

StartingAhead[®] Academy

Parent Handbook



Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for choosing Starting Ahead Academy for your child's care and education. We are a licensed child care facility. We welcome you and your child, and strongly believe that open communication between parents and our staff is essential to meet your child's needs. It is our goal to create a partnership with our parents. Early experiences are vital to your child's growth and development. Early childhood experts agree that personality, identity, and language are largely formed by the time your child is six years old.

We are here to provide your child with a quality education in a safe, healthy, stimulating, and well-supervised environment. Our teachers are trained, experienced specialists that focus on the overall development of your child. Our curriculum combines the strongest elements of existing early childhood research, age appropriate activities. Our philosophy, values, and excellence reflect the expectations of the parents, communities, and schools we serve.

The purpose of this handbook is to share information and ideas with parents and guardians, to promote understanding of our programs, and foster a spirit of cooperation between parents and our staff. We are here to assist and support you as you raise your child.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Diaz
Director
Starting Ahead Academy

This handbook has been compiled to explain our program and guidelines to you. We trust you will not find the requests demanding. We feel they reflect the high standards necessary to maintain proper care for your child.

Mission Statement:

Our goal is to provide a friendly, nurturing atmosphere, to inspire confidence and a positive self-image. We provide age-appropriate learning experiences that stimulate the cognitive, social, emotional and physical self. Starting Ahead Academy offers an enriching curriculum. Each child is respected as an individual; therefore, teaching methods, approaches and instruction are tailored to the child's unique learning needs. To meet this goal, Starting Ahead Academy maintains a low teacher/child ratio. In addition to forming a solid foundation for future academic achievement and creative expression, our comprehensive early childhood education program also promotes social skills and healthy interpersonal relationships, which assist the children as they integrate into elementary school and beyond.

Operations:

Starting Ahead Academy serves children from 2 years of age through 5 years of age. Our hours of operation are 7:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. Starting Ahead Academy is open year round with exception to the outlined holidays.

Holidays:

Starting Ahead Academy will be closed in observance of the following (7) holidays:

- > Martin Luther King Day
- > President's Day
- > Good Friday
- > Memorial Day
- > Labor Day
- > Veteran's Day
- > Juneteenth (June 19th)

Should the holiday fall on a Saturday, we will close on Friday. If the holiday occur on a Sunday, we will close on Monday.

Inclement Weather:

If school is dismissed due to inclement weather, Starting Ahead Academy will be open unless announced otherwise. Please listen to local radio and TV stations for school closings in Miami-Dade County

Enrollment Procedures

1. Schedule a visit for you and your child.
2. Complete registration form.
3. Submit required registration material.
4. Return all forms with a Non-Refundable \$50 registration fee.
5. Read the Parent Handbook.

Required Registration Materials

Prior to attending Starting Ahead Academy, each child must have a copy of the following materials on file with the front office:

- > Birth Certificate (copy)
- > Blue and Yellow Health form
- > Emergency Information Form
- > Lunch & Allergy Form
- > Photo Release/Roster Permission Form
- > Court papers stating parental rights and responsibilities, or custody (if applicable)
- > Copy of Driver's license

Immunization Record

A copy of your child's current immunization record will be kept on file. As your child's records change, please supply the office with an updated copy of the immunization record.

Withdrawal from the Program:

Parents or guardians must give at least two weeks written notice regarding the withdrawal of a child from the program by completing a

Payment Policy

1. Your first tuition payment is due with your child's agreement for each term in order to secure a spot. The enrollment fee is also due at this time.
2. Checks should be made out to "Starting Ahead Academy". A fee of \$10.00 will be charged to those accounts that have not been paid by sign out, Second day of either payment option below.
3. Enrollment may be terminated if payment is not made within one week of the due date. Starting Ahead Academy reserves the right to terminate enrollment at any time.
4. Parents receiving public assistance are responsible for all financial payments until the center receives authorization from the county or state. If, at that time, there is a credit, it will be refunded to the parent from the center. Also, the parents are responsible for any unpaid portion of child care tuition.

Monthly Payments

Payment is due on the first business day of each month or on the first day of the month attending daycare. If received after the second business day of the month a \$25 late fee will be charged.

Our general policy is to review our fees annually. Additional fees may be necessary from time to time to cover special events such as field trips. You may ask for a receipt for any payment. All fees, rules and procedures are subject to change at any time.

Absences

Starting Ahead Academy bases its operating costs on annual membership projections. As a result, to assure the highest quality of staff personnel, equipment, and supplies on a continuous basis, we cannot offer tuition reductions for absences due to illness, holidays, natural disasters, etc.

Vacations

Starting Ahead Academy will have 5 vacations per year. These vacations are already calculated in your monthly tuition and already priced in to your payment.

Vacations for the upcoming school year are:

- > November 21-25
- > December 20-31
- > March 21-25
- > July 4-8

Uniforms

Uniforms are mandatory every day of the week, Monday through Friday. Uniforms consist of khaki bottom and navy blue or light blue top polo with school's logo. (Please ask administrator where to purchase).

Attendance

Unless enrolled into the after care program, Starting Ahead Academy is not responsible for children arriving before 7:00 a.m.. We want all children to be properly supervised and safe and appreciate you abiding by the suggested drop off and pick up times. To inquire about before and aftercare options, please contact our office. We realize there may be a time when something unexpected causes you to be a few minutes late and we will work with you. Regular attendance and timeliness is encouraged and required.

Parents or authorized adults picking up children before scheduled dismissal must sign the "Sign Out" Sheet. Child will only be released to an authorized adult. Please notify us in writing if your child will be picked up by an adult that is not listed on the authorization form. We are not able to release a child to an individual that is not listed in writing as authorized to pick up the child from the program. The staff will ask for identification if the adult is unfamiliar. All children must be signed out before leaving school outside of the 4:00 p.m. dismissal time.

Our day begins at 8:00 a.m. with breakfast until 8:45 a.m. If you are arriving after 8:45 a.m., please make sure your child has been given breakfast before arriving to our center. Program activities begin at 8:45 a.m.

Children must be accompanied by the parent or another designated adult 18 years of age or older. It is your responsibility to escort your child into Starting Ahead Academy building and to sign your child in at the front desk. Please do not drop off your child in the parking lot.

Our responsibility begins when you place your child in the care of Starting Ahead Academy staff member. At the beginning and end of each day attendance may be low. During these times children are gathered in designated areas before they move on to their respective classrooms, or before their evening pick-up time. Classroom staffs are willing to help with sadness or anxiety about separating. Such emotions are typical of many children.

Sign-In/Out Procedures

Parents are required to sign their child in and out at the reception desk in the lobby entrance. The parent or guardian is the only person who can authorize the release of the child to another individual. The parent or guardian should provide the names of at least two other adults who have permission to pick up the child in case of an emergency. This authorization is given on the enrollment form and should be periodically updated in writing.

We ask for proper identification before releasing a child to someone other than his/her custodial parent or legal guardian.

Sign-In/Out Procedures (Continued)

If either parent wishes to place restrictions on the other parent's rights to pick up a child, Starting Ahead Academy requires the enrolling parent to submit a copy of court orders or other legal documentation regarding child custody and/or visitation rights. This information will be kept in the child's file and we will abide by all legally authorized restrictions.

Under no circumstances will children be allowed to leave the Academy unsupervised for another location. We cannot release a child to walk to a bus stop or walk home.

State Licensing Requirements

We believe that licensing and rigid enforcement of standards are in the best interest of all children. We comply with applicable licensing regulations and standards. These standards relate to our facility, staff, health and safety procedures, nutrition, teacher/child ratio, and record keeping. Starting Ahead Academy is subject to inspection by state and city, health, fire, and licensing officials.

Special Needs Children

If your child has any special needs, please notify the Director in advance. We will make all necessary arrangements to provide for a special needs child whenever possible. We ask that you bring a written statement from the child's physician that states the needs and the care instructions for the child.

Allergies/Special Diets

Parents should provide specific information concerning allergies and/or special diets. If a special diet is needed a doctor's note with the recommended diet will be requested. Administration and parents will discuss dietary needs and implement a plan.

Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of Starting Ahead Academy to provide an environment that is free from unlawful discrimination of any type, including discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Lost and Found

If your child is missing anything, please inquire at the Academy as soon as possible. It is much easier to return a lost item if it is labeled with the owner's name. Remember to label everything. Unclaimed items are given to charity after a reasonable amount of time.

Discipline Policy:

It is the policy of Starting Ahead Academy to use a positive means of managing children's behavior. We recognize that as a child care provider, we share with the parent the responsibility for the development of self-discipline and self-control in the child. Specific behavior techniques which will be utilized are reinforcement of good behavior, modeling good behavior, redirection of activities, removal from environment, talking through the problem to aid the child in identifying and expressing their feelings and frustrations appropriately, and, as a last resort, the use of thinking time.

Our program has been structured to encourage acceptable behavior. Discipline will be consistent and individualized for each child, as well as appropriate to the child's level of understanding. The method of discipline will not be humiliating, frightening or physically harmful to any child. It will not be associated with food, rest, toilet training or isolation.

Parents will be notified of any problematic behavior exhibited by their child who has not responded to positive behavior techniques. Their assistance will be requested in establishing an appropriate behavior modification program. However, should efforts be unsuccessful and the child's behavior is of such a severe nature as to represent a threat to the safety of others and/or a substantial disruption to the program, the child may be removed from the program.

Physical punishment is not allowed on the premises, by staff or others.

Child Maltreatment Reporting

All persons working in a child care facility are required by law to report any suspected maltreatments of a child. All reports are kept confidential. Children may be interviewed by Child Care Licensing, Special Investigations, and law enforcement personnel in the event that any maltreatment is suspected. This would be done with discretion and with the child's best interest in mind.

Emergency Contact

Please provide Starting Ahead Academy with at least two other persons who are authorized to give Starting Ahead Academy guidance in the case of a medical emergency if the child's parents are unavailable. It is the responsibility of the parent to notify the Director of any changes in address, telephone numbers, emergency contacts, persons allowed to pick up your child, and any changes of transportation needs. You will also be required to provide a secret password to keep on file in case someone else must pick up your child.

Accidents

It is our policy to notify parents if their child receives even a minor bump or mark. In the event of an accident, the parent is contacted and an incident form is completed. All necessary forms for handling medical emergencies must be on file.

Let us know if your child has sustained an injury outside of school.