. This usually occurs in January of each year and the current families are given a two-week period to enroll in this program. After this period, we open up any available space to the community. If we have registered 40 students (our student capacity for GA Pre-K), we then begin a waitlist. The waitlist is numbered, and we contact each family in the order they are on the waitlist. We start responding to our waitlist families in early Spring or as space opens.

GA Pre-K will follow very closely to Fulton County schools, and a calendar will be available prior to the school year outlining closures/holidays.

The Georgia Pre-K program has a separate handbook provided by the State of Georgia , is available online on the Bright from the Start website, or by request.

After School Care (Extended Day)

We offer after school care to children through the fifth grade. Transportation is usually available from Abbotts Hill, Ocoee, Creek View, Dolvin and Lake Windward Elementary Schools. This may change based on demand and availability each year. The afterschool schedule includes supervised study hall, outdoor play, learning centers and a nutritional snack. Personal electronic devices are allowed with limitations. Drop-in care will be available for registered children on Fulton County school holidays.

Drop In Care

When Fulton County School System has calendar holidays, Open Arms does our best to provide care for school age children, siblings, alumni, and Georgia Pre-K parents on a drop-in basis. Please ask for the current Open Arms calendar for details, and for the tuition form for rates, and the registration form for sign up.

Summer Camp

During the Fulton County School System summer break, we offer Summer Camp. Summer Camp is a 10-week session. This is available for children who completed Pre-K through students who have completed 4th Grade. There is a separate registration for Summer Camp. Information and registration are available no later than Spring Break.

Field Trips

We take walking trips to explore our property. In addition, we may also take trips further away by vehicle or on foot to enhance learning and enjoyment. We will obtain written permission prior to all major trips that leave our campus to inform parents of the name and address of the trip destination, the date of the trip, the departure time, and the estimated return time.

Technology and Screen Time

Open Arms limits screen time and digital entertainment with our students. Children are not allowed to exceed more than 2 hours of screen time daily per our licensing standards. Our goal is for our children to

remain active and learn through engaged play and other hands-on activities. Screen time opportunities or a movie can be for educational purposes or special events and will be age appropriate. Our after-school care and summer camper may be offered limited time to access devices during rest or relaxation periods. We ask parents to limit or block any inappropriate content to include anything violent, sexual, or that promotes drugs or other illicit and inappropriate activity. Open Arms is not responsible for lost or broken devices, and we at any time may ask for children or families to discontinue use or allow children to bring them to school if it is causing disruption of any kind.

Academic and Progress Reports

For Infants through Preschool classes, at a minimum, parents will receive daily communication on each child's activity through brightwheel. This information will include developmental milestones, individual notes to families and school-wide announcements, and pictures. If teachers and/or the Director feels a need to discuss anything with parents beyond the brightwheel reports, they will reach out to the parents.

Georgia Pre-K and Private Pre-K, teachers will present a written progress report twice in the school year (Fall and Spring), along with conferences if requested by Parent and/or Teacher.

Additionally, if parents would like to discuss anything with the teacher or Director, they are encouraged to contact Open Arms at any time. Parent conferences can be scheduled upon teacher's or parent's request at any time.

Transitions

From Home to School

Your child's well-being is our primary concern. We want you to feel comfortable and confident as you combine your life as parents with your career. We want the time your child is in our care to be as free from worry as possible. We do this by always adhering to strict operational policies which govern, for example, discipline, administration of medications, or release of children to others. We will call you if anything is amiss, but otherwise, we will share your child's experience with you throughout the day with the brightwheel application and in person when needed or desired. Because consistency in child-rearing philosophy between the childcare center and the home is best for the child, we will honor parents' concerns and wishes for development according to the Georgia Education Learning and Development Polices.

From Classroom to Next Classroom

As your child progresses in our program, an assessment will be completed by your child's teacher to determine their readiness to move to the next classroom. Parents will receive timely notification that their child is ready to transition to the next room. This transition will be a gradual introduction to the new room, from 30-minute intervals up to 2 hours for one week prior to complete transition. It is important that your child has ample time to adjust to the new room, new classmates and teachers. This timeline can change to more or less time depending on the child's ability to adjust to the transition.

Behavior and Guidance

Student Behavior

At Open Arms, we believe all children are capable of learning appropriate behavior in a supportive environment. Setting clear and consistent limits helps children understand expectations and fosters their social and emotional growth.

When a child engages in behavior that is disruptive or potentially harmful, teachers will address it in an age-appropriate manner, explaining why the behavior is not acceptable and guiding the child toward more positive choices.

Our discipline practices focus on encouragement, praise, and reinforcement of positive behavior. Humiliating, striking, or displaying anger toward a child is never used or tolerated. Safety and respect for all children and staff are our top priorities.

If a child shows a recurring pattern of challenging behavior, the staff will work closely with parents to create a plan for support and improvement. Together, we partner to help children learn self-regulation, responsibility, and respect for others in a loving and structured environment.

Open Arms Rules

- No running inside (walking feet)
- Use quiet voices indoors
- Keep hands to yourself, except for hugs
- Show respect for others
- Show respect for the center and its resources
- Follow classroom rules

Guidance and Time to Regulate

If a child repeatedly requires disciplinary attention, he or she may be asked to sit apart from the group briefly. This provides a safe moment for the child to calm down and regain self-control. This practice is used as a last resort and only for children over 24 months of age. The child is reintroduced to the group as soon as they are ready.

Biting Policy

Even in the best preschool settings, periodic outbreaks of biting occur among infants, toddlers, and sometimes preschoolers. This is an unavoidable occurrence in groups of young children. When it happens, it can be scary, frustrating, and stressful for children, parents and teachers. Understand that this is not an unusual phenomenon among children who are going through the oral stage of their

development. It is also not something to blame on children, parents or teachers. There are no quick and easy solutions.

Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, teething pain or intense desire for an object. Before a child becomes very verbal, biting can be a chief way of expressing needs. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behavior that is often hard to extinguish since it does achieve results: the desired object, excitement and attention. Children who are teething may bite because it is a pleasant sensation to their mouth. Knowing that the biting will hurt another person is not yet part of a child's mindset, so the "cause-effect" relationship is not internalized. Our teachers plan activities and supervise carefully to minimize biting from occurring. There are times, however, that a teacher cannot be within immediate reach to prevent a bite.

Our policy for handling a biting incident is as follows:

- We make special efforts to protect potential biting victims.

- The biter is immediately removed from the class with a firm "NO". The bitten child is consoled, and the bitten area is washed with soap and water. If necessary, ice is applied to reduce any swelling or bruising. The biter is not allowed to return to play and is talked to on a level that he/she can understand and then redirected.

- A written incident report is given to the parents of all children involved when they are picked up that day. The name of the biting child is not released because it serves no useful purpose and can make an already difficult situation more stressful.

- We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for patterns in an effort to prevent further biting behavior.

- We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner. We try to adapt to the environment and work with parents to reduce any child stress.

- If a child has bitten or attempted to bite other children multiple times in a single day or there is a pattern of multiple bites over several days, the parents may be asked to keep the child home for a period of time to help extinguish this behavior.

- We try to make every effort to extinguish the behavior quickly and to balance our commitment to the family of the biting child and the other families. Only after we feel we have made every effort to make the program work for the biting child do we consider asking a family to withdraw the child.

Program Withdrawal

In rare cases where a child exhibits extreme behavior that consistently endangers themselves, other students, or staff, and all intervention strategies have been exhausted, Open Arms reserves the right to withdraw the child from the program.

Nutrition, Meals, and Allergies

Meals and Snacks

Lunch and snacks are provided for your child every day. Lunches are served hot, and the menu is planned to provide a nutritious diet low in salt, refined sugar, preservatives, and artificial flavors or coloring. Menus are developed in accordance with Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) Guidelines to support optimal growth and development.

Children eat lunch and snacks in their classroom with their teacher, fostering a family-style environment. Snacks are provided in both the morning and afternoon. Menu items are posted on the bulletin board in the entryway, outside each classroom door, and are available upon request.

Children are given as much time as they need to eat. They are encouraged to explore and show interest in their food, and teachers provide assistance when necessary. No child is forced to eat any food, and food is never used as a punishment or taken away. Any concerns about eating habits, appetite, or notable changes in lunchtime behavior will be communicated to parents promptly.

GA Pre-K Meal Policy

Open Arms provides meals and morning snack for all GA Pre-K students in accordance with state guidelines. Families are charged a meal fee to cover the cost of these meals, which is separate from tuition for extended day schedules.

- Meal fees are assessed annually and are subject to change based on GA Pre-K requirements.
- Meal fees are due according to the school's billing schedule and must be paid in full, even if a child is absent.
- Modified meal options are available for children with documented allergies or other dietary restrictions. Families must complete and submit the Allergy/Dietary Form to ensure proper accommodations are in place.
- Families are responsible for keeping this form updated whenever there are changes to a child's dietary needs.
- Meal fees are non-refundable for absences, holidays, or school closures. On weeks GA Pre-K is not in session, meal fees will not be charged (Thanksgiving , Winter and Spring Breaks).
- Meal fees are required to be paid even if the child brings in their own meals.
- Meal or snack fees cannot be charged to families with a verified Category One status.
- This policy ensures that all children receive healthy, safe, and appropriate meals during their time at Open Arms.

Birthdays and Special Events

Birthdays may be celebrated at school with a simple party consisting of cupcakes, cookies or other treats and party napkins brought by parents. Parties are held in the child's class during their snack time. Please remember that we are a nut-free program and consider the age of your child's class when providing food.

Allergy & Dietary Reminder

- Parents must complete an Allergy Form for any child with known allergies and update it promptly if changes occur.
- Open Arms provides modified meal options for children with documented allergies or other dietary restrictions.
- Please communicate any special dietary needs to your child's teacher and the school office so we can ensure their safety and well-being.
- Open Arms is a Nut Free School
- No outside meals or snacks unless a doctor's note is on file at the school.

Health and Environmental Guidelines

At Open Arms, we are committed to promoting the health and well-being of every child. Our campus provides a clean, smoke-free, and safe environment. Children have access to safe toys, supervised physical activities, and age-appropriate opportunities for physical education.

We also provide resources for parents to support disease prevention and overall child wellness. The Open Arms campus is strictly a drug-free, alcohol-free, smoke-free, and weapon-free environment to ensure the safety of all children, families, and staff.

Health and Safety Training for Staff

All Open Arms staff members are certified in Pediatric First Aid and CPR. In the event of an accident, appropriate procedures will be followed, and parents will be notified either by a phone call if there is an immediate need to notify, or through a written report that will be sent home that day. Reports are kept on all accidents in the child's permanent file.

Accident and Incident Reports

At Open Arms, the safety of every child is our top priority. Any significant, observable or noticeable accidents or incidents that occur during the school day will be documented on an Accident/Incident Report. Parents will be asked to review and sign it upon pick-up and receive a copy of the report upon request.

In the event of a serious concern**,** such as a head injury, bite, allergic reaction, or any situation requiring immediate attention, a staff member will call the parent or guardian as soon as possible to provide details and next steps. By state requirements, we are unable to release the identifying information of other children who may have been involved in the incident.

Staff follow consistent procedures to ensure proper care, documentation, and communication with families for all incidents.

Medical Records

A Certificate of Immunization (3231) or religious exemption on the State approved form is required upon enrollment and must be kept current. A 3300 form is required for all GA Pre-K students.

We are required by the Department of Health to have the name, address, and telephone number of your child's physician in our files. Please be sure to bring this information with you when you are ready to enroll your child and any updates while your child is enrolled.

Illness

Sick children should remain at home. Each child will be checked upon arrival by the teacher for symptoms of illness. Children with fever or other signs of illness upon arrival will not be accepted for the day. The admitting teacher in the morning may request that a seemingly ill child be returned home. We do not have facilities for caring for sick children and in such cases will need to call parents to pick up children who become ill at school. Children who become ill on the premises will be isolated from the other children and parents will be contacted.

For the comfort of the child and safety of classmates and staff, parents are expected to pick up the child as soon as possible and at least within an hour of being notified.

Open Arms follows all CDC local, state and federal mandates.

If your child displays any of the following symptoms, you will be notified by the teacher or administrative staff and you will have the option to pick up your child. If the symptoms worsen, you may be asked to pick up your child.

- Loss of appetite
- Severe itching and scratching of body or scalp
- Cranky or less active than normal
- More crying than normal
- General discomfort

If your child displays any of the following symptoms, you will be notified by the teacher or administrative staff and may be asked to pick up your child.

- Unusual spots or rashes
- Red, irritated sore throat with trouble swallowing
- Colored discharge from the nose accompanied by upper respiratory symptoms
- Infected skin patches: crusty, yellow, dry, or gummy areas of skin
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Any child with a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher will not be permitted to remain in the center and must be picked up as soon as possible by a parent or authorized pick-up person. Children who are sent home may not return to the center until at least 24 hours from being sent home and are symptom-free or have a doctor's note stating that they are not contagious.

In the case of diarrheal diseases, if a child has two diarrheal stools in a single day, the parents will be notified by the administrative staff. After the third diarrheal stool, the parents will be called to pick up their child as soon as possible by a parent or guardian within one hour.

To eliminate the spread of infection, children who are sent home with diarrhea may not return to the center until at least 24 hours after the last stool. The child must be symptom-free or have a doctor's note stating that the child is not contagious.

In the case of Conjunctivitis ("Pink Eye"), any child with redness, swelling or pus discharge of the eyes will be sent home. Pink Eye is highly contagious, therefore, a child with Pink Eye may return to the center only after prescription eye drops have been administered for a period of 24 hours and there is no active discharge.

As per the CDC guidelines, in the event of recurring head lice--when an infestation is found, parents will be contacted. Pick up is encouraged to begin treatment. The infested child is required to receive lice treatment before returning. All Personal items must be cleaned before returning.

Pick up Requirement for Sick or Injured Children

When parents are called to get their children due to an illness, they must do so within an hour. If the parent is not available, a person on the authorized pick-up list must be contacted to pick up the child. Please consider that if your child does not feel well or is hurt, it is in their best interest to be picked up as soon as possible. Fees apply after 1 hour if child is not picked up. Please see Financial Agreement for more information.

Medication Policy

Open Arms requires a doctor's note to administer any medication, including over the counter (OTC) medications, during school hours. Medication will only be given if it is necessary and required during the school day. Parents must provide the doctor's note, medication in its original, labeled container, along with clear instructions for dosage and timing, and any tools needed for administration, such as a dosage cup or syringe.

Written consent is required using the "Authorization to Administer Medications" form, which must be completed for each medication. The form and medication should be left in the front office. **Do not leave medications in your child's cubby or backpack.**

Prescription medications will only be released to the person to whom they are prescribed. Parents may request two labeled containers from the pharmacist—one for school and one for home. Delivery and retrieval of medications are the parents' responsibility.

A daily medication log is maintained by the front office. Parents will be notified of any noticeable adverse reactions to medications.

Handwashing

Children's hands shall be washed with liquid soap and warm running water: (a) Immediately upon arrival for care, when moving from one child care group to another, and upon re-entering the child care area after outside play; (b) Before and after eating meals and snacks, handling or touching food, or playing in water; (c) After toileting and diapering, playing in sand, touching animals or pets, and contact with bodily fluids such as, but not limited to, mucus, saliva, vomit or blood; (d) After contamination by any other means; and (e) Washcloth handwashing is permitted for infants when infants are too heavy to hold for handwashing or cannot stand safely to wash hands at a sink, and for children with special needs who are not capable of washing their own hands. An individual washcloth shall be used only once for each child before laundering.

Medical Emergencies

While we do everything possible to ensure that children in our care are safe, emergencies may still happen. In the event of a medical emergency, our teachers and administrators are trained to act quickly and compassionately to secure the needed care and to provide comfort to the child.
When necessary, 911 will be called. Parents will then be called by someone in administration to let them know what has happened and the steps that are being taken. If it is necessary for the child to be taken to a hospital or urgent care before the parent arrives, a staff member will accompany the child in the ambulance and stay at the hospital until the parents arrive.

Communicable Diseases

If your child is diagnosed or tests positive for a contagious illness, we will ask you to keep your child home in order to prevent transmission to other students or staff according to the chart posted in our common area and found on the Bright from the Start. If there is a confirmed case of a communicable disease, classrooms will be notified in writing by digital communication (email and/or brightwheel) or posted outside the classroom impacted.
Should changes occur with the Department of Health, updates will be provided on the Family Information Board.

Safe Sleep Procedures for Infants (8 weeks–12 months)

1. Infants will be placed on their backs to sleep unless a physician provides a written statement authorizing an alternative sleep position. The statement must include specific placement instructions and a time frame for use.
2. Cribs meet CPCS and ASTM safety standards, are maintained in good repair, and kept free from hazards.
3. No objects will be placed in or on the crib with a sleeping infant. This includes blankets, toys, pillows, quilts, comforters, bumper pads, sheepskins, stuffed animals, or other soft items.
4. No objects will be attached to the crib, such as gyms, mirrors, mobiles, or toys, while an infant is sleeping.
5. Only parent-provided sleepers, sleep sacks, or wearable blankets may be used. These must fit according to manufacturer guidelines and not slip over the infant's face.
6. Infants who arrive at the center asleep or fall asleep in other equipment or on the floor, will be moved to a safety-approved crib for sleep.
7. Swaddling is not permitted unless a physician provides written authorization. The statement must include instructions and a timeframe for swaddling.
8. Wedges, infant positioning devices, or monitors are not allowed unless authorized by a physician, including instructions and a timeframe for use.
9. Crib bedding will be changed daily, or more often as needed.

Emergency Preparedness Guidelines

At Open Arms, the safety and well-being of every child is our top priority. We have established comprehensive emergency preparedness guidelines to ensure that staff and students are ready to respond quickly and effectively in the event of any emergency. This section outlines our procedures, communication plans, and safety measures so that parents are informed and can feel confident in our ability to protect their children.

Our front office, classrooms, and vehicles have a complete first aid kit available. Staff will do comforting activities during the event to keep the children calm and engaged with the staff.

In the event of a natural disaster or any other emergency, we will communicate with all families via email and/or brightwheel to notify you of any unexpected closure, lockdown, or delay in opening the school as we are able. Furthermore, should an emergency event occur during school hours, administrators will monitor weather reports, hazard alerts, or other emergency situations. We will initiate evacuation protocols if advised by emergency responders and/or law enforcement. In the event of an evacuation, we have identified offsite locations where our students will be safely relocated. We will communicate with you via text, email and/or brightwheel throughout the evacuation process to keep you informed about the situation, provide updates, and give instructions for reuniting with your child as we are able.

Utility Outages

If our school loses the use of heat, water, electricity, or other vital operating services before the center opens, we will notify you via email and/or brightwheel of any school closures or delayed openings. If the school should lose the use of heat, water, electricity, or other vital operating services while children are in attendance, we will immediately contact all families to pick up their children within two hours or as soon as possible.

Safety Practices

Fire drills are practiced monthly. Tornado and Lock-Down drills are held twice a year at minimum. The Emergency Plans are in a binder in the front lobby area and office, and procedures are reviewed with staff regularly in accordance with State Licensing requirements**.**

Safety Threats

If our school receives a threat to the building or its occupants (e.g., bomb threat, bodily injury threat, etc.), administrators will immediately contact law enforcement and all families and staff to advise them of the threat. Depending on the nature of the threat, evacuation, closure or lockdown may be needed.

Lockdowns

If a potential threat is identified on or near school property, a "lockdown" will be implemented to protect all students and staff on campus. Lockdown drills are practiced with students, and all staff members are trained to implement a lockdown under certain circumstances. Once a lockdown has been declared, all interior and exterior doors and windows are locked to secure the building and prevent unauthorized entry. To fully secure all entrances to the building, this restriction also applies to parents. An "all clear" must be declared by an administrator or local authorities before anyone can enter or exit the school.

If a lockdown occurs, whenever possible and reasonable, an office administrator will email and/or brightwheel with information and updates about the situation. Parents will receive a final "all clear" notification once the lockdown is over. If you receive a lockdown message, please try to remain calm. The safety of our students and staff is our highest priority.

Tornado Policy

When there is an active tornado warning or watch (depending on severity of weather) staff, students, and visitors on site will immediately move to Celebration Hall in the church. This space is central in the facility and away from doors and windows. An administrator will monitor weather advisements and communicate to families via email/brightwheel as able. If a family member or other authorized pick up is in the building during drop off or pick up during an active tornado warning, we highly recommend that they shelter in place until the warning has been lifted.

Severe Weather Policy

The safety of children and staff is our top priority. Open Arms will follow the severe weather and emergency policies of Fulton County Public Schools.

- **School Closures:** If Fulton County Public Schools are closed due to severe weather, Open Arms will also close.
- **Delayed Openings/Early Closures:** If the county schools announce a delayed opening or early dismissal, Open Arms will communicate adjusted hours via email, brightwheel, and phone as appropriate.
- **Emergency Announcements:** Updates regarding school closures or delays due to weather will be communicated through multiple channels, including local radio, television, digital news websites, and Open Arms' website, email, brightwheel, and Facebook page as able. Families should check these sources for the most current information.
- **Parent Communication:** Parents are asked to ensure contact information is current so that notifications can be received promptly.
- **Pick-up Safety:** In the event of severe weather during school hours, parents will be asked to pick up their children as soon as possible. Staff will follow all safety procedures to ensure a secure and orderly dismissal. A designated time frame for pick-up will be communicated, and late fees will apply if a child is not picked up within that window.

Open Arms reserves the right to make independent decisions regarding closures or early dismissals based on weather conditions that may impact travel safety for children, families, and staff.

Loss of a Child

In the event of a lost child, administrators will immediately initiate lockdown protocols and perform a full check of all areas of the school. If the child cannot be found, the child's parents and / or emergency contacts and the police will be notified immediately. Administrators will notify our licensing contact within 24 hours after the occurrence.

Policies and Legal Disclosures

Medical and Liability Insurance

Parent's Primary Insurance for their children will cover any accidental injury or sickness for their children. Open Arms has secondary insurance that would cover the gap subject to the policy limitations if your child had any accidental injury, whether on premises or away from the school with a teacher-supervised group.

Open Arms LCDC/or school staff cannot be held responsible for accident or injury that may occur on the property of the center or church.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

All staff 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 abuse of a child by staff, parent, guardian or caretaker.

Babysitting Policy

Open Arms is not responsible or liable for any arrangements in which staff members provide childcare, babysitting, or related services. These arrangements are personal, voluntary, and are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Center**.**

If a staff member is transporting your child, you must disclose this information in writing for the staff member to be an authorized pick up in your child's file, and it must be disclosed to the Director.

Handbook Acknowledgment

A parent or guardian signature is required on the Child Information page within the Open Arms enrollment packet to acknowledge that you have received this handbook and agree to the terms and policies outlined within. This handbook is also available on our website and can be printed or emailed as a PDF upon request.

SUMMARY

Open Arms is a ministry, and the core of the organization is service to the community. You can help us become better by sharing your feedback for the benefit of those we serve.

Some Important "Dos" to Remember

- **Do** accompany your child to the classroom and say good-bye positively and promptly.
- **Do** have your child at school on time each day.
- **Do** show appreciation for your child's creative work and display it proudly at home.
- **Do** share with us any concerns regarding your child's behavior, language, health, or family changes that could affect school adjustment. Please also celebrate successes with us—we love hearing the positives, too!
- **Do** pick your child up on time. It can be difficult for a child to be the last one waiting.
- **Do** treat other children, parents, and staff with respect and courtesy at all times.

Final Reminders and Open Door Policy for Parents

Open Arms reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment for violations of school policies or regulations established by the Department of Early Care and Learning.

Parents are welcome to visit at any time and have access to all areas of the facility. We kindly ask that visits be made with consideration so as not to disrupt classroom routines. If you have concerns or uncertainties, please speak directly with the Director. Open communication helps us resolve issues quickly and effectively.

Our greatest joy is sharing the love of Christ with the children entrusted to our care. The policies established by Open Arms are designed to ensure the welfare and safety of every child.

Words of Wisdom

"Most of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in kindergarten... Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat."
—Robert Fulghum, *Church and Public Education*

"Let all that you do be done in love."
—1 Corinthians 16:14