

MISSION

The goal at Dawn's Early Light ECC is to promote the healthy, well-being of each individual child during their early years by providing a healthy, safe, and productive learning environment emphasizing developmentally appropriate practices (DAP). Within a meaningful environment, children can develop socially and executively laying the foundation for future successes.

PHILOSOPHY

Dawn's Early Light recognizes the early childhood years to be a special and important time, wonder and exploration in children's lives that should be respected and cherished. We support and encourage curiosity, individuality and independence. Children learn best when they manipulate materials, experiment, explore and initiate their own activities. Daily experiences provide children with the habits most needed for intellectual growth while developing a child's enthusiasm for learning. The staff communicates with families regularly in order to ensure the highest level of education for the child. Our goal is to welcome families into our center and watch their children grow and flourish at each stage of their lives.

We believe by understanding the whole child that we as facilitators can help the child attain optimal growth and development at each age of early childhood. The early years provide experiences and genetics that will determine an individual's capability.

Dawn's Early Light, Inc. is committed to protecting the health of our children, families, staff, and community. The following policies were designed in response to guidance from the Maryland State Department of Education and Maryland Department of Health, in accordance with best practices from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and with everyone's well-being in mind. To limit the potential spread of COVID-19, we will be making some temporary changes to our programming that include robust cleaning and disinfecting procedures and minimizing opportunities for person-to-person exposure. The following plan outlines the recommended practices and strategies we will use to protect the health of our children, staff, and families while at the same time ensuring that children are experiencing developmentally appropriate and responsive interactions and environments.

PROGRAM

The child's self-concepts such as individuality, socialism, independent productivity and creative expression are enhanced through planned lessons and open-ended activities. Opportunities are provided each day for the child in the following domains:

Social Foundations Language and Literacy Physical Well Being The Arts Math, Science and Social Studies



Developmentally appropriate tools and curriculum help the child achieve success at every age from birth to 5 years. Dawn's Early Light follows <u>Teaching Strategies Gold</u> as a guide for planning and recording developmental milestones and <u>Learning Without</u> <u>Tears</u> for kindergarten readiness.

Each classroom follows a daily schedule including times for reading, music, diapering and potty training, indoor and outdoor play and meal time that is shared with parents to add to the child's emotional development. Routine is a vital component to social foundations. Language and literacy opportunity.

Classroom materials and tools for learning are accessible to each child throughout the day. Age appropriate materials and tools are placed on low shelves within the children's reach. Guidance from the teacher helps promote the child's confidence in using materials appropriately and responsibly. The child learns from responsibility and takes pride in accomplishments.

The child meets together in a large group for circle time each day and opportunities are made within the lesson to work in two or three small groups with skill based criteria. Child to Teacher time is during free play.

Supporting Social/Physical Distancing Our program will use the following strategies to encourage physical/social distancing in our learning environments:

• Rearranging furniture to section off play spaces and maintain 6-feet separation, when possible.

• Limiting the number of children in one space at a time (e.g., using Velcro strips, or a pocket chart to show how many children may be in an area at one time).

• Using markers (e.g., tape) on the floor to indicate spaces to line up.

• Conducting more activities in small groups (e.g., read-alouds, introducing a topic) that might usually be done in a large-group (e.g., circle time).

• Planning activities that do not require close physical contact between individual children.

• Incorporating additional outside time as much as feasible.

• Encouraging children to use alternate greetings or shows of affection that limit physical contact (e.g., waving, bowing, or curtseying to each other; air hugs or high fives).

• Staff will continue to provide hands-on support for any child with a special health care need (e.g., assisting with mobility equipment, nebulizers, communication devices, etc.)

• Limiting non-essential visitors, volunteers, and activities, including groups of children or adults.

• Canceling or postponing field trips and special events that convene larger groups of children and families.

Transitions

The staff assist the child when progressing through each class from the infant room to the toddler room, from the toddler room to the 3 and 4 year old class and then to the 4 and 5 year old class. The parents are notified the child will be moving to the next class. The parent reserves the right to make the best choice for the child. The child will visit the new classroom at small intervals two weeks before the move. This time allows the staff and parents to observe the child in the new setting and make recommendations.

Calvert County Public Schools allows the five year old child in our program to visit the kindergarten classroom each spring with the others in class to help with the transition to school. The class rides the bus, tours the school, participates in class and meets school staff. The transition to school is less intrusive for the child when the staff, the family and the school work together.



Open House Night

Each September the center hosts an information hour for parents to learn about the curriculum, activities, events and ways to volunteer which contributes to the success of the child. Information is posted in the parent newsletter and on the website.



Family involvement is beneficial to the child and to the success of the program. Dawn's Early Light maintains an Open-Door policy to our families welcoming new ideas, participation and educational support. Families can voice ideas and concerns to the child's teacher or to the Director. Families reserve the right to a conference within 24 hours of notification. The Director can help identify the problem and discuss possible solutions. An action plan is developed that both parties agree on. The goal is to provide the child with a beneficial early childhood foundation. We have developed several ways to communicate to the families:

Monthly newsletter and calendar HiMama App (download to your phone) Classroom Newsletter Director's Desk (<u>del.dunkirk@comcast.net</u>) Website Conferences (Twice per year and upon request)

Volunteer Opportunities Volunteers receive a discount in tuition of up to 10%

Work the Scholastic Book Fair Read a story to the class Coordinate holiday snacks Present your career Chaperone a field trip Donate free items to the classroom Graduation Help

Gatherings

Open House Night (September) Pumpkin Patch Trip (October) Halloween Trunk or Treat (October) Thanksgiving Luncheon (November) Christmas Concert (December) Read Across America (March) Grandparent's Day (April) Preschool Graduation (May) Parent's Night Out (Every other month open until 10)



Our center provides an inclusive setting for all children. Children gain a better understanding and knowledge of our diverse culture by working with one another regardless of their individual needs. Staff is trained to provide reasonable accommodations to children with special needs based on the following:

- 1. A written plan of care that includes instructions for any procedure necessary for the health of the child.
- 2. The plan will be modified and revised as often as deemed necessary to meet the changing needs of the individual child.
- 1. Parents will receive referrals for developmental assistance.
- 2. Therapists, when requested, may work with the child on site.
- 3. Staff is trained to follow IFSP and other written plans.

Assessments

Assessment informs our instruction. In order to guide the child through their development, teachers must assess what the child can do first and build on those skills. In order for the child to reach their full potential the staff prepares a portfolio each year. The following tools are used to learn more about the child: Form ASQ (family to complete) Data collected from the child (observations, work samples and assessments) On demand assessments (Asking a question during class) Follow Up activities Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment Record Conferences (Conducted twice per year)

In the event that your child needs further testing, we will connect parents to the specialists at Calvert County Infants and Toddlers. Outside agencies can help by assessing the child's needs and making recommendations to our teaching staff and to parents that help minimize obstacles for children to grow and develop healthy and happy.

Conferences

Twice per year in the fall and spring teacher's share each child's progress with one or both parents. The staff is trained to follow suggestions from parents to improve the child's success.

Our Staff

Dawn's Early Light understands that it is our staff that maintains the quality level of our center. Understanding this, we strive to hire top quality professionals who believe in the uniqueness of children as set forth in our philosophy. Each staff member is credentialed through the Maryland State Dept of Education. Certifications are posted or kept in the office.

Our staff members understand that they too are continuing to learn each day and with each challenge. Ongoing professional development provides continuing education and other opportunities for staff to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field, including: new programs and practices, routines, pending policy, legislation and regulatory changes.

In addition to staff training, all staff working directly with the children are adequately acquainted in their orientation:

- 1. Center's philosophy goals
- 2. Emergency health and safety procedures
- 3. Child abuse and neglect reporting procedures and expectations for ethical conduct.

At ninety days they go through an informal review and once a year after that.

Our employees go through appropriate screening techniques, including state and federal background checks. Our directors observe the teachers in their classrooms on an on-going basis. The staff is trained to be friendly and accommodating.





Little Patriots 6 weeks to 18 months Open <u>7am-5pm</u> daily



The Navigators & Trail Blazers 18 months to 36 months (Toddler Program)



The Explorers 3 and 4 year olds (Preschool)



The Pioneers 4 and 5 year olds (Kindergarten Readiness)

School Age Children

Our before and after school program provides a safe and healthy environment for children 5 through 10 years of age each day before school and after school including days when schools are closed. We encourage caring, honesty, respect, friendship and responsibility. Homework assistance is provided each day except for Friday. Incentives are provided for completed homework and good behavior. In Dunkirk, the students attend Mt. Harmony. In Prince Frederick, the students attend Calvert and Barstow.

Dawn's Early Light Summer Adventures begins when school lets out in June and continues until school resumes in September. We provide a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities led by trained staff to give the children a memorable experience. Children form a sense of community and lasting friendships. Activities range from weekly outings and craft projects to organized games.



Discipline and Guidance

Our goal is to provide your child with a positive and consistent approach to guidance. Safety is our foremost concern. A variety of methods are used to promote learning and exploration each day. Each child should arrive in comfortable clothing in order to enjoy the activity. Play includes sand and water, painting and playdoh, running and jumping. Some children will be learning to dress. Rules are introduced to promote a healthy and safe learning environment for everyone to work and play. Social skills and emotional management play a key role not only in young learners but later in life as well.

If an undesirable behavior occurs, the child will be walked away from the group and talked to about the consequences of his or her behavior. If the behavior continues, the child will be asked to clean up his/her area and try another activity. If the problem involves another child, both children will be helped to talk through the dispute. The goal is that sooner rather than later, the child will be responsible for his or her own problem solving. The staff is trained to always re-direct the child.

Persistent behavioral issues or aggression would be handled with a conference to include the Director and a plan of action. The Director's door is always open to families who have questions or concerns about the program, the staff or the child. Refusal to provide care is at the discretion of Dawn's Early Light, Inc. Staff is trained

to maintain a comfortable space for the children. Parents can receive resources for children with behavioral needs:

The Promise Resource Center (Awesome staff. Very helpful!)

Calvert County Infants & Toddlers (Free! Attentive and professional)

Kennedy Kreiger

Physical Fitness

Our goal is to have children be as active as possible throughout the day while in our care.

Children ages 1-2 have 30 minutes of structured and at least 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity per day.

Children ages 3-5 are provided with at least 60 minutes of structured and at least 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity per day.

Children of all ages are provided twice per day with indoor and outdoor areas for performing large muscle activities like climbing, running, balance and ball play. Staff are trained to promote healthy choices. Physical fitness activities are provided every day and within our thematic units during the year.

Biting

Biting is a release of frustration. It is a natural behavior frequently exhibited by young children. These children are still discovering orally and do not have the processing skills to properly understand their range of emotions. It is important to understand that when children bite, they are sending a signal for help. It is important to understand that there is nothing caregivers or you as parents can do to stop the behavior. In a group care situation, try as we might, at some point your child will bite or be bitten. Each case is treated individually and meeting with staff tends to help where all sides will be considered.

We do, however, take cases of biting seriously. An accident report is prepared and signed by the parent of the biter. The child that has been bitten is given lots of hugs while the bite mark is cleaned with soap and water and ice is applied. An accident report is written for the bite and the parents are informed. As in the case with all disputes between children, no names are given.

Food Allergies

Parents are required to list informative medical needs of a child including known allergies on the Emergency Form. The staff is trained to serve food in the class room following the written food guideline.

Parents are required to provide food from home when allergies prevent the child from eating center meals.

Nutrition

Dawn's Early Light provides morning/afternoon snack as well as hot lunches. Fresh fruit and vegetables are provided daily with lunch. Fresh fruit and veggies are also served at least once a week with snack. We serve 100% juice or 1% milk at meal times. 1% milk is served with lunch. Drinks with added sweeteners and caffeine are not permitted to be served to children. Children have access to water throughout the day. The staff is trained to monitor sugar intake of the child at meal time and encourage good eating habits.

Food & Mealtimes

To limit opportunities for exposure during mealtimes, our program will engage in the following recommended practices:

• Spacing children as far apart as possible (ideally 6 feet apart) by limiting the number of children sitting together and rearranging tables/seating.

• Serving meals in the classroom instead of group dining spaces.

• Staff and children will wash hands before and immediately after children have eaten.

• Kitchen staff will prepare food wearing face coverings and masks with additional sanitizing and disinfecting practices.

• Kitchen staff will deliver meals/snacks outside classrooms, and classroom staff will bring food into the classroom. Classroom staff will place used dishes outside the classroom for kitchen staff to pick up and clean.

• Cooking/food activities in the classroom will be temporarily suspended.

Tuition and Expenses

Tuition is due one week in advance to be submitted the Friday prior. Dawn's Early Light reserves the right to refuse services due to non-payment. A \$5 late fee is applied to each day the payment is not received. Tuition is collected weekly through automatic debit.

We make every effort to stay open for your convenience. On holidays, snow days and sick days, tuition will not be reduced.

Deposit

A deposit equal to one week's tuition is due before the first day of attendance to be applied to the final week of attendance. <u>Withdrawal notices must be received to the</u> Director at least one month in advance to avoid further charges.

Late Pick Up Fees

Our center closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. The staff is trained to collect the fee at the time of the parent's arrival. If no contact has been made with the parent or emergency contacts, staff is trained to contact CCPS (Calvert County Protective Services) to pick up the child.

First Late Pick Up	No charge
Second Late pick Up	\$25.00
Third Late pick Up	\$75.00
Fourth Late pick up	\$100.00
5 or more	Dismissal from center

Withdrawal

You may withdraw from Dawn's Early Light at anytime of the year. However, your required deposit will not be refunded or applied to your tuition unless two week's written notice is presented to the Director. Written notices may be sent via e-mail to del.dunkirk@comcast.net. Dawn's Early Light is a private forprofit center and as such we reserve the right to refuse care under certain conditions. The following are only examples and are not intended to limit our rights:

- Non-payment of tuition
- Consistent communication difficulties between parents and Dawn's Early Light
- Repeated failure to abide by the regulations set forth in this handbook
- Exhaustion of all reasonable efforts regarding child or adult behavior concerns;
- Harmful behavior from children requiring medical attention

• For any other reason which, in the opinion of the management, is in the best interest of the center.

Health Records

Parents are required to submit an initial shot record when registering. Records are updated annually according to Maryland Child Care Regulations. Parents are responsible for providing DEL with an updated copy of immunization records as shots are administered by the doctor and to update the contact information form. Failure to provide these records upon request will lead to a child's exclusion from care.

- Health Inventory & Immunization Record (both parent and doctor completed)
- Lead Test Completed
- Dawn's Early Light, Inc. Signed Parental Contract
- Emergency Card (every line completed)
- Getting To Know You Form
- Infant/Toddler Plan (under 2)
- ASQ Screening Form
- Photo Release
- Email address submitted to <u>del.dunkirk@comcast.net</u> (Dunkirk) or <u>pfcenter@comcast.net</u> (Prince Frederick)

What to Bring...

Infant Room

Health Forms / Updated Shots Bottles pre-prepared Unopened jars of food Snack foods Sippy Cup for water Pacifier / Comfort item Diapers for one month Wipes fragrance free for one month

Toddler to 3

Health Forms / Updated Shots Sippy Cup or Water Bottle Coat and hat in winter Spare clothes kept here Backpack with small blanket and crib sized bed sheet Diapers and wipes for one month Food items (optional, not required)

Preschoolers to 5

Health Forms / Updated shots Coat and hat in winter Spare clothes kept here Backpack with small blanket and crib sized bed sheet Food items (optional, not required)

Accounting

Parents can request receipts and statements by contacting the office. The Director is the only staff who can provide signatures and approval letters. Staff members are not able to accurately give information about an account.

Front Entrance Security

Our program will use the following recommended practices during drop-off and pick-up times to protect the health of children, families, and staff.

At this time, families will not be allowed in the building, and check-in/out procedures (including screening and temperature checks) will happen outside.
Parent access to the facility will be limited to the area just inside the entrance with social distancing during temperature/symptom checks and child hand-off.

• Only one adult per family should be present at drop-off/pick-up. Ideally, this would be the same parent or designated person every day, though we recognize this is not always possible.

• Implementing staggered drop-off and pick-up times to limit contact among parents.

• Staff will greet children and families curbside or outside the building and walk children in and out of the building.

• Children should enter the building without car seats.

• There will be hand sanitizer or wipes at the sign-in station for parents/guardians to clean pens/keypads between each use.

- Parents and other visitors should wear masks while in the building.
- Parents should avoid congregating in a single space or a large group.

Access into the center is secure at all times. The doors remain locked throughout operational hours. The key fob allows access into the center. Parents must purchase a key fob per person and pay a deposit of \$25.00 per key. Deposits will be mailed within 14 days of key return.

Health and Safety

Screening Families & Staff for COVID-19 Symptoms and Exposure Upon arrival to the program, we will ask staff and families to report if staff/children have: had any symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, OR fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, chills or shaking, muscle aches, sore throat, headache, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, and congestion or runny nose). been diagnosed with COVID-19, tested for COVID-19 due to symptoms and are awaiting a result, or have been instructed to isolate or quarantine by a health care provider or health department had close contact (been within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes total in a 24-hour period) with anyone with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 within the last 14 days and did not complete quarantine.

The staff are trained to observe children including their health and safety. Children not well enough to participate in the program are not well enough to be present. Children who show any of the following symptoms listed below must be excluded from the center.

- Temperature of 101 or higher (100.5 for infants)
- Rash Child may not return without a doctor's note or if rash is open, oozing or itching; open skin has to be healed before returning to care
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Red and runny eyes Child may not return until they have been on medication for at least 24 hours and there is no goop or drainage in or around the eye. If the child is documented to have a medical reason (clogged tear duct or allergies) the child may return the next day if "pink eye" is not present in the center.
- Noticeable change in behavior
- Virus
- Coxsackie's (Hand, foot and mouth) Child may not return to the center until all blisters have disappeared and the child is eating normally.
- Strep Throat Child may not return until she/he has been on medication for at least 24 hours
- Chicken Pox Child may not return until all blisters have had the scabs fall off.
- Thrush Child may not return to the center until the child has been on medication for at least 24 hours and has resumed normal eating patterns.
- Lice-Child must not have any nits before returning to care. Staff are trained to search a child's hair.

Medication

Staff specially trained to administer medicine to children must have: Original Medicine bottle labeled with name Authorization form completed by doctor Medication returned home each night

The application of over-the-counter topical ointments or lotions, such as diaper rash ointment or sunscreen, can be applied per the parents' instruction with a parent signed medication form.

EMERGENCIES

While all efforts are made to protect your child from injury, occasionally accidents do occur. First Aid will be provided to minor accidents such as a scrapes, bumps or small cuts. Parents are contacted directly for more serious injuries. The lead staff is trained to manage emergencies and consult with Director. A staff member travels with the injured child to the closest hospital until family arrives.

Poison

All poisonous materials will be kept out of reach. However, should your child ingest a poisonous substance, we will follow the instructions of the Poison Control Center. 1-800-222-1222

Screen Time

Our program offers a variety of activities to keep children engaged and moving. Screen time is limited to according to age. Tablets are used to support the curriculum where needed. Educational games and musicals are used to enhance cognitive thinking.

Vacation

Tuition vacation weeks are offered each year for children enrolled for 12 consecutive months. You must give two week's notice to receive your vacation credit while the child is on vacation. Vacation weeks do not accumulate. Vacation credit may only be used for full weeks (5 consecutive days)

Inclement Weather

Inclement weather does affect the opening of the center. Closings, late openings and early dismissals are posted on our website within a reasonable amount of time during bad weather. Parents are required to submit a working email address to get information out quickly and efficiently. Weather closings are posted on the answering service and on the website.

> Dunkirk phone: 301-855-6300 Prince Frederick phone: 410-525-5625 www.dawnsearlylight.net

Holiday Closings

The center is closed on the following days: Labor Day Thanksgiving Day and the Day After Christmas Eve- Closed at 3:30 Christmas Day – Closed December 26th - Closed New Year's Eve Day- Closed at 3:30 New Year's Day Good Friday (Friday before Easter) Memorial Day Independence Day

Unforeseen Closures

If for some reason the center is closed for unforeseen reasons, no discount in tuition will be available. Some examples of this might be:

Hurricane or Tornado Damage Flood or Electrical Outage Government Request Emergency Plan in Effect Pandemic

Emergency Preparedness

We conduct fire drills monthly throughout the year with three "emergency scenarios" conducted per year. This ensures that staff and children are familiar with the location and operation should we experience fire, tornado, flooding, earthquake, power outage, or acts of terrorism. Parents are required to submit a working telephone number at all times for the staff to reach you while the children are in our care.

Program Evaluation

We look for your feedback each year. The survey will be distributed each May to assure the quality of services provided. Those concerns are then openly shared and solutions are made. Parents can contact the Director at any time to discuss serious concerns and the child's teacher has been trained to be attentive to the needs of the parents.

Birthday Parties - Check in with your child's teacher for allergies and other restrictions.

Holiday Parties – Parents are asked to donate an item.

Field Trips – Our center takes 3 to 4 field trips per year as the outing pertains to the children's needs. Permission slips will be put out in each classroom for parents to review and sign allowing their child to attend a field trip. We use a private bus company to travel to and from our destination. Chaperones are asked to follow the bus on all trips in their own vehicle due to bus capacity. (See Covid-19 guidelines)

Transition to Kindergarten Day – The children who will attend kindergarten in the fall are invited to the local elementary school for an hour of classroom participation each May. The children travel by bus to Mt. Harmony (Dunkirk) or Calvert Elementary (Prince Frederick). The date is announced on the May calendar. Kindergarten registration takes place each spring during April and May. Visit calvertcountypublicschools.

Preschool Graduation – This ceremony marks the end of preschool for children who will be starting kindergarten in the fall. All families are welcome to join us for this momentous event.

Parent Information Area – Located in each entryway, parents can find current information

Visiting – Dawn's Early Light has a complete open door policy. We welcome you, the parent, unannounced visits. If there is a custodial arrangement in place, a copy of the custody agreement or court order must be included in your child's file so that we can comply with your visitation and pick up needs. All other visitors must show ID to enter the center. (See Covid-19 guidelines)

Entrance – The front doors will be locked for the entire day. Each parent who enters the building is required to have a key. Key fobs are purchased in the office and a deposit of \$25.00 is required. Deposits are returned by mail upon receipt of the key when you withdraw from the program.

Parking Lot Safety - Children are not permitted to roam inside or outside the center without supervision. Parents are required to escort children to and from the center responsibly by holding their child's hand. It is against Maryland law leave a child unattended in a car. For everyone's safety parents are asked to watch children closely and hold their hand arriving and departing. The speed limit is 10 mph in the parking lot.

Dropping Off and Picking Up – It is important for your child's safety that you drop off and pick up within your child's assigned classroom. Do not allow children to "find their own way" to their group. The child will be released to either parent listed on the emergency card unless a copy of a custody agreement or court order is in your child's file.

Absenteeism – Parents are required to report all illnesses to the classroom teacher. Please notify an absence through Hi Mama by 9:00 a.m. A child is not permitted to arrive to the program after 9:00 a.m. without prior permission.

Clothing – Remember that we are in a constant state of discovery. Discovery is messy business. Do not dress your child in something that would inhibit their movement or their ability to explore. Please remember to dress them appropriately for the season and as if everyday they will be outside. Shoes are very important and should not be worn carelessly. Our playground is grounded with large wood chips that find their way into sandals and flip flops. It is best to wear tennis shoes, if possible, while at the center.

Toys – We have gone to great lengths to select toys that are appropriate and promote discovery through safe and positive messages. On certain days throughout the year we will have Show and Tell days where children may bring an item from home to share and discuss with their friends in class in order to expand classroom learning. Staff are trained to remove objects from the class room that do not promote development.

Class Pictures – Creative Images is here one day each Spring to take individual and class photos. There is no obligation to pay. Proofs can be viewed within two weeks and parents order directly with the company.

Summer Camp Field Trips

Our "Summer Adventures" program for school age children ages 5 to 10 during the summer months offers field trips and fun activities that are age appropriate. All forms and permission slips are completed before any child can participate. The children must follow all rules and regulations read to them in order to attend each trip. Registration and the Activity Fee for Summer Adventures **must collected by April 30th. (See Covid-19 restriction guide.)**

To reach us by email: Dunkirk – <u>del.dunkirk@comcast.net</u> Prince Frederick Center – pfcenter@comcast.net

PARENT HANDBOOK

2020-2021