

The Ark Children's Center
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Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Dear Families,

It is my pleasure to share joyful news of our reopening on November 2, 2020. The staff and I are very excited about the upcoming school year and are fully committed to complying with many new health and operations regulations that have been established since last March. With your partnership and support, our program and its' staff, students, and families will adjust to these new guidelines.

Many agencies (Maryland State Department of Education, Center for Disease Control, Local Health Department, Montgomery County Health and Human Services, and Child Care Administration) have been hard at work coordinating efforts to issue new safeguards and consider reasonable practices within school settings. **Here are the many new practices we will implement when we return to school, pending further mandates or new requirements that arise in the upcoming weeks before we open.**

- **Great news! Our school year will operate from November 2-June 11.**
- **NEW School hours are 8:30 am-12:30 pm for all classes** to avoid conflicts with MCPS Zoom sessions.
- **Class ratios will remain small** (13 students or less) and must meet our minimum enrollment requirements for operation. We will open additional outdoor spaces so we can socially distance more effectively during the day.
- **In keeping with a suggested hybrid approach and limiting shared spaces the following change of school days will be implemented:**
 - **2 day** a week student will attend school on **Monday and Tuesday.**
 - **3 day** a week student will attend school on **Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.**
 - **5 day** a week student will attend school **Monday-Friday.**
- **Masks will be worn by all students attending the 3s and 4s programming.** We will be introducing our 2s children to wearing masks in the classroom as we begin school.
- **No backpacks or lunch boxes!** Children will need to bring lunch to school in a **paper bag and all food should be contained in disposable wrap or baggies.** Please do not send any reusable containers or thermoses.
- **Frequent cleaning and sanitizing protocols** will be practiced and closely monitored throughout the day.
- **Virtual and in-person licensing inspections** will be conducted from the Office of Child Care to help us through the many new transitions ahead.
- **Online Payment only through SimpleGive,** a user-friendly payment platform that will allow credit and debit card payments on a scheduled basis. **Monthly tuition due November through May, with no charge for June.**
- **Parent/Caregiver access to the building will be limited to outdoor drop-off and pick-up areas** at assigned doors. Specific information regarding entrance and exit points will be shared closer to the start of the year.
- **6 Feet of Social distancing** will be practiced by all adults on our property and in the best ways possible with children in classrooms and outdoor settings.
- **Daily Temperature monitoring for all children and staff** arriving to the building with a temporal thermometer. All temperatures must be below 100.4 degrees. Parents will be responsible for using their own temporal thermometer (in front of ARK staff) at the entry door assigned for your child.
- **If traveling out of state with family members,** please follow guidelines for required quarantine and comply with recommended COVID testing before your child returns to school.

- **Contact the school office/ leadership if your child, or family member has confirmed symptoms of COVID-19 and/or they receive a positive COVID-19 test result.** The family and student name will be kept confidential. We need to know this information and are REQUIRED to report this information to the Local Health Department and Office of Child Care for their decisions and recommendations for school closures.

Begin **preparing your child for school** by practicing the following safe procedures in your home and out in the community.

- Teach sneezing into sleeves, not hands! Teach your child to throw away tissues and to wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds or longer (try singing the ABC Song or Happy Birthday Song).
- Wear masks that cover mouth and nose in all social settings and when in contact with others.
- Reinforce the message that “safe practices” reduce the spread of germs and help keep us all safe!

Parents... we will need your partnership in the following ways:

- Keep children home when they are showing any sickness symptoms (i.e. mild fever, coughs, complaints of tummy aches, colored discharge from nose, etc.). If they are acting out of sorts, have had a sleepless night, please keep them at home!
- Accessing Butterfly Class Sites regularly from computer, laptop, or tablet. Full access to information, resources, and messages posted weekly to these sites does not transfer using phone devices.
- Communicating any changes of email addresses is essential as our weekly messages will reflect new information, changes in school policies and practices, and any changes needed in operational procedures. Please send us updates to arkoffice@oakdale.church

Please note the following school policy changes implemented last spring:

- **Withdrawals received in writing before June 30, 2020 are eligible for partial refund of the materials fee and first tuition installment.** No refunds will be issued for withdraw after that date. The Application fee is non-refundable at any time after registration.
- **Health Inventory Immunizations-** We are no longer accepting students with Medical Contradictions and Religious Exemptions who are not fully immunized at the start of the school year. All children must comply with current Health Department Immunization Schedules before they can attend school.
- **School Closures mandated by our Maryland State Governor will be followed.**
- **Weather-Related Closures announced through MCPS for inclement weather will also be followed. On a Delayed Opening Schedule our program operates from 10:30-1:00 PM.**

The Ark Children’s Center is a vibrant Christian ministry program at Oakdale Church that celebrates children and is committed to serving the families of our community. I am blessed to lead this ministry with an amazing staff, and support of the ARK Board of Directors. Communication, Health and Safety, and a great spirit of resilience and flexibility will be critical in the year ahead. Your partnership in preparing your children for a “new” year of practices will help to ease early transitions into school.

Wishing you good health, self-discipline, and a commitment to partnership as we come together as a school community. Your cooperation is essential and paramount in providing a healthy environment for everyone in our building!

Susan Borst, Director