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WELCOME

About us
Learning Zone is a locally owned and operated child development center. We are dedicated to a fun filled learning experience during the early years. We believe in providing quality care and education during these critical years of development.

Learning Zone students develop, learn and thrive first through imaginative play. Our teachers are educational engineers and are trained to provide an atmosphere that promotes curiosity and imagination. By providing this environment, the children feel empowered to ask questions and explore the world around them.

At Learning Zone, we have a commitment to the environment and are striving to reduce our environmental footprint. We consistently focus on three main commitments.

1. We are committed to upcycle and recycle. We have a convenient upcycle station on site and we encourage our educational engineers to find creative ways to reuse materials.
2. We are committed to use sustainable products. Our students dine with child-size and age-appropriate dishes, utensils and serving pieces that are reusable.
3. We are committed to educating our students on being environmentally conscious and creating such habits.

STAFF AND CURRICULUM

Staff:
Children deserve a fun and memorable childhood and we pride ourselves on having a loving staff and home-like atmosphere in each of our centers to make that happen. Our educational engineers are specifically chosen for their caring attitudes, knowledge of child development, and their enthusiasm for teaching young children. Our educational engineers encourage, innovate and facilitate development for a well-rounded preschool experience. Professional development including training in First Aid, CPR, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) prevention, as well as age-specific training on child development is a continuous process for our staff. In addition, we make it a priority to remain informed about current child development and education research and trends in order to most effectively serve your child’s needs. Each educational engineer undergoes a criminal background and fingerprint check to ensure your child’s safety.

Curriculum
Innovations curriculum is a unique combination of practical and theoretical discovery. This learning approach focuses on encouraging, facilitating and stimulating a child’s development. Innovations uses a creative approach to study STEAM that will provide a foundation for each child’s development. This integrated curriculum often revolves around scientific inquiry. Our education program thrives on providing an environment where children use their imagination and are encouraged to learn through play experiences. Through this engaging and hands-on method, we encourage your children to explore, ask questions and discover through their own imagination, experiment and of course, interactive play.
ENROLLMENT AND TUITION

Admission
Admission to the Learning Zone program is based on availability and the age of your child. When a classroom no longer has open enrollment positions, a waiting list will be established. Priority will be given to siblings of currently enrolled children and active military families. Otherwise, individuals will be placed on the waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis. Learning Zone does not discriminate against any race, religion, nationality, gender, or sexual orientation.

Enrollment Application
A thoroughly completed and signed application form is required before start as required by state regulation. Please be sure to answer every question thoroughly. In addition, prior to your child’s start date the parent must provide an updated immunization record on an official state form and complete a health history form. The immunization record must be up to date and signed or stamped by the child’s physician.

Registration and Supply Fees
Initial registration fee and the first week of tuition are required to hold enrollment space until the requested start date. These fees are non-refundable. In order to provide our excellent curriculum and activities, we require an annual $60 Supply Fee, which is due in the fall.

Tuition Payments
Payment must be received prior to the first day your child attends. Thereafter, tuition is due at the beginning of each week. When withdrawing your child from Learning Zone, a written two-week notice is required. If no notice is given, you will be required to pay tuition for the additional two weeks.

- Tuition is based on enrollment NOT attendance. Full payment is required even if the child is not in attendance, regardless of absences or closings.
- No credit will be given for illness, vacation, center closing due to an emergency situation, or inclement weather. Learning Zone reserves the right to close the center for weather or safety-related reasons.
- All tuition is paid through automatic bank drafts. Your registration fee and first week’s tuition may be paid with a check or cash. If the draft is declined, a $35 late fee will be charged.
- Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the center.

Annual Rate Change
Rates will be adjusted annually for new, incoming families. As a current Learning Zone family you will lock your rate in at your initial rate for the remainder of your time with us. If at any time you leave Learning Zone, you will be subject to the new adjusted rate when you return. If you have an additional child enroll with us after the rate change, that child will also be subject to the new rate.

Disenrollment
We require a two-week written notice to be given in the event that a family ends enrollment at the center (including when a child leaves the center to attend kindergarten). Payment of tuition for these two weeks is required even if a family leaves prior to the end of the two-week period. We reserve the right to dis-enroll any family for any reason deemed necessary, including non-payment of tuition or other fees, disruptive or dangerous behavior as deemed by center staff, or the inappropriate or disruptive behavior of a parent/guardian that interferes with the operation of the center.
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Drop Off and Pick Up

Hours of Operation
Learning Zone is open Monday-Friday 6:30am-6pm. Please refer to the list of closings later in this handbook.

Security Codes and Entry
Safety and Security is very important at Learning Zone, which is why each family will have their own security code or fingerprint passcode to enter the building. Please do not share your code with anyone other than people who will pick up your children. Guests will be able to ring the bell and gain entry. Children must be signed in and out daily.

Absences and Late Arrivals
If your child will be absent, or will be arriving later than 10:00 a.m., we ask that you call so that we can prepare for adequate staffing.

Release of Children Policy
Please inform your child’s teacher if someone other than you will be picking up your child. You will be asked to provide names of those individuals who are approved to pick up your child in the application procedure. Learning Zone reserves the right to refuse to release a child to a person who appears physically, emotionally, or mentally unable to provide adequate care for the child as judged by the staff member responsible for the child. We will not be able to release a child to an adult who appears intoxicated. In the event that this situation should arise, staff will release the child to an authorized individual on the child’s emergency contact list who appears able to provide appropriate care for the child.

Late Pick Up
Late pick up fees are put in place to cover the staff after the center closes. $10.00 for the first 5 minutes past 6:00 pm, then $1.00 per minute after that. Payment will go directly to the teacher who stays with the child. At 6:30 pm, if the child has not been picked up, the authorities will be called.

Dress/Accommodations
Part of creative learning means FUN! When choosing your child’s clothing, bare in mind that sometimes our fun can be messy, too! For this reason, please follow our clothing policies to ensure your child gets the best experience.

- Please dress your child in seasonally appropriate and comfortable play clothes.
- Each child should have at least one, preferably two complete changes of seasonally appropriate play clothing; including socks in his or her classroom at all times. Please be sure to replace any articles of clothing that are used from the spare set.
- Please label ALL items (including clothing, coats, hats, bottles, baby food, bags, and sippy cups) that you bring to our center with your child’s first and last name.
- Children MUST wear shoes at all times.

Personal Belongings
Please refrain from allowing children to bring personal belongings to the center other than those we request (see below). For the safety and well-being of all the children in our center, we ask that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home except on special “sharing” days. We are not responsible for personal items or toys from home that get lost or broken. Any items brought for a
special reason requested by teachers need to be labeled appropriately with the child’s first and last name. Labeling all of your child’s items is the best way to ensure they do not get misplaced.

**Infants (6 weeks - 12 months)**

Please bring the following supplies, labeled with your child’s first and last name:

- Prepared bottles- Breast milk should be brought in pre-made bottles ready to warm and serve. These will be refrigerated immediately until feeding time. Formula bottles should be brought in filled pre-measured formula for each bottle. We will mix formula with room temperature filtered water upon scheduled feeding. We provide whole milk for infants no longer on formula, but you may bring labeled milk from home if you wish.
- Two complete changes of seasonal clothing and bibs
- Diapers and wipes
- Any cereal or unopened jar food. State law prohibits the center from accepting any opened baby food of any kind, with the exception of homemade baby food

**Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) special note:**

We are proactive against SIDS. Cribs will only contain a sheet per state regulation. Mobiles, stuffed animals, extra blankets, and propping will not be allowed. Infants in cribs are checked every fifteen minutes during napping times.

**Toddlers and Twos (12 months - 2 years)**

Please bring the following supplies, labeled with your child’s first and last name:

- Diapers and wipes
- A complete change of seasonal clothing including socks and underwear (if applicable)
- Sippy cups are provided. We provide milk, meals, and snacks for toddlers
- We provide a light blanket for use on our nap cots/mats

**Preschoolers (3 years - 5 years)**

Please bring the following supplies, labeled with your child’s first and last name:

- A complete change of seasonal clothing including socks and underwear
- We provide a light blanket for use on our nap cots/mats

**Communications and Parent Involvement**

**Communication**

Communication is a top priority for us. We provide weekly emails, blog updates, and electronic daily sheets with detailed information about your child’s day. Electronic daily sheets will include details about meals, snacks, diaper/potty, nap times, activities, your child’s behavior and activities, and needed items (diapers, wipes, clothing, etc.). Conferences will be offered as well to discuss this information. Please provide your child’s teacher with any special instructions to help us serve your child better.

**Child Assessments**

In continuing to provide the best educational experience for your child, we offer two developmental assessments per year, one in the fall and one in the spring. In addition to the assessments, we offer conferences to discuss your child’s development and to work with your child’s teacher on special projects and activities uniquely designed for your child. This is also an opportunity to address any questions or comments you have. Conferences may be held at any time throughout the year, at either the request of the parent or the teacher.
Please remember, drop-off and pick-up times are considered transition times for a classroom and can be busy. These transition times are not the best time to address your child’s growth or development. Please let a management team member know your question or request to schedule an appropriate time to discuss your child’s needs.

Confidentiality Policy
Staff will have conversations with parents concerning only their child. We will not discuss other student’s progress, behavior, or accidents with anyone other than the appropriate parties. Personal info is NOT sold or shared.

Parent Participation
We welcome parent participation in your child’s class and for the improvement of our program. We have several regular opportunities for class participation, such as reading in your child’s class, sharing special family traditions or cultures, assisting with parties and open houses, and volunteering in the class. Additional ideas and suggestions are always welcomed and appreciated!

Birthdays and Special Events

Birthday Policy
We love to celebrate! If you want to celebrate your child’s birthday with the class, feel free to bring in food (cupcakes, cookies, etc.) or party favors. Any food items brought in MUST be store bought in order for management to check ingredients for allergens. Please remember we are a nut free company. You are welcome to stay for celebration. Please discuss plans for the party with your child’s teacher, including date and time, class allergies, developmentally appropriate food choices, and favors. If you are handing out favors or invitations to parties outside of the school, you MUST bring enough for each child in the classroom or the school cannot distribute them.

Holidays and Special Events
We will also celebrate holidays and special events. You will be given an opportunity to sign up to bring food, goodies, paper goods and to participate for these celebrations.

Balloon Policy
Mylar helium balloons are the only type of balloons allowed in the school. Rubber or latex balloons are NOT allowed because of a potential choking hazard.

Nut Free Commitment
Learning Zone centers are completely nut free. Please refrain from bringing lunches, snacks or food for parties or other celebrations that contain any kind of nut. This would include peanuts (including peanut butter), hazelnuts (including Nutella™ and similar products), almonds (including almond milk, cashew milk), cashews, pecans, pistachios, walnuts, etc. During special celebrations, any items brought into the center MUST be store bought and sealed. Once brought to the center, you will drop off the items at the front desk. Please refrain from removing the ingredient labels, as this is how we will double check before delivering to the classrooms. Due to continual changes in manufacturer’s packaging and processing, please read the ingredients label of your food chosen to ensure that it does not contain any of the following: peanuts/nuts, peanut/nut butter, peanut/nut oil, peanut/nut flour, peanut/nut meal, or “may contain traces of peanuts/nuts,” or “may have been manufactured in a facility where a nut product is produced or is manufactured.” If any of these are listed on the food items or we do
not have an ingredient list to check, the food items will not be consumed and will be left in the kitchen.

We thank you in sharing our commitment to ensuring a safe environment for all of our students and staff!

**Diapering and Toilet Training**

**Diaper Changes/ Cloth Diapers**
Part of our high level of customer service is ensuring that all children are properly cared for. For children still in diapers, cleanliness is an essential factor of maintaining an appropriate level of care. Therefore, diapers/pull-ups will be changed when soiled or at minimum every hour and a half to two hours. Diaper changes will be noted on the child’s daily activity sheet. The TN Diapering System will be used for all diaper changes. If you choose to use cloth diapers for your child, we ask that you have a plastic cover with insert over them and bring a sealable bag to enclose them in. We cannot discard human waste from cloth diapers as per state regulation.

**Toilet training**
When you are ready to start toilet training your child, we ask that you let us know what routines you are using at home so the teacher can do the same in the class. Consistency is key when toilet training. Please bring any supplies such as a few pairs of extra clothes, including socks and shoes, to put in the child’s cubby for any accidents.

**Transitions**

**Transitioning into school/other classroom**
As your child grows and develops through our school, he or she will transition from one class to another. We strive to make this as stress-free as possible, not only for the child but for you as well. There are many decisions involved in promoting children to the next class. Children are assessed by age as well as terms of their development. Interest level in the classroom activities is also taken into consideration. The classroom teacher and parents will be consulted. When the final decision is made, you will get a transition letter that includes information about the next room. There will be a transition period to ensure that the child feels comfortable with the change. We help and encourage parents to be involved in the process.

**Discipline and Behavior**

**Discipline Policy**
Discipline is always in a manner which protects your child’s dignity and wellbeing. Discipline will not be embarrassing or abusive, and physical punishment will never be allowed. Discipline will be consistent and fair. The staff will use positive reinforcement and re-direction techniques. First, the child will be redirected verbally. If the behavior continues, the child may be placed in the safe space separate from the group, but still within the classroom. If behavior escalates, cannot be controlled, or becomes violent towards other, the Director or Assistant Director will be involved and may contact parents to get involved in the process. This may include the request for the child to be picked up for the day. Behavioral issues that cannot be resolved may result in dismissal from the center.
Biting Policy

Biting is an age appropriate stage of development for infants, toddlers, and on occasion preschoolers. In a group setting, most children will attempt biting at least once. When biting occurs, our focus will be on the children to determine why the biting occurred and what we can do to help. Communication between teachers and parents will be a key aspect in reducing this behavior. In some cases, management may dismiss a child if biting does not stop.

Safety and Child Abuse Prevention

Video Monitoring
For the safety of your children, closed-circuit is provided for on-site video monitoring. For the protection of our students, external access is restricted.

Child Abuse Policy
Learning Zone will comply with all Tennessee State laws in reporting any suspicion or evidence of child abuse. The Child Abuse Hotline (or 1-800-4-ACHILD) will be contacted and a report will be filed. A report will be made to the police if necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the child. The Department of Human Services will then be notified, and an incident report will be filed within 24 hours.

Keeping Kids Safe
This curriculum is mandated by The Department of Human Services for all children 36 months and over. Parents will sign a form to be kept in the child’s file which states they understand that the school uses this curriculum and talks to the children about stranger danger, personal safety and sexual abuse.

School Closings

Holiday Policy
We will observe and be closed for the following Holidays/Events:
- New Year’s Day*
- Good Friday
- Spring In-Service Training (Friday before Memorial Day)
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day*
- Fall In-Service Training (Friday before Labor Day)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following
- Christmas Eve*
- Christmas Day*
- New Year’s Eve - closing at 4:00pm if it falls on a weekday

*Note: Holidays listed above that fall on a Saturday will be observed on the Friday before, and those that fall on a Sunday will be observed on the Monday that follows.

Vacation/ Break Policy
Learning Zone understands that families will be off periodically for vacations and breaks. We offer a vacation/break rate when families give advanced notice for trips or extended breaks when the child will not be in attendance for a week or more. This rate will be half of your normal rate and will “hold” the space open for your child while they are not attending. You can choose to dis-enroll during extended breaks instead of paying the fee but we cannot guarantee space will
remain available upon your return and will be subject to new tuition rate. As a reminder, tuition payment is for enrollment in our program and not for attendance.

Inclement Weather Policy
Normal hours of operation are subject to change at any time to ensure the safety and well-being of your children and our staff. Emergency conditions cannot always be predicted with accuracy, so please be prepared for short notices in snow or ice days. Due to the unavoidable occurrence of emergency weather conditions, please remember any closure is to protect the well-being of the children in our care.

In order to get the news out quickly there are several ways we will contact parents about closings:
- News Channel 5: You can sign up on their website [www.newschannel5.com](http://www.newschannel5.com) to have specific closing or delay texted and/or emailed directly to you.
- Mass text alert and mass email: Please make sure management has the correct contact information for your family.
- Social Media: We will post closings on our Facebook page.

Illness and Medical Records

Illness Policy
Learning Zone will communicate with you about any health issues that are noted while your child is at our center. As a courtesy to all children and staff, please keep the staff informed about any health issues your child may have. In order to protect the health and well-being of all children and staff within our center, the following health procedures and policies will be followed:
- We cannot admit a child who has any contagious illnesses or symptoms, including but not limited to:
  - A fever over 101 degrees
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea occurring more than twice
  - Open sores & mouth sores
  - Unexplained or communicable rashes
  - Severe mucus drainage
  - Conjunctivitis (a.k.a. pink eye)

If your child becomes ill with any of the above while at the center, we will notify you and the child must be picked up within one hour of contact. Learning Zone reserves the right to require a child to be picked up immediately for suspected contagion. You will be notified should your child be exposed to a contagious illness.

Your child must be symptom and medication free for 24 hours before returning to the center.

We reserve the right to request a physician’s statement prior to readmitting a child to the center. Learning Zone does not administer medication to any child. (see Medication Policy)

Medication Policy
We do not dispense any over-the-counter or prescription medication other unless REQUIRED by a physician to be medically necessary. Medical equipment and emergency medication must be supported by written and signed release from a physician that will be kept in your child’s file. Teething tablets and Orajel must be accompanied by a completed medication authorization form to be administered while child is in our care. All authorized medication is to be administered by Director and Assistant Director only.
Lice Policy
Children must have proof of treatment and be nit free before returning to Learning Zone. Director or Assistant Director will check to make sure child is free of lice upon return to school.

Shot Records
An Immunization Certificate is required upon enrolling and must be attained before your start date. Immunizations must be kept up-to-date according to Tennessee State Law. Your child will not be allowed to remain in the center without up-to-date immunization records.

Accidents and Emergency Procedures

Accidents/ Incidents
Safety is an important part of our jobs. We believe it to be our top priority to keep your children safe each day. Although we have many procedures in place to prevent accidents, sometimes accidents are unavoidable. In the event your child has a minor injury such as a bump, scrape, bite, etc. we reserve the right to treat your child with the proper First Aid Care and will contact you to inform you. We will also fill out an accident/incident report that will need to be signed by you or the person picking up your child that day.

Emergency Medical Procedures
In the event that your child requires emergency medical treatment, center staff will call 911 immediately. If your child requires emergency ambulance transportation, the ambulance drivers will transport your child to the closest local hospital at their discretion and depending on the speed with which your child must be treated. Decisions as to the necessity of emergency medical treatment will be made by the Director or Assistant Director, or another staff member standing in their position. Parents or legal guardians of the child will be notified as soon as possible and will be responsible for any and all medical expenses related to the child’s injury including any medical transportation. It is the parent or legal guardian’s responsibility to provide insurance information to medical personnel. Our employees are not responsible in any form for medical or transportation expenses.

Man Made Disaster Plan
In the event of a man mad disaster, such as a chemical spill, gas leak, etc., the following procedure will be followed: The children will be evacuated by employees and be transported in employee’s automobiles to an alternative facility. All parents will be contacted and informed of the evacuation. Parents will be given instructions on how they can pick up their children. An incident report will be filed with Department of Human Resources within 24 hours of the incident.

Natural Disaster Plan
In the event of a natural disaster (e.g. tornado, threatening winds, etc.), the children will be moved to an inside room or area of the center in accordance with the center’s approved emergency action plan. A weather radio will be maintained at all times for updates on threatening conditions, as well as flashlights, first aid kits, and other necessary items. In the event the situation requires evacuation, the same procedure used for a man-made disaster will be followed. An evacuation plan is posted in all classrooms. Parents will be notified as soon as possible. The Department of Human Resources will be informed in the event of an actual disaster, and an incident report will be filed within 24 hours. Learning Zone will also follow a schedule of safety drills, such as fire and tornado drills, throughout the year to maintain preparedness for any emergency.
Infants

Infant Section
We have a number of specific policies in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our infants.
- Infants may not sleep in swings or bouncers for more than 30 minutes
- Teachers may not swaddle children, but sleep sacks are permitted
- No glass bottles are allowed in the classrooms
- We are cloth diaper friendly! Please bring a plastic cover over the diaper along with a bag to enclose them in with your child’s name on it
- We do not allow rice, food or medicine in the bottles
- We do not allow pacifiers with animals attached in cribs
- We have individualized infant plans, however if the child is hungry we will feed on demand as per state regulation

Miscellaneous

Social Media Policy
Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest! We do not allow teachers to put pictures of your children on their personal Facebook. We ask that you do not post pictures of children other than your own in social media without consent from that child’s parent. Upon enrollment, you will need to complete and sign a photography waiver.

Sunscreen/Bug spray Policy
During the summer months, the children are frequently outside exploring and learning. If over 85 degrees in the afternoon, we offer to apply sunscreen and bug spray. The sprays will be supplied by Learning Zone and there is a consent form that must be signed. You can find information about the brand used at the specific school.

Gold Sneaker Initiative
At Learning Zone, we offer your child healthy meal options along the guidelines of the USDA and we are proud to be Gold Sneaker certified. In support of our program and the Gold Sneaker initiative, food will never be used as a reward or punishment. If you prefer to bring your child’s lunch from home or have dietary restrictions, please remember you MUST bring food to meet the guidelines as well. If not, we will have to offer/supplement what they do not have.

In addition to the meal requirements we meet under the Gold Sneaker initiative, we also strive to offer an ample amount of physical activity and a limited amount of sedentary time. Physical activity will always be a fun and interactive part of each child’s day. For more information, you can go to www.tn.gov/health/topic/goldsneaker.

Parent recruitment of Learning Zone Staff
Our policy states that recruitment of any staff member is not allowed. Learning Zone has incurred costs that factor into employing qualified staff members and we do not permit solicitation of said staff. If a staff member is solicited, you agree to pay Learning Zone a minimum of $1,500 plus any legal fees or court costs cause by this breech of terms. By acknowledging the receipt of this handbook you agree to Learning Zone’s non recruitment policy listed above. This policy excludes evening and weekend times outside of our normal operating hours.

Policy Changes
Policies are subject to change at any time. Every effort will be made to notify parents in a timely fashion of any changes to the policies or procedures
DAILY ROUTINE

Meals and Snacks
We provide nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. Menus are posted for your reference. Any changes in items served will be communicated. Meal and snack times are scheduled according to a group’s age and developmental level. Please alert the staff concerning any special dietary needs or food allergies. If you are providing lunch from home, please see Gold Sneaker Initiative section for more information.

Rest Time
Rest times are scheduled in the middle of the day after lunch as required rest time per state regulation. Rest times will vary according to the group’s age and developmental level. Children will be offered two hours of naptime (minimum of one hour from Pre-K students). Children are not required to sleep, but must rest quietly as to not disturb other children who are sleeping.

Outside Play
We have separate, age appropriate playgrounds. During a normal daily routine and weather permitting, children will play on the playground two times per day, in the morning and again in the afternoon. If weather conditions do not permit outdoor play, other gross motor activities will be substituted.

Sample Schedule
The following sample schedule is presented here to give you an idea of what your children will be doing throughout the day. Schedules are designed to be appropriate for the age and developmental level of the group. Please check with your child's teacher to see their regular schedule.

Example Schedule
6:30-8:30 Arrival/ Zone Exploration
8:30-9:15 Breakfast
9:15-9:45 Community Zone (Optional)/ Zone Exploration
9:45-10:30 STEAM Focus/ Zone Exploration
10:30-11:15 Outdoor Expedition (weather permitting)
11:15-11:45 Lunch
11:45-12:00 Prepare for Rest and Reflection
12:00-2:00 Rest and Reflection
2:00-2:30 Wake up/ Prepare for snack
2:30-3:00 Snack
3:00-4:00 STEAM focus in small groups/ Zone Exploration
4:00-4:30 Outdoor Expedition
4:30-5:00 Group Reflection
5:00-6:00 Zone Exploration
BRANCHES

Branches is a non-profit Christian ministry focused on reaching in and out to the staff, families, and community of Learning Zone and beyond. Our mission is to provide programs, events, and community connections to build a Godly legacy. We serve to see needs met, lives changed, faith developed, and families enhanced and equipped. Our hope is that we will connect lives to the “Source of Life” through branches of hope.

Everyone needs help sometimes. Branches is here when you need it. This ministry was created to support, care for and guide people in times of need. As a family of Learning Zone, Branches seeks ways to walk through life with you, building relationships and serving one another. Whether it be emotionally, socially, physically, financially, or spiritually, Branches is a support source for not only you but beyond that, serving family members, community members, or a friend of a friend.

Branches is fully funded by pledges and donations from employees, families and outside donors. As a family benefit you are given the option to donate to Branches. Feel free to talk with your center director, LIFE Support Branches representative or email Branches directly at branchesministries@gmail.com. Pledge forms are available on site or on our website at www.branchesministries.org. We also accept donations through Pay Pal on our website. If you have any additional questions or would like to know more, please contact our Executive Director, Katie Dufleurant, at 615-864-3267.

It is our genuine hope that you, now as a representative of Learning Zone, will become joyfully involved with our ministry, either by volunteering and/or supporting financially. We look forward to serving you.

RELIABLE RESOURCES
Through partnerships with local supporting businesses and other non-profit organizations, Branches offers assistance and services in times of need. Some of our resources include financial planning, car repairs, health care, holistic care, optometry, family, marital and individual counseling, and much more. Our resource list is constantly growing. If you have a particular connection within the community that you feel Branches could use, please let us know.

ENRICHMENT CLASSES
We offer free monthly classes to all families, employees, and their guests on a wide range of topics to equip and encourage participants and explore growth opportunities that enhance their quality of life. Examples of classes include Health, Nutrition, Financial/Budgeting, Cooking, Fitness, Yoga, and Crafts. Dinner and childcare is included at no cost.

BRANCHES 101
The Branches 101 Class serves as our information class for new employees and families and those interested in understanding more about how to get involved. This interactive class gives valuable information and an opportunity to connect with other volunteers in a positive uplifting environment. Like all Branches events and classes, dinner and childcare is provided at no cost. This class is held quarterly and we encourage ALL new staff and families to attend!
LIFE SUPPORT TEAM

The Branches LIFE Support team consists of volunteer representatives from each of the NGU centers. These amazing individuals meet monthly for spiritual growth, to represent their site, plan programs and events, pray together, and support each other. We encourage you to seek out the LIFE Support rep at your center. They are there to support YOU!

FOLLOW BRANCHES ONLINE

Please visit our website for all other details and information
www.branchesministries.org
SUMMARY OF LICENSING REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS

This summary is a guide for parents of children in child care centers. It outlines some of the requirements child care providers must meet in order to be licensed. The Department of Human Services is legally responsible for licensing child care centers with 13 or more children. The purpose of licensing is to protect your child. Questions about these requirements or concerns about an agency’s compliance should be referred to the local DHS office. You may ask your provider to see the complete set of center rules or you can access the rules through the Department’s website at: [http://state.tn.us/humanserv](http://state.tn.us/humanserv)

Ownership, Organization, and Administration
- Every child care center shall have an on-site director.
- General liability, automobile liability and medical payment insurance coverage shall be maintained on the operations of the child care agency’s facilities and vehicles.
- Enrollment of children under six (6) weeks of age is prohibited.
- Children shall not be in care for more than twelve (12) hours in a twenty-four (24) hour period except in special circumstances.
- Written documentation that the parent performed an on-site visit to the agency to review the agency’s facility and child care policies & practices prior to enrolling the child.
- A copy of the agency’s policies, procedures, and the Department’s Summary of Licensing Requirements shall be supplied to the parent upon admission of the child.
- Parents shall be permitted to see the professional credential(s) of staff upon request.
- During operating hours, parents shall be permitted immediate access to their children.
- Children shall be signed in and out of the center by the parent or other person specifically authorized by the parent or the appropriate staff person.
- Children’s Records
  - Written consent for emergency medical care.
  - Written plan stating to whom the child shall be released.
  - Written transportation agreement between parent and the center regarding daily transportation.
  - Daily attendance that includes time in and time out for each child.
  - Prior written permission of parent for each off-site activity.
  - The records of any child who is five (5) years old in an agency which lacks approved kindergarten status shall include a signed acknowledgment by the child’s parents that recognizes that the child’s attendance does not satisfy the mandatory kindergarten prerequisite for the child’s enrollment in first grade.
- Incidents, accidents and injuries shall be reported to the parent as soon as possible, but no later than the child’s release to the parent or authorized representative.
- The agency or agency staff shall not disclose or knowingly permit the use by other persons of any information concerning a child or family except as required by law.
- During hours of operation the current license and agency report card shall be posted near the main entrance in a conspicuous location.

Supervision
- All areas of the building and grounds shall be visually inspected for children prior to closing the agency for the day.
- Children six (6) weeks through nine (9) years of age:
  - Adult must be able to hear the child at all times, be able to see the child with a quick glance, and be able to physically respond immediately.
  - Exception: during mealtime an adult must be in the direct sight and sound of children ages six (6) weeks through five (5) years of age, not in kindergarten, while the child is eating.
- Children ten (10) years of age and older:
  - Adult must know the whereabouts and activities of the children at all times.
  - Each child shall be greeted and received by a specific caregiver who will have ultimate responsibility for their supervision and care.
  - When children leave a caregiver’s assigned area and go to another, the center shall implement a system to track the whereabouts of each child and recognize the transfer of responsibility from one caregiver to another.
  - When children ages ten (10) and above are grouped with children under ten (10) the minimum supervision requirements for children six (6) weeks through nine (9) years shall apply.
  - When more than twelve (12) children are present on the premises a second adult must be physically available on the premises.
  - When more than twelve (12) children in first grade and above are present, a separate group, space and program shall be provided for them.
  - Each child must be on roll in a defined group and assigned to that group with a specific caregiver(s).
  - Infants shall not be grouped with children older than thirty (30) months, and a separate area shall be provided for them.
  - Children shall be kept with the same group throughout the day and shall not be moved, shuffled, or promoted to a new group until required based upon the developmental needs of the child, however
    - Groups, excluding infants & toddlers may be combined for short periods for special activities of no more than thirty (30) minutes per day
    - Groups, excluding infants & toddlers may be combined for up to one (1) hour at the beginning & end of the day as outlined in the A.C ratios.

Revised 09/2016
Ratio Chart - First/Last Hour of Each Day Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Size</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5 - 12 Years</td>
<td>1:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 12 Years</td>
<td>1:15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 12 Years</td>
<td>1:20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A:C ratios must be maintained while children are indoors and on the playground.
- A:C ratios and group sizes may exceed the required limit by up to ten percent (10%) no more than three (3) days per week, provided however:
  - Infant & toddler groups may never exceed the required ratios & group sizes.
  - The licensed capacity of the classroom may not be exceeded.
- Adult:Child ratio and grouping chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of children at beginning of school year</th>
<th>Minimum Adult:Child Ratio</th>
<th>Maximum Group Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants (6wks. - 15 mos.)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infants/Toddlers (6wks. - 30 mos.)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddlers (12 mos. - 30 mos.)</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years (34-35 mos.)</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4 years</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 - 3 yrs. (30 - 47 mos.)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 yrs.</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 1/2 - 12 yrs.</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 yrs.</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5 yrs.</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 yrs.</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 12 yrs.</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>No Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Age (K &amp; above)</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>No Max</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Ratios can be relaxed during naptime and nighttime care but one (1) adult must be awake and supervising the children in each nap/sleeping area (infant/toddler ratios must be maintained).
- Supervision During Off-Site Activities
  - A:C ratios for preschool children doubled during off-site activities.
  - A:C ratios for school-age children during off-site activities must equal the number of trained caregivers required in the classroom plus additional adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Trained Caregivers</th>
<th>Additional Adults</th>
<th>Total Adults Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A minimum of two (2) adults is required for any off-site activity.
- Supervision During Swimming:
  - Age Group Ratio

| Infants (6wks. - 12 mos.) | 1:1 |
| Toddlers/Twos (13 - 35 mos.) | 1:2 |
| Three Year Olds | 1:4 |
| Four Year Olds | 1:6 |
| Five Year Olds | 1:8 |
| School-age & Above | 1:10 |

- Group swimming is not prohibited but it is also not recommended due to the high risk.
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Precautions:
  - Infants positioned on backs when placed in crib for sleeping.
  - Soft bedding is prohibited for infants to avoid risk of suffocating.
  - Infants touched by caregiver every fifteen (15) minutes in order to check for breathing and body temperature.
- Staff
  - At least one adult available on the premises at all times during child care hours must be able to read & write English.
  - Caregivers must be at least 18 years of age.
  - Staff under 18 years must be supervised by an adult while in the presence of children.
  - Each group of children must have at least one caregiver present who has a high school diploma or equivalent.
  - Substitutes providing services for 36 or more hours in a calendar year must have a physical and a criminal background check.
  - Volunteers can not be used to meet the adult-child ratios unless they meet the qualifications for substitutes.
  - Criminal background checks are required for employees who have contact with children.

Equipment for Children
- Individual lockers or cubbies, separate hooks and shelves or other containers, placed at children’s reaching level, shall be provided for each child’s belongings.
- In infant/toddler rooms, equipment and space shall be provided for climbing, crawling, and pulling without the restraint of playpens or cribs.
- Indoor equipment, materials, and toys shall be available to provide a variety of developmentally appropriate activities so that each child has at least three (3) choices during play time.
- Climbers, swings and other heavy equipment must be anchored even if they are designed to be portable.
- Resilient surfacing is required in fall zones around playground equipment.
- A quiet rest area and cots or mats shall be available for all children who want to rest but no child shall be forced to nap.
- For health & safety reasons each crib, cot, bed or mat shall be labeled to assure that each child naps on his own bedding.

Program
- Each caregiver shall be responsible for providing consistent care for a specific infant(s)/toddler(s) which includes but is not limited to: planning, and record-keeping for the child, communication, general interaction with and routine care of the child.
- Children shall not be left in restraining devices such as swings, car seats, or high chairs (in excess of thirty (30) minutes). Stimulation shall be provided to children in those settings.
- Programs, movies, computer games, and music with violent or adult content (including “soap operas”) shall not be permitted in children’s presence.
- If television, video tapes/DVDs, video/computer games, and/or movies are used, they shall be limited to two (2) hours per day, or the length of a movie if more than two (2) hours in the case of school-agers.
- Other activity choices shall be available to children during television/movie viewing or computer use.
- An opportunity for outdoor play shall be extended to children of all ages who are in care for more than three (3) daylight hours unless outdoor play is prohibitive.
Children shall be provided an opportunity for outdoor play when the temperature range, after adjustment for wind chill and heat index, is between thirty-two (32) degrees and ninety-five (95) degrees Fahrenheit and not raining; children shall be properly dressed and the length of time outside adjusted according to the conditions and the age of the child.

During outdoor play caregivers shall be alert for signs of dehydration, heat stroke, frostbite, etc., dependent upon the season.

Spanking or any other type of corporal punishment is prohibited.

Discipline that is potentially shaming, humiliating, frightening, verbally abusive, or injurious to children shall not be used.

Discipline shall not be related to food, rest, or toileting.

Staff shall plan ahead for developmentally appropriate activities; written lesson plans shall be provided for children of each age group.

For ages three (3) though school-age, a curriculum shall be offered that shall include instruction, at least once a year, in personal safety – parents notified of and given an opportunity to review the curriculum.

For school-age children the curriculum shall include instruction on reporting physical, verbal or sexual abuse.

Health & Safety

Children shall be checked upon arrival and observed for signs of communicable disease during the day.

Symptomatic children shall be removed from the group until parents are contacted and health issues are resolved.

At least one staff with certification in first aid and one certified in CPR on duty at all times.

The agency, in consultation with appropriate local authorities, shall develop a written plan to protect children in the event of disaster.

All home/work contact numbers for parents shall be readily available to all staff.

Impetigo and diagnosed strep shall be treated appropriately for 24 hours prior to readmission to the center.

Children diagnosed with scabies or lice shall have proof of treatment and be free of nits prior to readmission.

Serious injuries or signs of serious illness shall be reported, or a reasonable attempt made to report, to the parent as soon as possible, but no later than the child’s release to the parent or authorized representative.

All medications, prescribed and non-prescribed, shall be received from the parent by a designated staff person or management level staff person.

Medication shall never be handled by children or administered in bottles or infant feeders unless authorized by a physician.

All medications shall be inaccessible to children.

Unused medication shall be returned to the parent.

Smoking is not permitted in the presence of children.

The use of alcoholic beverages is not permitted in child care centers during the hours of operation of the center.

Firearms shall not be on the premises of a child care agency, in any vehicle used to transport children or in the presence of a child.

Staff’s personal belongings (purses, backpacks, coats, etc.) shall be inaccessible to children at all times.

For the protection of children and adults, the Centers for Disease Control guidelines for handwashing and diapering procedures shall be followed.

If older children are enrolled who lack independent toileting abilities, rules regarding diapering of preschool children shall apply; they shall be changed in a location designated for that purpose and which provides privacy from other children and adults.

In order to avoid the spread of airborne diseases children shall be positioned on mats in a face to feet alternating pattern during naptime.

All staff, substitute staff, volunteers are required to immediately report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

Food

If any agency provides meals, the agency shall provide developmentally appropriate meals, snacks, and drinks for each child that are of sufficient proportions and nutritional value to meet each child's health needs.

A meal shall be offered to children who arrive before 7:00 a.m. and have not had breakfast at home.

All special needs diets shall be prepared as prescribed by a physician or by the written instructions of the child's parent.

Staff shall support and facilitate a parent's decision to continue breast feeding.

Children shall not be permitted to carry a bottle with them throughout the day.

Caregivers and children shall wash their hands with soap and water.

At mealtime, children shall be seated at tables and chairs of appropriate size, and adults shall sit with them.

Frozen breast milk shall be dated when expressed.

All formulas remaining in bottles after feeding shall be discarded.

Microwave ovens, bottle warming devices, and crock pots, including cords, shall not be accessible to preschool children.

School-age children shall use microwaves only under direct supervision.

Previously opened baby food jars shall not be accepted in the center. If food is fed directly from the jar by the caregiver, the jar shall be used for only one feeding.

Children shall never be left without adult supervision while eating.

Home canned food and raw milk are prohibited.

Physical Facilities

All facilities shall annually pass an inspection verifying compliance with all applicable state and local fire and environmental requirements.

At least one (1) working, land-line telephone shall be present in the agency.

If used, answering machines/voice mail shall be monitored at thirty (30) minute intervals except when staff and children are off premises.

Parents informed that answering machines/voice mail are used.

A minimum of thirty (30) square feet of usable indoor play space must be provided for each child.

Outdoor play areas shall contain a minimum of fifty (50) square feet of usable play space for each child using the area at one time.

Window blind cords and electrical cords on equipment shall be inaccessible to children.
All rooms used by children shall be maintained at a temperature of between 68 to 78 degrees by means of heating, cooling or ventilation sources approved for use.

Swimming pools and/or wading pools shall not be used without prior approval by the Health Department.

If animals or birds are kept in classrooms as pets, they shall be caged away from the food storage and preparation area, and cages kept clean.

Transportation

- An adult must be in the vehicle whenever a child is in the vehicle.
- A passenger log with the first and last name of each child shall be used to track the loading and unloading of children during transport.
- If the child was loaded from home, the parent or other authorized person will additionally sign the log indicating that the child was placed on the vehicle.
- The log shall be updated as children are released from the vehicle.
- When the child is released to a parent or other authorized person, that person must sign the log indicating the release of that child to them.
- Immediately upon unloading the last child the driver must walk through the vehicle to confirm that all the children are off the vehicle.
- If a monitor was on the vehicle they shall walk through the vehicle as well.
- A designated agency person who did not ride on the vehicle shall also conduct a walk through of the vehicle.
- Drivers must obtain certification from Department of Safety.
- Drivers must submit to an annual health examination and pass a drug screening test.
- Drivers and monitors have certification in CPR and First Aid.
- All child care vehicles designed by the manufacturer to carry ten (10) or more passengers must be inspected by the Department of Safety.
- Effective January 1, 2007 all child care vehicles designed to carry ten (10) or more passengers must conform to the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses.
- Child passenger restraints must be used in accordance with state law.
- Signage that includes the agency name and phone number and the Department’s toll-free Child Care Complaint phone number must be on child care vehicles.
- Children shall not spend more than forty-five (45) minutes traveling one way to or from the agency’s facility or to and from school (this provision does not apply to field trips).

Care of Children with Special Needs

- When children with disabilities are enrolled, all reasonable and appropriate efforts shall be made to provide each child an equal opportunity to participate in the same program activities as their peers.
- The agency shall have written individualized emergency plans for each disabled child who requires more assistance in emergencies.

Sick Child Care

- This type of care includes the supervision, protection, and meeting the basic needs of children who have short term illness, symptoms of illness, or who have a medical or technological dependency that requires continuous nursing intervention.

Agencies that provide sick child care either as an exclusive service or as a component of an existing child care service must comply with additional rules specific to this type of care.

You can access the Department’s website at:

http://state.tn.us/humanserv

A wealth of child care information can be found on the Department’s website.

You can:

- Learn more about the rules
- Learn more about the types of regulated care
- Locate a child care provider
- Learn more about the Report Card and Star Quality Program
- Locate the local child care licensing office
- Review the current personal safety curriculum
- View recent correspondence to providers
- Read about new initiatives
- Locate the nearest child care certificate office
- Find info on choosing child care
- Locate a resource and referral center

And much more!

Child Care Center Rules

The full set of the official child care center rules can be found on the Secretary of State’s Web Site:

http://state.tn.us/sos/rules/1240/1240-04/1240-04.htm

Report Card & Star Quality Program

http://tnstarquality.org

Child Care Resource & Referral Centers

Currently, there are eleven CCR&R centers located throughout the state. The centers help parents find the type of care that is best for their child or children. These community resources also give providers technical assistance to better serve the children in their care. Contact information for the CCR&R centers can be found on the Child Care Services web page.

Child Care Resource & Referral – Complaint Hotline

NASHVILLE AREA: 615-313-4820
LONG DISTANCE: 1-800-462-8261

If you have a concern about an existing child care agency or wish to report an illegal operation you can call the Department’s complaint hotline.

Department of Children’s Services

Report Child Abuse or Neglect Hotline
1-877-237-0004