

The Ark Children's Center
3425 Emory Church Road
Olney, Maryland 20832
301-774-5369
arkoffice@oakdale.church

Friday, June 26, 2020

Dear ARK Families,

It is a pleasure to reconnect with you since your initial decision to register your child at The Ark Children's Center. The staff and I are very excited about the upcoming school year ahead and are fully committed to complying with many new health and operations regulations that will keep your child, fellow classmates, parents and our staff safe. With our partnership and your support, we will all adjust to these new practices. We will need to be flexible to new operational processes and the likelihood that changes could result in the days ahead, especially if there is any significant re-emergence of COVID-19 cases.

Many agencies (including, 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 to consider reasonable practices within the school setting. Here is a **glimpse at new practices that will be implemented** once we return to school, pending changes and/or further mandates from the above agencies.

- Any closures announced by our Maryland State Superintendent or the Governor of Maryland will be followed.
- Parent/Caregiver access to the building will be restricted at drop-off and pick-up times. Specific information regarding entrance and exit patterns will be provided in late July/early August and closer to the start of the school year.
- Daily Temperature monitoring for all children and staff arriving to the building with a temporal thermometer. All temperatures must be below 100 degrees.
- Social distancing will be practiced in the best ways possible entering the building and within the classroom and in outdoor settings.
- Cleaning protocols will be practiced and closely monitored throughout the day to ensure sanitized surfaces and to reduce the spread of germs.
- Virtual inspections or in-person inspections will be conducted by licensing specialists from the Office of Child Care. They are here to help us through the many new transitions ahead.
- Our class ratios will remain the same and are in accordance with guidelines from the Office of Child Care. We will be opening some new outdoor and indoor spaces so we can socially distance more effectively throughout the day.

Please begin **preparing your child** for school by practicing the following safe procedures in your home and out in the community. Please start practicing these frequently and throughout the day.

- 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).
- Wear masks that cover mouth and nose 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, then please keep them at home!
- Accessing Shutterfly Class Sites frequently and regularly from a computer, laptop, or tablet device is important. Phone access does not provide full viewing of information, resources, and messages posted weekly to these sites.
- Communicating changes to your email address information 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
- 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 so we can make immediate decisions regarding health notification to parents and temporary closures for cleaning.
- Trust us in this new time of change. Ask questions and be encouraging of the leadership and staff during these unprecedented times.

Please note the following immediate school policy changes:

- **Withdrawals received in writing before July 10, 2020 will be eligible for partial refund** of the materials fee and first tuition installment. 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.

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 feel very blessed to lead this ministry with an amazing staff, and the support of the ARK Board of Directors. At this time, the office is closed for the summer and will reopen in late August. I will be checking email and returning phone messages during the time the office is closed. Please be looking for an early August newsletter, school calendar and update on missing student forms. Please visit our direct link to our page at (<https://oakdale.church/the-ark-childrens-center/>) Of interest is our **Stay Connected Page** with Parenting Resources that were shared with families last spring during our time of mandated closures.

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. In the week ahead, our office will be sending a postcard to verify your mailing address and emailing this letter to all families enrolled in the 2020-2021 school year. If you need to update any information, kindly contact the office (arkoffice@oakdale.church).

Wishing you good health, smart choices as we reopen in Phase 2, and God's blessings,

Susan Borst, Director