



# PARENT HANDBOOK

## **Our Mission**

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

## **Why Firefly is Unique**

- We serve organic, natural, and whole foods three times per day.
- We follow a nature based; Waldorf inspired Little Acorn curriculum.
- Our teachers believe that learning is a hands-on and interactive approach that includes yoga, music, art, movement, American Sign Language, and regular presentations from visitors.
- There is a strong emphasis on development of emotional intelligence that teaches rather than punishes.
- Our children learn by making choices.
- We maintain a strong focus on each child's individual gifts.
- The toys are made of natural materials such as wood, fabric, wool, etc.
- We staff well educated, nurturing, and consistent teachers that create supportive relationships with the children.
- Our large outdoor play area is utilized as much as weather permits.
- Our 5,000-square foot building on two acres provides generous amount of room for creativity.
- Firefly families are involved through volunteering consistently throughout the year.

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## **Contact Information and Hours**

School office correspondence and telephone calls will be handled through the office between the hours of 7:30 am and 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, year-round. The school phone number is (406) 309-2284, the fax number is (406) 309-2781 and our e-mail addresses are [frontdesk@fireflymt.com](mailto:frontdesk@fireflymt.com) and [admin@fireflymt.com](mailto:admin@fireflymt.com). We will have staff in the office during the above hours to answer questions and return calls. Please feel free to call us during this time. Teachers will not be available to come to the phone during class hours, but messages will be relayed, and your call will be returned as soon as possible. The ProCare Parent Engagement app can also be used for messaging to administration and teachers.

## **Enrollment Procedures and Tuition**

Parents should read over the parent handbook and application materials which are available online at our website [www.fireflymt.com](http://www.fireflymt.com). If you agree with all center policies and wish to enroll your child(ren), call the center to set-up a tour at (406) 309-2284. Enrollment is not guaranteed; Firefly reserves the right to refuse to enroll any child.

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

### **All Children**

1. Child Application
2. Annual Registration Fee (\$100 for first child, \$50 for second. Max \$150 per family) \*
3. Half Month Tuition Deposit per child\*\*
4. Emergency Contact and Parent Release
5. Immunization Record
6. Food Program Agreement
7. Over the Counter Medications Form
8. Tuition Express Form
9. Transportation Waiver

### **Infants Only (under 24 months)**

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

### **Additional Forms for Vaccination Exceptions:**

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

\* Annual registration fee is due at time of enrollment and July 1<sup>st</sup> each consecutive year.

\*\*If child is enrolled after April, the registration fee will be paid in September and then in July each consecutive year.

\*\*\*After 6 months of enrollment, the deposit will apply towards the last month of care when notice is given before the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. It is applied to any unpaid balances before it is refunded or applied toward the last month of enrollment.

**Firefly Closures:** We close when Kalispell School District Five (SD5) closes. No refunds are given for closure days. Firefly also reserves the right to close the center any time to ensure the safety of the children. We are closed for the following holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Break, Christmas/New Year's Break, Independence Day, and Memorial Day. The above outlined closures have been taken into consideration prior to setting tuition rates, therefore no tuition credit will be granted. Annual calendars go out in August of each year. Dates of holiday closures are subject to change annually.

**Staff Training Days:** We close twice a year during our staff training days. Please see the yearly calendar for specific dates. The above outlined closures have been taken into consideration prior to setting tuition rates, therefore no tuition credit will be granted.

**Family Involvement Hours:** Parents are required to volunteer one hour per month that their child(ren) is in attendance during the school year that runs September through June for a total of ten hours (this only includes months that your child attends). Involvement hours can be filled numerous ways: doing a demonstration for the kids, cleaning, painting, baking, repairing items, making something for the kids or teachers, attending parent meetings, etc. Here at Firefly, we create a strong community of families that fosters an all-inclusive environment for the children. Because we understand that life can get busy, there is an option of being billed for any hours that were not met at the rate of \$15 per hour. Family Involvement Hours must be turned in if you withdraw your child prior to the due date. If they are not turned in, you will be billed for the months that your child attended.

**Firefly Tuition Rates and Policies:** Our tuition is billed monthly and is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> OR the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month for that month. Payments are completed through electronic funds transfer from a checking account only. If the 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the payment will be processed the prior Friday. Monthly payments cannot be paid with a credit card. A \$25 late fee will be assessed on the 5<sup>th</sup> and/or the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month with an additional \$5 per day thereafter until the bill is paid, a \$35 fee for any returned payments, and in the *rare* occasion (approved by the director of Firefly) that a credit card must be used, a \$35 fee will be assessed for each payment made using a credit card. If your payment has not been received by the 5<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>, your child will not be able to attend Firefly until the balance has been paid. Monthly tuition remains the same whether children attend or not. We bill for forty-nine weeks a year and account for sixteen days off for major holidays and training days for Firefly staff. Please refer to our calendar for specific dates. We do not credit sick days or vacation days. It is your responsibility to find alternate care for your child on days that we are closed or when they are sick. We do our best to accommodate extra days or times needed when you are not already scheduled. We will only trade days during the same week and only if we have availability. We do not swap days within a week with a holiday. If you would like your child to attend on another day that week, it will be billed as an add day. Please contact the front desk to check for availability and you will be billed at the time of service for additional days or hours. You will be charged according to the Extra Charges section below.

**\*\*Families are required to have a Tuition Express form on file. Should a parent request to pay cash/check ahead of time, approval is needed from management and payment must be received prior to tuition being pulled. If payment is not received prior, Firefly will automatically pull from the account on file. \*\***

**Best Beginnings Scholarship:** As a state licensed childcare center, we do accept the Best Beginnings scholarship. The Nurturing Center will not cover your deposit or registration fees. They also may not cover the entire amount charged by Firefly or days that your child may be absent. Contact the Nurturing Center to see what they cover for

your child. Please note that you are responsible for paying your monthly copay and any amount that Best Beginnings does not cover.

**Annual Registration Fee:** \$100 for first child, \$50 for second child, \$150 max per family. The annual registration fee is nonrefundable.

**Half Month Deposit:** After six months of enrollment the deposit will apply towards the last month of care. One-month notices to terminate enrollment are only accepted before the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month to take effect on the following 1<sup>st</sup>. Any deposit paid is nonrefundable if you decide to discontinue the enrollment process for your child(ren) at Firefly Children’s Center, **even if your child(ren) have not attended.** Deposits will cover any unpaid balances before it is applied. Please refer to Termination of Enrollment section below for more information.

**Multi-Child Discount:** Families with multiple children will receive 10% off tuition for the child with the lowest tuition charge.

**Late Pick-up Charge:** There will be a charge of \$1.00 per minute per child that a child(ren) is picked up after 5:30 pm. This fee will be charged on the next invoice. Please do not pay the teacher directly.

**Monthly Tuition:**

Full Day (6 hours or more)

	<b>2-5 Years</b>	<b>Under 2 Years</b>
5 days per week	\$1155	\$1315
4 days per week	\$970	\$1095
3 days per week	\$780	\$875
2 days per week	\$565	\$655

Half Day (9:00 am to 3:00 pm)

	<b>2-5 Years</b>	<b>Under 2 Years</b>
5 days per week	\$1030	-----
4 days per week	\$845	-----
3 days per week	\$690	-----
2 days per week	\$530	-----

<u>Extra Charges:</u>	<b>School Age</b>	<b>2-5 Years</b>	<b>Under 2 Years</b>
Extra Full Day	\$55	\$65	\$70
Hourly	\$15	\$15	-----

**Termination of Enrollment:** Parents may terminate enrollment as needed but are required to give Firefly a one month written notice prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. Written notice must be turned into the office staff. After six months of enrollment your deposit will be applied towards the last month of care as long as any outstanding balances are satisfied prior to giving notice. Failure to give proper written notice will result in the deposit not being applied towards the final month of childcare. In the unlikely event that Firefly terminates your child’s

enrollment, as much notice as possible will be given and your deposit will be first applied to the remaining time allowed then to any outstanding balances. Any amount of the deposit remaining will be refunded unless termination is due to failure to pay. In this case the deposit will be retained, and collection actions will be taken.

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

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

### **Licensing, Policies and Procedures**

**Licensing:** Firefly Children's Center is licensed by the State of Montana as a childcare center. If there are any questions or concerns about Firefly's license with the State of Montana, you may ask the Director, Julie Kiewatt, or the Office Manager, Danielle Buzzard. If you have questions directly for the state, you may contact Fern Sutherland, Child Care Licensor with the Quality Assurance Division for the State of Montana, at (406) 751-5932. You may find a copy of the licensing requirements online at [www.fireflymt.com](http://www.fireflymt.com) or read the hard copy at the front desk.

**Stars Program:** We are a part of the Stars to Quality Program which is funded by the State of Montana. The Stars to Quality Program is a quality rating improvement system to support early childhood education programs in continuous quality improvement. We accomplish benchmarks for each star level and in turn the state awards us with funding to continue meeting higher benchmarks. These benchmarks include standards of quality for the building, property, toys, equipment, and staff training and education.

**Procure Parent Engagement:** Parent Engagement is a program that is used to keep track of your child's naps, meals, diapers, and send messages to your child's teacher throughout the day. Once enrolled, you will receive an email to sign up for Parent Engagement. There is no additional cost to use this feature. It can be accessed via the internet on your computer, mobile device, or App for Android and Apple devices.

**Drop-Off and Pick-Up:** Transitions are usually challenging for children. In our work with the children, we plan ways to ease transitions from one activity to the next. The most impacting transition of the day is when the child is being dropped off or picked up. The more routine and rhythmical we can make these transitions, the easier it is for the child. At drop-off: Briefly help your child settle in by helping them hang up their coat and exchange their outdoor shoes for slippers or socks. Once your child or children are settled in, you may bring your child to their teacher and let them know anything that might affect your child's day (sleep, health, an event, etc.). Finally, after saying good-bye to your child, quietly take your leave. We find that this entire process is best done in ten minutes or so. A longer process is often more difficult for the child. At pick-up time: Your child is your responsibility from the time you arrive because it can be difficult for your child when both parent and teacher are "in charge". The teacher will share with you any valuable information pertaining to your child's day. Please pick up any art projects daily from the cubby areas.

**Daily Attendance Records:** To track attendance, Firefly uses ProCare check-in system. The stations are located at each entrance. It is a requirement to check your child in and out each day. If ProCare is not working for any reason, please sign in and out on paper that will be available next to each station. If we do not have a record of your child being signed in or out in the ProCare System or on paper, you will be charged \$10 for each signature missed.

**Schedule Change Request Forms:** These forms are located at the front desk and at the check in station downstairs. We require a two-week notice effective on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of the month to drop days and can add days as soon as they are available. Fill out this form to request drop-in days, to let us know when your child will be absent, to see if we have availability to switch days, or to make changes to your child(ren)'s schedule. Any days that your child will be absent or late, please call Firefly to let us know.

If a family has submitted vacation dates and they want to child to return earlier than planned, they must contact the front desk to discuss this. Our staffing is planned based on attendance and we may approve staff vacations based on this information. It's possible if the child(ren) return early without notice, we may not have the appropriate number of staff.

**Dismissal Policy:** All efforts will be made to retain the child at Firefly. If there is ever a concern with the child's care, parents are to notify a manager (Kari or Megan). The manager will then set up a parent/teacher meeting to resolve any concerns. If the parent/teacher meeting does not produce the desired change, a meeting with the management and director will take place. If either the parent and/or staff believe that Firefly Children's Center is not beneficial to the child(ren), enrollment may be terminated. The center reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for one or more of the following:

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

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

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

**Transportation:** Firefly Children's Center does not transport children regularly. In the case of field trips, parent volunteers will transport children with a copy of driver's license and insurance on file at Firefly.

**Items Parents Provide:** Parents will provide the following personally labeled items (we recommend labeling with a permanent marker or sewn-in/iron-on labels):

- Two full sets of spare clothes for children regardless of age – these will be kept in bins in the bathrooms (two shirts, two pants or shorts, two or more underwear, two pairs of socks)

- An extra sweater or sweatshirt
- One pair of slippers or thick slipper-socks with non-skid soles. NO SHOES are worn past the cubby area.
- Cap for infants up to one-year old
- Hats for all seasons (hats are not worn inside except on infants)
- Appropriate outer wear for each season that includes:
  - Warm coat, boots, hat, mittens, and snow pants for winter
  - Jacket, raincoat, rain pants and rain boots for other seasons
  - Warm hat for fall, winter, spring
  - Sun hat for summer
- Proper footwear for play outside when boots are not needed. Please no dress-up shoes, or other impractical shoes for vigorous outdoor play.
- Three bottles for infants
- Diapers and 3 pack of wipes per month
- Wet bag for cloth diaper users and labeled cloth diapers
- Any special dietary food that is different than that supplied by the center
- A small pillow with a cotton pillowcase and blanket for sleeping (these are meant to be as simple as possible with no characters or caricatures on them). Blankets will be sent home to be washed each Friday.
- Water bottle or sippy cup for outside use in the summer

If your child's clothing becomes soiled while at Firefly, it will be set aside in a plastic bag to take home and launder. Please re-stock your child's bin every time soiled clothes are sent home. Please make sure clothing still fits your child, is appropriate for the season, and that there is enough for a full clothing change. Firefly is not responsible for lost or missing clothing. We appreciate your understanding.

We have learned that the way children are dressed directly affects their experiences. Please refer to our suggestions for your child(ren)'s clothing while attending Firefly Children's Center:

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

If at any point in time Firefly Children's Center must provide your child with any of the necessary items listed above, a \$25 fee will be added to the cost of the item. Firefly is not responsible for missing items.

**Toys from Home:** We recognize that young children often have a beloved blanket or sleeping companion that brings them comfort. This can be especially so for children under age three. We welcome these toys for naptime. Generally, we prefer that they be kept on the child's cot or in his/her cubby and used only for napping. **We ask that all other toys that are not a comfort object for naptime be kept at home.** Toys from home are more difficult for children to share because they often create unnecessary conflicts. If a toy is intentionally broken by a child, the parent will be responsible to repair or replace the toy.

**Food and Drink from Home:** No food or drink from home unless it is a dietary need and a *Medical Statement To Request Special Meals And/or Accommodations* form has been filled out and signed.



## **Child Guidance Policy**

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

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

**Abuse Policy:** Under Montana law, if any worker has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, it remains that individual's obligation to see that the situation is reported to the Child Abuse Hotline **1-866-820-KIDS (1-866-820-5437)**. This Hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The reports must contain:

- (a) the names and addresses of the child and the child's parents or other persons responsible for the child's care;
- (b) to the extent known, the child's age and the nature and extent of the child's injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries;
- (c) any other information that the maker of the report believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries or showing the willful neglect and the identity of person or persons responsible for the injury or neglect; and
- (d) the facts that led the person reporting to believe that the child has suffered injury or injuries or willful neglect, within the meaning of this chapter.

If any employee is suspected of abusing a child, this will also be reported immediately, and the employee will be placed on mandatory unpaid leave until the situation has been investigated and resolved by Child Protective Services (CPS). If CPS finds the allegations are found to be true employment will be terminated immediately.

**Safe Infant Sleep in Child Care Policy:** Providing infants with a safe place to grow and learn is very important. For this reason, Firefly has created a policy on safe sleep practices for infants up to 1-year-old. We follow the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to provide a safe sleep environment and reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is "the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age, which remains unexplained after a thorough investigation." The staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at Firefly follow the AAP safe sleep policy.

### **Sleep Position:**

- Infants will be placed flat on their backs to sleep every time unless there is a physician, practitioner or clinician signed sleep position medical waiver up to date on file. In the case of a waiver, a waiver notice will be posted at the infant's crib without identifying medical information. The full waiver will be kept in the infant's file.
- Infants will not be placed on their side for sleep.
- Devices such as wedges or infant positioners will not be used since such devices are not proven to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Infants who use pacifiers will be offered their pacifier when they are placed to sleep, and it will not be put back in should the pacifier fall out once they fall asleep.
- Pacifiers will be cleaned between each use, checked for tears, and will not be coated in any sweet or other solution.

- Parents are asked to provide replacement pacifiers on a regular basis.
- While infants will always be placed on their backs to sleep, when an infant can easily turn over from back to front and front to back, they can remain in whatever position they prefer to sleep.

**Sleep Environment:**

- Our program will use Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines for safety-approved cribs and firm mattresses.
  - Crib slats will be less than 2 3/8” apart
  - Infants will not be left in bed with drop side down
  - Playpen weave will be less than 1/4”
- Consumer Product Safety Commission safety-approved cradles and bassinets may also be used for sleeping if the infant meets the weight and height requirements.
- Infants will not be placed to sleep on any standard bed, waterbeds, couches, air mattresses, or on other soft surfaces.
- Only one infant will be placed to sleep in each crib. Siblings, including twins and triplets, will be placed in separate cribs.
- The crib will have a firm tight-fitting mattress covered by a fitted sheet and will be free from blankets, loose bedding, toys, and other soft objects (i.e., pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, etc.)
- To avoid overheating, the temperature of the rooms where infants sleep will be checked and will be kept at a level that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Sleep clothing, such as sleepers, sleep sacks, and wearable blankets, may be used as alternatives to blankets.
- Bibs and pacifiers will not be tied around an infant’s neck or clipped on to an infant’s clothing during sleep.
- Smoking will not be allowed in or near Firefly.

**Supervision:**

- When infants are in their cribs, they will be within sight and hearing of staff at all times.
- A staff member will visibly check on the sleeping infants frequently at Firefly.
- When an infant is awake, they will have supervised “tummy time.” This will help babies strengthen their muscles and develop normally.
- Infants will spend limited time in car seats, swings, and bouncer/infant seats when they are awake.

**Training:**

- All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at Firefly will be trained on safe sleep policies and practices.
- Safe sleep practices will be reviewed with all staff, substitute staff, and volunteers each year. In addition, training specific to these policies will be given before any individual is allowed to care for infants.
- Documentation that staff, substitutes, and volunteers have read and understand these policies will be kept in each individual’s file.
- All staff, substitutes, and volunteers at Firefly will be trained on first aid for unresponsive infants as well as what to do when they have a question or need assistance before they are allowed to care for infants.

**When the Policy Applies:**

This policy applies to all staff, substitute staff, parents, and volunteers when they place an infant to sleep in Firefly Children’s Center.

**Communication Plan for Staff and Parents:**

Parents will review this policy when they enroll their child in Firefly and a copy will be provided in the parent handbook. Parents are asked to follow this same policy when the infant is at home. These policies will be posted in prominent places. Information regarding safe sleep practices, safe sleep environments, reducing the risk of SIDS in childcare as well as other program health and safety practices will be shared if any changes are made. A copy will also be provided in the staff handbook.

Any individual who has questions may ask:

Program Contacts: Kari Topp, Director

*The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.*

## **Staffing, Curriculum and Development**

**Firefly Children's Center Staff:** All Firefly Staff have current First Aid and CPR certifications for infants and adults, background checks performed by the state (or the FBI if the teacher has lived out of the state of Montana in the last five years), and state required trainings regarding Shaken Baby Syndrome and Safe Sleep in Child Care. We hire staff that believe in empowering children, that are nurturing, well spoken, dedicated, and well educated. Our Primary Teachers all have at least two years of experience in a licensed facility or an Associates Degree or higher in Early Childhood Education or a related field.

**Staff Ratios:** Licensing requires staff-to-children ratios of one teacher for every four children under the age of two, one teacher for every eight children between the ages of two to three, one teacher for every ten children for ages between four and five, and one teacher for every fourteen children ages six and older.

**Classrooms:** Children are placed in the classroom where they developmentally, emotionally, and academically match other children. Classrooms do not have an age requirement, except when transitioning from infant to preschool, children must be at least 2 years old. Children will transition into the next classroom when they are ready and when there is space. If there is no space available in the preschool area when a child turns 2, the tuition rate will remain the same until they transition to the preschool area. Once Enrolled, but before a child begins at Firefly, we will meet with the parents and child to ensure that we know about family structure, culture, and development of the child (emotionally, socially, spiritually, academically and physically).

**Parent Interactions and Breastfeeding:** We encourage parents to stop by during the breaks to nurse or snuggle their babies. We are a breast-feeding friendly facility equipped with three rocker/glider chairs in the infant room with boppy's for your comfort. We also have a private room to breastfeed in, if preferred.

**Toilet Training:** Teachers begin naturally teaching infants about the potty at a very young age. To assist in the potty-training process, the teachers will take off the child's diaper, set them on a child sized potty, and read books or sing to encourage a positive experience. Teachers will take children the bathroom in pairs or small groups, so they are more inclined to try to use the potty. We make this a fun and interactive experience and it is *never* forced. We believe children will naturally learn something when they are ready. We are here to support the learning process! Ideally, children will have completed toilet training by two and a half to three years of age.

**Developmentally Appropriate Activities for Infants and Toddlers:** We focus on healthy development of movement, language and physical growth with our infants and toddlers. Children are sung to and spoken to articulately throughout the day. Recognizing that young children learn by imitating the adults in the environment, Firefly teachers work on their own speech and music development on an ongoing basis. Development of movement is encouraged through the child's own natural processes. Children are not placed in ExerSaucers®, car seats, or any other apparatus meant to hurry development. Rather, they are provided protected spaces in which to

practice rolling over, crawling, pulling up and walking. Children will have opportunities to interact with and observe older siblings and friends at the beginning of the day, lunch time, and afternoons.

**Developmentally Appropriate Activities for Preschool Aged Children:** Our developmental practices will enhance growth and development in the following areas: language, social, emotional, physical, cognitive and creative. Here at Firefly Children’s Center, we use Little Acorn Nature Based Curriculum for our Preschool age children. For more information about Little Acorn, visit [www.littleacornlearning.com](http://www.littleacornlearning.com).

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

**Handwashing Procedure for Staff and Children:** Children’s hands will be washed with soap and warm running water before meals and snacks and after toileting or diapering. Faces and hands will be washed after meals. Staff members will wash hands after assisting with diapering or toileting, before meals and snacks, and before handling any food.

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

- **Large and Small Motor Skills:** Infants will be allowed free movement which is the healthiest way for them to exercise large muscle activity. The best and most available resource for them to explore is their own body, fingers and toes, etc. They will have a few simple toys made of natural materials to utilize as they begin to learn grasping and holding. As the child grows older, s/he will be allowed to do extensive building, creating, climbing (both indoors and outdoors) with blocks, chairs, tables, wooden play stands, and tree limbs and stumps. Through simple sewing, finger knitting, woodworking, folding, washing, and other practical skills, they will develop their fine motor skills as well.
- **Creative Activity:** Everything in the child’s environment will be allowed to be transformed through the child’s play. They will build their own environments rather than having fixed and finished play areas. Manipulatives such as silk and cotton play cloths, building blocks, objects the children find in nature, dishes, baby dolls, etc. will be available for them to create their own scenarios. Infants and toddlers will be exposed to the creative play of the older “siblings” as well as having their own protective environment to explore. They will have opportunities to paint with watercolors, draw with natural beeswax crayons, and have simple craft projects throughout the year that have to do with the seasons and holiday gift giving.
- **Social:** A primary focus of Waldorf Early Childhood Education (from which Firefly draws much of its inspiration), social skills play a pivotal role in the development of a healthy social foundation. This is especially supported through the creative playtime. Social challenges are handled on an

individual basis, often through the use of stories, redirection and modeling of the appropriate behavior. Finger games, transitional tools, and games are also used as redirecting tools.

- **Intellectual:** Recent brain research indicates that the kinds of activities listed above are the necessary foundation for healthy synaptic connections. Through touching, feeling, and doing, the child's budding intellect is allowed to unfold at its own appropriate pace. The teachers have ongoing speech, voice and movement training during in-services. Through their own growth and development, the teachers model healthy speech and movement for the children to imitate.
- **Cognitive:** Growing a healthy body is of primary concern in the first seven years of life and is a primary focus at Firefly Children's Center. Although the children will be read to, and they will see their teachers writing and reading, there will be no formal academic drills or intentional academic instruction time. Research indicates that early academic training can create a type of burnout by third grade. As the child's natural interest in letters and numbers awakens, s/he will be encouraged and supported.

**A sample schedule is as follows (actual classroom schedules will vary):**

7:30	Creative indoor play
8:00	Breakfast and clean up
9:00	Story, Music, and Movement
9:45	Art and Creative Play
10:30-11:15	Outdoor play
11:50	Lunch and clean up
12:00	Free play and Story
12:30	Nap and Quiet Time
2:30	Sleeping children are roused gently
3:00	Snack Time
3:30	Outside play (in the Spring, Summer and Fall) Indoor playtime (in the dark Winter months)
5:30	Good-bye

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

**Celebrations and Festivals:** There is no religious training or affiliation connected with Firefly Children's Center. The faith backgrounds of the children will be honored through the celebration of festivals that the parents may wish to bring to the childcare in a simple way. We will also celebrate seasonal festivals for families that honor the universal qualities of the season (for example, a fall harvest festival in October, a festival celebrating new life in Spring). The childcare will also celebrate some holidays during the day with the children and will celebrate each child and teacher's birthday. A special snack or treat for a child's birthday is always welcome.

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

**Toys and Children's Play:** The toys here at Firefly are simple and open-ended. We believe the best toys are 90% child and 10% toy. Our toys invoke the child's natural creativity, imagination and healthy development. We also strive to provide playthings that are from natural materials, as they provide more and varied sensory experiences. Our toys are also non-toxic and are created from living, renewable resources.

## **Food and Nutrition**

We provide organic, whole, non-GMO foods. Teachers will be expected to learn the minimum meal requirements and offer balanced, natural meals and snacks, prepared fresh on site from whole foods.

**Mealtime Routines:** Teachers will eat family-style with the children at both snack and mealtimes. After children wash their hands, they will help to set the table. After singing our blessing song and giving thanks, the children will help to serve themselves and others as they are able. Preschool aged children will be especially encouraged to practice the skills of serving and passing. Children will be given one serving of everything that is being served. They will be encouraged to try each item before having seconds of any item. When children are finished, they will be expected to clean around where they were sitting. Children under one and able to sit up on their own will sit at a highchair. Infants not yet able to sit in a highchair will be in the lap of a teacher or playing in a secure spot on the floor if they are awake at mealtime.

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

**Infant Feeding:** We encourage nursing moms to breast feed, and we will accommodate nursing and bottle feeding of breastmilk. Breast milk must be labeled and dated. Infants will be fed according to the schedule provided by the parents. Our medical advisor has suggested the following:

- 0-6 months: Breast milk/formula only
- 6 months and up: Introduce bland vegetables such as banana, avocado, yams, squash, carrots; preferably unprocessed foods (i.e. cooked and mashed at home) or healthy jarred baby food (such as Earth's Best)
- 6-9 months: pears, apples, and other non-acidic fruits; grains and vegetables to include greens
- 9 months and up: easily digestible pastas, cottage cheese, yogurt
- End of first year: breads, table food

We encourage baby led weaning that allows the child to feed themselves. The child will quickly learn to gauge how much they can handle in their mouth because they are feeling themselves. Thick slices of pears, avocados or bananas are the easiest for them to hold yet still mushy enough for them to gum without many teeth.

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

- Introduce lidless cup at twelve months. We start by pouring in a little amount of liquid and gradually increasing as the child's ability not to spill grows.
- One year to fifteen months is optimum time to wean a child from a pacifier as the physical need to suck is not so strong anymore. If the child is in need of a comforter, we recommend a soft cloth or soft, simple doll that can be cuddled while falling asleep.

**Montana Food Program:** Firefly Children's Center participates in the U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## **Parent Involvement**

### **Parent Responsibilities:**

1. Please bring your child in on time (No later than **9am** is preferred in order to cause the least disruption). Exceptions will be made for appointments.
2. Communicate with Firefly when your child will be late or absent.
3. Communicate with your child's teachers about their progress and what is going on at home.
4. Get to know other parents and the staff – we are a community!
5. Support Firefly by sharing your experience with friends, family, and neighbors.
6. Complete your Family Involvement Hour each month to help improve our children's experiences.
7. Pay your bill on time.

**Parental Notices:** These will be kept near check in areas, your child's cubby, sent to your email address on file, through our ProCare check in stations, and/or our Facebook Page. Please keep your information on file updated and be sure to add Firefly Children's Center to your email address book.

**Communication with Parents:** Parents are welcome at any time during operating hours. Brief conversations will take place with each child's parents at pick-up and drop-off times. There will be an open-door policy at the center with a request that parents be respectful of the types of activities going on and that parents make sure their

children follow the expectations of the center staff. Sometimes it can be difficult for children to know who is in charge when both parent and teacher are present. Please help your child's teacher by making sure that your child follows the rules and expectations put into place for all the children (for example, sitting at the table while eating, helping clean up, or other things you hear the teacher ask of the children). Although there is an open-door policy for parents, it is helpful to the teachers if they know ahead of time if you plan to visit outside of normal pick-up and drop-off times. Because Firefly is a family-style childcare, when another adult enters, it is like walking into someone's living room. All the children recognize that someone new has entered their environment, and their attention is partly on you as long as you stay. It can take them awhile to get back to their normal play and learning focus. If you do come to visit, we suggest asking the teacher what work needs to be done or how you can help. Children thrive when the adults in the room are engaged in meaningful activity, such as washing toys, sweeping, mending. When they see you quietly engaged in your work, they can take up *their* work, which is play. The teachers are responsible for every child in their care, and unexpected interruptions or too much adult conversation can keep them from focusing on the children. Please do not think your child's teacher is intentionally being rude if they don't seem to have much time for conversation. If you have something to discuss that will take a while, please set up an in-person or phone conference with the teacher.

**Parent Involvement in Promoting Positive Behavior:** Through participation in the various activities at the center and open dialogue with parents and teachers, it is our intention that the home life of the child will support the child's life at Firefly, and vice versa. When a child's behavior is such that the child (or other children) could be harmed, the child's teacher will request a meeting with the parents to work out a plan to implement both at home and at Firefly to address the behavior. All efforts will be made to retain the child as long as it is clear that the family and staff are working healthily together toward a resolution and that progress is being made. If there is no significant change in behavior, or staff and parents are not supporting one another in a healthy way, the child will be exited from the program.

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

### **Smoking Policy**

Smoking on Firefly property is strictly prohibited (this includes the parking lot). If a parent smokes, they are required to do so off the property and must be free of smoke smell when entering the facility. If children are dropped off with the smell of smoke on their clothing, they will need to be changed into fresh clothing and the smoke clothing taken home immediately. The health and safety of the staff and children in our care is our number one priority. Below you will find a link to the CDC website with information on the dangers of second-hand smoke.

[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/secondhand\\_smoke/health\\_effects/index.htm#:~:text=Secondhand%20Smoke%20Harms%20Children%201%20Studies%20show%20that,smoke%20around%20them%20get%20more%20ear%20infections.%20](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/health_effects/index.htm#:~:text=Secondhand%20Smoke%20Harms%20Children%201%20Studies%20show%20that,smoke%20around%20them%20get%20more%20ear%20infections.%20)



## **Health Care and Emergencies**

Childhood illness is a natural part of early childhood whether the child stays at home or is in childcare. It is not unusual for young children to have fevers, occasional colds or even illnesses such as chicken pox. Some physicians feel that such illnesses help to build the natural immune system. Many pediatricians also recognize the importance of allowing children to have fevers to help fight infections. For this reason, we encourage parents to stay home with their children when they become ill in order to allow the illness to follow its natural progression. Studies indicate that children are being given far too many antibiotics currently, partly because parents sometimes feel a need to return to work and need quick remedies to get their child back to childcare. Montana state licensing requires that children stay home who have influenza, painful sore throats, fever (**101 or higher**), diarrhea, pink eye or have been vomiting. If they develop any of these symptoms while in care, they are to be picked up immediately. **Children who have any of these symptoms may not return to childcare until these symptoms have been gone for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication.** Please establish a backup person for your child's care if they are ill. Ideally, when a child is ill, the best place for the child is at home. Healing comes from more than prescription medicine. More important is the sense of wellbeing that comes from being with their own loving parent and in their own surroundings. If finding alternate care is impossible, please do not ask Firefly to make an exception; it is against State regulations. Thank you for your cooperation.

**Communicable Diseases:** A child with a reportable communicable disease will be sent home and asked to remain home during the period the disease is communicable. Parents of other children will be notified via ProCare, email, in person or a note in your child's cubby, when necessary. The appropriate public health officials will also be notified. The child may be admitted when his/her condition is no longer contagious. Communicable diseases that must keep a child home include: pink eye, coxsackie virus, cold sores with drooling or fever, impetigo, head lice, ringworm, scabies, Hib, measles, mumps, meningococcal disease, fifth disease with fever, whooping cough, RSV, strep throat, TB, chickenpox, diarrhea, hepatitis A.

**Immunizations: All infants and children attending Firefly Children's Center will be required to have at least the minimum required immunizations by the state of Montana to operate a childcare center. If your child is NOT immunized and you would like them to attend Firefly, they will need to have at least one of each required immunization before starting and a Conditional Attendance Form signed by their doctor with a plan of getting caught up. We audit all immunization files every six months starting in January to ensure all kids are keeping up.**

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

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

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

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

**Minor Injuries:** When a child receives a minor injury, the teacher will spend a brief time soothing the child with a moist clean cloth, hugs, kisses, and a Band-Aid® if needed. The teacher will then encourage the child to return to what he or she was doing. Parents will be notified upon pickup regarding the nature of the injury.

**First Aid:** All staff members at Firefly Children’s Center are CPR and First Aid certified. If first aid must be administered, parents will be immediately notified.

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