
GOLD STAR ACADEMY

PARENT HANDBOOK & ENROLLMENT POLICIES

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GOLD STAR ACADEMY
Parent Handbook & Enrollment Procedures

Gold Star Academy (GSA) provides childcare to families without discrimination. In order to provide the best possible care for our children, it is important to ensure that our parents are aware of our procedures and your responsibilities. Our procedures exist for the protection of our children and we encourage any questions or concerns that parents may have to be communicated to us promptly.

Central to GSA's procedures and our success is an open door policy for the families of our children. Parents and family members are strongly encouraged to speak to teachers and directors regularly to understand our curriculum and methodologies. Families are also encouraged to visit classrooms and participate in special activities. In our experience, parent involvement can be integral to a child's success and we aim to provide the best possible educational environment.

I. Hours of Operation

GSA is open from 4:30 am to 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding state and federal holidays. We request that all children are dropped off by a parent/guardian or their authorized designee no later than 10:00 am. GSA should be notified if there will be any late arrivals.

II. GSA's Non-Discrimination Policy

GSA is designed to care for children from infancy through twelve years old, including before and after school care and summer programs. In order to ensure that our children receive the best care possible, we can only accept a limited number. Children are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, without regard for race, color, gender, sex, religion, marital or veteran status, national origin, handicaps or political beliefs.

III. Licensing

GSA is licensed under the regulations of all applicable state and local regulations and agencies. Copies of relevant childcare regulations may be provided upon request.

GSA endeavors to exceed all standard requirements as established by regulatory bodies, and is proud to have earned the State of Florida Gold Seal. This nationally recognized accreditation is a reflection of the dedication of each of our staff members.

IV. Caring for Children with Special Needs

GSA will accept children with special needs whenever possible. In our experience, children with special needs benefit from our programs by being in a safe and understanding environment in which they are able to participate in typical activities enjoyed by other children their age.

When working with children with special needs, our staff interacts closely with each child's physician, therapist and other professionals, or makes referrals to more appropriate settings when necessary. Per the American Disabilities Act, we ask that our parents support our efforts by disclosing all necessary information by completing an "individualized assessment tool" prior to start of a child's enrollment.

V. Confidentiality

All information pertaining to a child and his/her family is kept confidential at all times. Occasionally, a staff member, along with the Center Director may review the child's file for information that may be pertinent to the child's needs. The child's information will not be released to third parties, with the exception of licensing or regulatory bodies as required by law, without a parent's written permission.

From time to time, GSA may record our facility's special occasions and day-to-day activities through photography. We do not sell, or give any images of children to media outlets and no personal details of the child or family, i.e. full name or address, will be accredited to any image whatsoever.

VI. Enrollment requirements

GSA's minimum requirements for enrollment are as follows:

- A child must be at least six weeks of age;
- Within thirty days of enrollment, the child must present a physical examination and immunization record by a licensed medical practitioner; and
- All required registration materials must be completed and returned to the Center Director prior to enrollment.

The Center Director may request additional information from a parent or guardian prior to enrollment if there is a valid medical or behavioral concern.

Parents may cancel their child's enrollment at any time with one week's prior written notice. Parents will be responsible for payment the last full week in which their child is enrolled.

VII. Tuition

Annual registration for infant through pre-school is for the period August 1st through July 31st. School age children register May 1st to hold a seat on one of the vehicles for the upcoming school year. Registration for summer programs begin on April 1st.

A. Tuition payments may be made in several forms:

i. Monthly

Parents utilizing a monthly payment schedule should submit payments no later than the 5th of each month. Late payments will incur a penalty of \$10.00 per week, billed on the 6th of each month, with GSA reserving the right to terminate enrollment on the 10th.

ii. Weekly

Parents utilizing a weekly payment schedule should submit payments no later than on Monday of each week for the subsequent week. Late payments will incur a penalty of \$10.00 per week, billed on Mondays, with GSA reserving the right to terminate enrollment on the following business day.

iii. Bi-Monthly

Parents utilizing a bi-monthly payment schedule should submit payments no later than the 5th and 18th of each month. Late payments will incur a penalty of \$10.00 per week, billed on the 11th of each month, with GSA reserving the right to terminate enrollment on the 25th.

If a payment is made by check, which is returned, parents will be required to reimburse GSA for any penalty fees incurred. GSA may also reserve the right to require future payments to be made in cash only.

B. Overtime penalty charges

Please note that parents will be charged an overtime fee for children who are picked up from GSA later than 6:00 pm, our closing time, which is due upon your arrival in cash. The fee is \$25.00, **plus** \$1.00 per minute past 6:00 pm, per child. After each 15 minute increment passes, an additional \$25.00 will be added.

Should a child be repeatedly picked up late, GSA will reserve the right to cancel the enrollment.

C. Special Circumstances

GSA is sensitive to the many demands on our families. Should a circumstance arise that would prohibit you from being able to pay your child's tuition fees on time, please discuss with our Center Director prior to payment being due. This discussion will be treated confidentially.

VIII. Signing in and Out

For the safety of our children, we require parents to sign in and out when you drop off and pick up your child. We request that when arriving for a drop off or pick up, that you comply with the following:

- Parents should only use the front door when entering GSA.

- Children should be walked into the building and directly placed into the care of a GSA staff member before a parent departs.
- When picking up your child, be sure to have a GSA staff member acknowledge that the child is leaving with you.

If there are any changes to the list of persons authorized to pick up your child or emergency contacts, please advise us as soon as possible.

IX. Medical & Health Information

In addition to the physician's examination and immunization records required for enrollment, we also have a periodic screening to observe each child's health. If your child develops symptoms of illness during the day, we will immediately isolate him/her from the other children and call you to pick up your child. For the health and well being of your child and others, we kindly request that you do not bring your child to GSA if he/she:

- Has a fever or has had one in the past 24 hours of 100 degrees or higher when taken under the arm, 101 degrees taken orally, and a sore throat, swollen glands, rash, vomiting, earache, irritability, or confusion.
- Is in the first 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.
- Has diarrhea or vomiting (2 or more runny stools within 24 hours).
- Has a heavy discharge that is not clear.
- Has a constant, severe cough, difficult or rapid breathing.
- Has any parasite.
- Has a symptom of a possible disease, such as sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, painful ears, yellow skin or eyes with discharge, rash, or headache. Abdominal pain and/or fever.
- Is fatigued or is not feeling well enough to participate in regular activities.

If your child has a communicable disease, such as chicken pox, please inform the school so that we can take the necessary precautions.

In the case of illness, accident or injury, we will make every attempt to reach you. If you are not reachable, the child's pediatrician and emergency contact persons listed will be called. Until the arrival of a parent or medical professionals, a staff member in an administrative capacity will take personal charge of your child. In your enrollment package, there is a form authorizing GSA to act on your behalf in the case of an emergency. If a child does not respond, is having trouble breathing or is having a convulsion, we must call 911.

Children may be re-admitted to GSA when they have been symptom free for 24 hours. For more information, consult the Center for Disease Control handbook, *The ABCs of Safe and Healthy Childcare*.

Exposure Control Plan

GSA observes a Health and Safety Exposure Control Plan in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The purpose of exposure control plans is to minimize or eliminate employee exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

Universal Precautions are observed to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. Under circumstances in which differentiation between body fluid types is difficult or impossible, all body fluids are considered potentially infectious materials.

GSA has reasonable belief that exposure to bloodborne pathogens is minimal. Work practice controls are used to eliminate or minimize employee exposure during the course of their work at GSA, where there may be a reasonable likelihood of occupational exposure, including, but not limited to:

- Personal protective equipment is provided by the supervisor, at no cost to the employee, when there is a chance of occupational exposure. Appropriate personal protective equipment may consist of, but is not limited to, gloves, masks, disinfectant and first aid supplies.
- GSA is maintained in a clean and sanitary condition according to a written schedule for cleaning and method(s) of sanitization. The schedule is based upon the location within the facility, type of surface to be cleaned and type of activity taking place in that area.

X. Birthdays

Birthdays are special occasions at GSA and we encourage parents to participate in celebrations. There are many nutritious and delicious goodies for your child's class to enjoy. Food must be purchased from a licensed food provider. Please make arrangements for birthday celebrations at least one week in advance with your child's teacher and the Center Director.

XI. Clothing

Children should arrive wearing comfortable, casual clothing. Please note that we will be doing many, and sometimes messy, hands on projects. Children are required to wear closed shoes. Sandals and boots can be unsafe and are not permitted. Sneakers are recommended.

We request that parents supply at all times an additional, complete set of clothing, labeled in indelible ink with their child's name, which can fit in the child's cubby. Younger children may want more and one extra set of clothing.

GSA is not responsible for lost clothing or possessions.

XII. Things from Home

Items such as toys, candy, money, balloons and play guns or other pretend weapons are prohibited and should be left at home. If such items are brought in, GSA will not be responsible for breakage or replacement. It is the parent's responsibility to see that their child brings nothing dangerous to GSA and GSA staff reserve the right to confiscate any item that is perceived as potentially harmful to someone in the facility.

XIII. Meals

For children able to eat table food, we provide breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. An alternate snack is provided for children with allergies. Copies of any restricted diet plans approved by your child's physician must be on file at the center. The substitution must also be stated on the diet plan. Menus are located in the front lobby and in all classrooms.

XIV. Nap Time

There is a required rest period during the day for all children. Each child is assigned his/her own mat to sleep on and is welcome to bring a favorite blanket or "cuddly." Some children will sleep, others will be allowed to rest or enjoy a quiet activity. Nap times will vary from time to time according to the child's age group.

XV. Medications

All medications brought into the school by parents MUST be in the original container with a pharmacy label affixed clearly indicating the child's name, doctor's name, medication name and required dosage, expiration date, and directions for administering the medication. This medication must be presented to either the Center Director or Assistant Director along with a medical authorization form completed and signed by the parents. All medications are placed in a locked medication box. All medication will be administered by either the Center Director, or in her absence, the Assistant Director. Medications will be administered only at designated times, per the prescription label.

XVI. Bumps and Bruises

You will receive an "accident/incident form" to notify you of a skinned knee or slight cut (situations that are not an emergency), which were handled using a first aid kit by a qualified staff member. In the event of an emergency or accident requiring more than first aid attention, we will contact you per the instructions provided on your enrollment form. You will receive an accident report and student accident insurance claim form if necessary.

XVII. Field Trips

From time to time, GSA staff may take children on age appropriate field trips. Prior notice will be given through a calendar or the Center Director. These field trips are an integral part of our educational program.

XVIII. Licensing Agency

It is the right of the licensing agency to perform their duties as follows:

- The licensing agency has the authority to interview children or staff and to inspect and audit child or facility records without prior notice or consent.

- The licensing agency has the authority to observe the physical condition of children including conditions, which could indicate abuse, neglect, or inappropriate placement, and if determined necessary, provide protective custody and/or have a licensed medical professional physically examine a child/children.

GSA has carefully developed the conditions to ensure the comfort and protection of each child. As a parent, you can always expect we will adhere to county and state rules regarding safety, fire, nutrition and child/staff ratios. Our goal is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all children with programs to suit each developmental level. We will encourage and welcome your comments and suggestions that may help us to achieve these goals.

XIX. Our Responsibility in Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

As caring and concerned parents and childcare providers, we take very seriously our responsibility, **as required by law**, to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. GSA staff is trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect, whether it may be physical or emotional, can happen in all types of families, from all walks of life and in varying degrees. In all instances, the damage to children can last a lifetime and certainly affect their self-esteem and development process.

When abuse occurs, both children and parents are the victims and need support, understanding and help. Parents may ask the Center Director for a confidential referral for outside intervention and suggested resources for prevention and assistance in dealing with this.

Should a parent or GSA staff member suspect abuse or neglect, the following steps are the recommended course of action:

- Staff member will discuss the suspected case with Center Director.
- Center Director will observe the child, talk with the child and further seek to determine if abuse or neglect may have occurred. These findings will be documented in the child's file.
- Center Director may talk with the child's parent(s) about the concerns.
- The staff and Center Director will determine the need to call a Child Protective Agency. The staff member who first observed the signs of concern may also make an independent report if they wish.
- A social worker or representative of the agency may visit the child at GSA or in the child's home.

At GSA, we are also very concerned about preventing abuse in the center. To protect the children in our care, the following measures are taken:

- Extensive screening of all staff members, including criminal background checks.
- Close observations and performance evaluations of staff.
- Involved, capable supervision constantly monitoring the classrooms, activities, and staff members through closed circuit television and observation windows.

XX. Child Guidance and Classroom Management

It is the philosophy of GSA, in classroom management, to focus on redirecting behaviors and allowing a child's self-esteem to remain intact. We apply careful guidance skills with positive reinforcement in our interactions with all children. This helps them build independence and confidence in their own abilities and to master skills and interact with others. In this process, it is important that expectations and limits be clearly defined and consistently adhered to. Our goal is to give children the security of knowing that we care enough to prevent them from hurting themselves or others, and to provide each child with a happy experience in school by encouraging success and minimizing failure.

GSA teachers believe in praising appropriate and positive behaviors. They take into account that every child is an individual. Responses to inappropriate or negative behaviors might include ignoring the behavior, redirecting the child to another activity or reasonably discussing the problem. By setting reasonable limits we help a child understand what is expected of him or her. At GSA, we advocate that punishments and discipline that in any way are frightening or humiliating not be applied. This would include corporal punishment, implied threats of physical punishment, derogatory remarks, or harsh language. Children will not be denied food, toileting or rest as punishments. Physical punishment, physical restraint, deprivation or ridicule will not be used as forms of discipline.

When necessary, a child may be removed from the group activity for a period of "time out." In these instances, the child sits apart from the group under direct supervision by a staff member. The period of time is limited to only two or five minutes, correlating to the child's age, and involves a discussion of the behavior. When the child makes his/her own decision to be ready to rejoin the group, he/she may do so.

As a part of our effective guidance techniques, we discuss with parents any problems or behaviors in need of correction. Often a child may be acting out in response to difficult situations at home or a special physical or cognitive imparity. If there are particular circumstances that would affect your child's behavior (such as divorce, a death, or the arrival of a new sibling), please let us know. Outside consultations or evaluations may be recommended when deemed appropriate. If we feel a child is in need of special assistance or additional services, the Center Director will inform the parent during a conference. If at any time we determine that it is not best for the child to continue attendance at GSA, we will handle such a situation with parental cooperation in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand.

XXI. Curriculum

Our educational program is a discovery based learning experience that gives a child the opportunity to move through specially designed modules at their own level of interest and ability. Our curriculum of choice is "High Scope" and is written for infants through school age on a weekly basis. There are a number of different learning centers in our facility, including: computers, home, science, sensory, library, outdoor playground, music, dance, dramatic play, math, blocks, small manipulatives, art, language, phonics and social studies.

GSA has an internal committee of teachers and directors, who meet regularly to review the curriculum and welcome parent input in this process. In addition, our curriculum is reviewed by Devreux, the Early Training Coalition and the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard.

XXII. Vacations and Holidays Observed

We may close the day before or after an actual holiday if that holiday is on a weekend. Depending on the day of the week that Christmas and New Year's occur, we may close early on the Eves or have a day off before or after the holiday. You will always be notified in advance. School closings are determined annually – please see the most current list in the office.

XXIII. Infant and Toddler Information

We realize that very young children need extra care and attention. Our loving staff provides a nurturing, soothing and stimulating environment for precious little ones. Children are involved with activities to promote sensory development and awareness, physical development and cognitive skills on a daily basis.

Please be sure your child has the following items in the center on a daily basis:

- Diapers – at least 8 disposable diapers are needed daily
- Baby wipes – labeled
- 2 complete changes of clothes – labeled and in a Ziploc bag
- Ointments – labeled (no powders are permitted, per law)
- We supply all food and “good start” formula
- Medication – must be by prescription only (see Administrator for more information)
- All belongings need to be brought to school in a labeled diaper bag. A bottle must have a cap and must be labeled with child's first and last name.

It would be neglectful on our part to admit a child into care on any day that they do not have the required supplies for us to keep them clean. If you do not have the supplies necessary, your child will not be allowed to stay until we have the items we need.

XXIV. Educational Philosophy

During the first years of life, the intellectual and physical development of children is unparalleled, and the desire to learn and to know will never be more intense. We believe the development of young children is largely influenced by the degree of intellectual, physical, emotional and social stimulation in their environment. Children learn through play, exploration, hands on observation and through positive feedback from the adults who influence them which are primarily their parents and teachers. Learning cannot be forced and the comparison of individual children to a “standard of normalcy” is non-productive except to detect generic or acquired abnormalities or defects that may require special attention. Children who experience “success” will see themselves as competent and that enhanced self esteem increases the desire to learn. We are committed to providing every child an atmosphere rich in experiences, concepts, ideas and skills by providing opportunities each day to play and explore in a variety of developmentally appropriate centers. We will provide skilled, professional and caring teachers who will participate with the children in the learning

process throughout the day. We will provide each child exciting and multifaceted educational experiences, including introduction to verbal communication skills, pre-reading and writing skills, and “American Sign Language,” as the logical steps in developing communication skills. Parents are welcome participants at any time in our school.

XXV. Conflict Resolution Procedure

Consistent with our open door policy, we strongly encourage parents to discuss any concerns they may have about any aspect of their child’s experience at GSA. In the case of a conflict, we recommend that parents promptly contact their child’s teacher to arrange a parent/teacher conference. Our teachers will make every effort to rectify any issues that may be worrying our parents.

If this does not yield a satisfactory result, parents should then speak to a director.

XXVI. Hurricane Policy

Our policy is to close when the public schools close so that our staff can take care of their families. We will re-open as soon after a storm as we can. If we have electricity and food, we will be open. We do not follow the policies of the school board after a storm. The best way to find if we are open or not (phones often do not work for days after a storm) is to drive by (when it is safe to do so) and read the sign on the front door. We will always do our best to keep you properly informed.

Certification

I hereby certify that I have received a copy of the A Gold Star Academy Parent Handbook & Enrollment Policies, dated _____, and agree to abide by the rules and policies contained herein.

I am also aware that any serious breach or non-compliance may result in A Gold Star Academy terminating enrollment with immediate effect, at the discretion of the Director.

Signature

Date