Little Friends

Early Learning Center

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Little Friends Early Learning and Child CareCenter

**Information Guide**

**Location**

We are conveniently located on Route 125 in Freeport (122 Wardtown Road). The center is situated 3.5 miles from I-95 Exit 22 and approximately 4 miles from L.L. Bean.

**Setting**

The center’s country setting offers ample opportunities for outdoor play. Children enjoy our large backyard, wooden play system, and four-season outdoor playhouse.

**Philosophy**

Our goal is to help every child experience the joy of learning. We strive to teach the whole child by fostering social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth. We treat children as individuals and try to help them to reach their full potential. Children learn through play and social interaction with peer and teachers. Age-appropriate, teacher-directed, early-learning activities are supplemental. The program is designed to help each child achieve age-appropriate development by kindergarten entrance.

**Curriculum**

A curriculum guide is available on the LF website. LF is trained in the Maine Early Learning Development Standards (MELDS).

**Children with Special Needs and/or Developmental Delays**

If a child is having difficulty and/or developmental delays (assessed by CDS), we provide supplemental support to help the child progress toward readiness. The child is given suitable preliminary experiences to help achieve age-appropriateness. We then reinforce these initial steps with additional support, encouragement, and practice in the areas posing difficulties.

Parents are encouraged to supply pertinent developmental information ***prior*** to the child’s enrollment to ensure appropriate and successful programming.

**Hours**

Little Friends is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

**Ages of Children Served**

The center accepts enrollment for children ages 12 months through five years.

**Ratios**

We provide care for as many as 8 children (with two staff members) in the infant/toddler room and as many as 16 children (with two staff members) in the pre-school room.

**Qualifications**

I have worked as a child-care professional for more than two decades, including two years as an elementary-school teacher and over 29 years as the owner of a day-care center. I also hold a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and have two children of my own. The lead teacher in each classroom has a degree in the field of Education. Our assistant teachers have experience, training, some college courses, and a love for children. The staff is trained yearly in CPR and first aid, a Healthy and Safety course, and mandated reporting training .They also participate in staff meetings, take courses, and keep updated in current research in the field of early childhood education. Staff achieve at least 30 hours of training time yearly.

**Television**

We feel that children benefit from interaction and active play. Therefore, television is used at the center only for special occasions.

**Parental Involvement**

We welcome you to come and visit your child. Parents/Guardians volunteer to be guest readers, guest cooking class instructors, and guest teachers (share an arts and crafts activity or learning game). Many parents/guardians also join the children at snack times on their child’s birthday celebration. Little Friends understands with greater communication and sharing we can improve the child, family, and school connection. We also provide monthly On Call Times, Daily Notes, and have a LF text line for enhanced communication. We encourage and welcome communication and participation in your child’s day!

**Communication**

Parents will receive a daily note about their child. Parents are offered monthly on call times with primary providers. Parents will receive text message updates and information for center activities and reminders. Text messages can also be sent regarding individual students for parent updates. The text line is for brief information, please use on call times for conversations and questions or email the director for conference time.

**Emergency Guide/Protocols**

Please visit the LF website and review the Emergency protocols document. Parents will be notified of any emergency via TEXT ALERT. Should this happen, please do not text back, it is vital for staff to get all the information to all parents. Please do not jam up the text phone. Follow-up details will be sent out as soon as possible. Staying or returning to school will be evaluated by staff and responders. Text alerts will again be sent out regarding returning to school timeline.

 **Illness or Injury at LF**

Parents will be contacted regarding ill symptoms involving their child. Parents will be notified of any slight injury (such as a band-aid). Serious injuries requiring 911 assistance will be reported to the parents immediately and to the State.

**Fire Drills and Evacuations**

Children and staff have monthly fire drills and bi-annually evacuation or lockdown drills. Children have footwear on, at all times inside, per Fire Marshall safety rules.

**Child Abuse Policy**

All members of the LF staff are mandated reporters as established by Maine State law. Staff are required to report any suspected instances of child abuse or neglect. Staff are required to keep confidentiality other than reporting to the Director. This includes reporting any person responsible for the child, including staff. The procedures in place for reporting child abuse and neglect protect both the rights of the accused and the children in the program.

**Staff Coverage**

LF staff schedules ensures there is never a staff left alone at the Center. Staff can always rely on the Director to assist or can call emergency contact as listed in the Emergency Guide if needed.

**Rest Time**

Maine State rules require at least one hour of rest time for children on the full day schedule.

**Outdoor Playtime**

Maine State rules require at least one hour of outdoor time or substituted for gross motor activities inside. LF strives to be outside as much as weather appropriateness allows. Staff use a zoned supervision system when on the play yard. Staff spread out, are aware of where children are, move as needed, and can be seen by at least one staff. Staff to child ratios for each age group are monitored to state standards when all children are present, using the zone system for age groups.

**Resources**

Child Development Services 207-624-6660

 [**https://www.maine.gov/doe/about/contact**](https://www.maine.gov/doe/about/contact)

 You may also speak with your child’s pediatrician about any concerns and

 they can refer you to CDS

Center for Disease Control

 [**https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/**](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/)

2-1-1 Maine 2-1-1 or 877-463-6207

 [**https://211maine.org/**](https://211maine.org/)

 211 is a free, confidential information and referral service that connects

 people of all ages across Maine to local services. 211 Maine is based in

 Maine and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**The Rights of Children and Parents**

**( Maine State Licensing Rules)**

Rights of Children. Children receiving childcare from Child Care Facilities have the following rights:

* 1. Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
	2. Each Child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the
	Child’s welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the Child.
	3. Each Child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards in this rule.
	4. Each Child must be provided child care services without regard to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition.
	5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the Child Care Facility.
	6. Each Child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that Child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the Child Care Facility.
	7. Each Child has the right to Developmentally Appropriate activities, materials, and equipment.
	8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to Child Care Facility policies
	and practices.

Rights of parents and legal guardians of children receiving child care from Child Care Facilities:

* 1. A Child’s Parent or Legal Guardian must be fully informed of items or services which are included
	in the rate they pay for childcare services.
	2. A Child’s Parent or Legal Guardian has the right to be fully informed of findings of the most recent inspection conducted by the Department. The Child Care Facility must inform Children’s Parents or Legal Guardians that the licensing inspection results are public information and inspection results must be posted in a prominent place on the Premises.
	3. Parents or Legal Guardians must be notified by the Child Care Facility within two business days of any actions taken against the Child Care Facility by the Department, including but not limited to, decisions to issue conditional Licenses, refusal to renew a License, or to impose fines or other sanctions.

**Daily Schedule**

8:00 - 9:00 Drop off, indoor play

9:15 Morning Meeting

9:30 Morning Snack

9:45 - 10:30 Early Learning Activities

10:45 Story Time

11:00 - 11:30 Outdoor Play Time

11:45 Lunch

12:30 Transition to Rest Time

1:00 - 2:00 Rest Time for All Ages

2:00 - 3:00 Continued Rest, Transition to Play Time

3:00 - 3:30 Indoor/Outdoor Play Time (seasonal)

3:30 Afternoon Snack

4:00-5:00 Pick-up and Indoor/Outdoor Free Play

**Behavior-Management Policy**

Praise and positive reinforcement are our most effective methods. When children receive positive, peaceful, and understanding reactions from adults and others; they develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. We will use positive methods of child-behavior management that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation. The individual needs of each child will guide our efforts in this process.

These are our most commonly used methods of addressing inappropriate behavior:

**Redirect:** We try to involve a child in an appropriate activity, while distracting him or her from behavior that is problematic.

**Ignore and Notice:** We generally ignore negative attention-seeking behavior, but always notice and verbally reinforce positive behavior. This technique is used only when the “negative” behavior is not harmful or disruptive to the other children.

**Say “Not Okay”:** We use the phrase, “That is not okay,” as a gentle reminder that a behavior is not acceptable at the center. We then recommend another activity that is appropriate for the child.

**Offer Choices:** We often give the older children a choice of two ways to alter inappropriate behavior. We suggest one option that puts the child in control and another that places the teacher in an authoritative role. Both options will ultimately discontinue the troublesome behavior.

**Cool Down:** The teacher may temporarily separate a child from the group for the purpose of mediation, not punishment. Children may also self-remove in order to regain self-control.

**Exclusion**

Behaviors that result in a need for care that is greater than staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children may require exclusion and/or a specific follow-up management plan.

**Rate Schedule**

**2024**

**Toddler Classroom** (age 1)

Daily…………...……………………………………………………………….…..$78.00

Full-Time………..…………………………………………………………….….$325.00

**Toddler/Preschool Classroom** (ages 2-3)

\*Half-Day ………..…………………………………………………………….….$61.00

Daily ………...………………………………………………………………….….$75.00

Full-Time ………..………………………………………………………….……$315.00

**Preschool Classroom** (ages 4-5)

\*Half-Day ……………….……………….………………………………………..$59.00

Daily………….………………………………………………………………...…..$72.00

Full-Time……………………………………………………………………...….$295.00

**Picking up an extra day** ……………………….. Daily fee plus additional $10.00

 **Late Pick Up Fees**……..$1.00 a minute past 5:00, with a minimum of a $5.00

**Yearly Registration Fee**

Due in September and/or time of registration………………………………$100.00

**Illness Policy**

Keeping children healthy and avoiding the spread of contagious illnesses is the responsibility of both staff and parents/guardians. Staff responsibilities for providing group child-care include taking special care to limit the spread of illnesses. While Little Friends cannot prevent all sickness, staff and parents/guardians can reduce its incidence and severity with good hygiene practices. Parents/guardians can support the well being of all children by keeping children at home when sick and/or showing signs of illness. Staff will notify parents/guardians and ask that ill children be picked up from the center.

Please use the following guidelines when assessing whether your child should attend the child-care center:

**I. Guidelines for Exclusion from the Center**

**Fever:** Axillary temperature of 100 degrees or above. (Masking a fever with medication still does not change the contagious factor.)

**Vomiting:** If your child vomits at school, you will be called immediately to pick up your child.

**Diarrhea:** If your child has three or more episodes of runny, watery stools, or any occurrence of uncontained diarrhea while at the center, you will be called to pick up your child.

**Cold:** A child should be kept at home if symptoms include green/yellow or excessive discharge, severe coughing, or difficulty breathing.

**Scabies/head lice/ringworm/pinworm:** Please consult a physician for treatment. There is a no nit policy allowed during a lice treatment.

**Rash/blisters/sores:** Please consult a physician to diagnose any unexplained skin symptoms.

**Redness/discharge from eyes:** Please consult a physician to confirm or rule out pink eye and or cause of eye discharge. A Dr note is required for conjunctivitis clarification/diagnosis. A child is considered contagious during the signs and symptoms period and can return when symptoms improve.

**Any physician-diagnosed contagious disease:** Consult a physician for treatment and to determine a plan for inclusion.

**General unwellness:** The parent/guardian will be contacted if a child repeatedly complains of sore throat, stomach-ache, earache, or other pain or discomfort. If a child is exhibiting unusual behaviors (specific to the child) such as lethargy or prolonged crying, a parent/guardian will be contacted to establish a plan or to pick up the child.

**Readiness for participation:** Please do not send your child to school if he or she is unable to participate in the normal day’s activities.

**II. Guidelines for Inclusion/Return to the Center**

**Fever, vomiting, diarrhea:** Children may return to the center once they have experienced 24 symptom-free hours (without medication).

**Cold:** Children may return with mild cold conditions only, free of signs of respiratory illness.

**Antibiotics for contagious condition:** A child may return after taking the medication for 24 hours.

**Physician-diagnosed contagious condition:** Please submit a physician’s note indicating the child’s readiness to return.

**Unwellness:** Please return the child to school only when well enough to participate in a full day’s activity.

**III. Determination of Exclusion/Inclusion**

The final decision on whether to exclude a child from the center will be made by the center director and the staff caring for the child. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.

Any illness that requires greater care than the child-care staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children will be a determining factor for inclusion or exclusion. Likewise, a child needing a great deal of one-on-one attention and time may jeopardize the staff’s ability to provide proper care for all children and will be a determining factor for exclusion/inclusion.

**Medication:** We can administer antibiotics and other medication to your child only with written and signed consent.

**Vaccination:** Maine State laws require updated immunization records. The only allowable exception if for medical reasons and a DR note is required.

**Child-Care Agreement**

**I. FEE GUIDELINES**

**Schedule of payment**

The fee is to be paid weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, by Venmo ( preferred) check or cash can be paid monthly only. A late fee of $5.00 will be charged for any late payment. Payment is due on the last day of the week your child attends. Exceptions will be made if your child is absent due to illness or emergency. Please plan to pay promptly upon your child’s return.

Please note that all accounts are paid in advance, toward the **following** week or month of care.

The fee is still required when a child is absent due to vacation, sickness, school closings, or other personal reasons.

There is a fee of $100.00 to enroll. There is an annual $100.00 fee due in September for re-registration.

The charge for returned checks is $35.00.

**Holidays and Vacations**

The fee is still **required** on the following holidays and vacation times when the center is closed: Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Days Break, Juneteenth Independence Days (July Fourth) Break, Columbus Day, Labor Day Break, Veteran’s Day, Thanksgiving Break, Christmas Break (determined by the Freeport Public School calendar), including Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, and New Year’s Day,) one week paid vacation in April (also in accordance with the Freeport School calendar), as well as two staff days during the months of March and June.

The fee is **not required** for the following holidays and vacation times when the center is closed: one week summer vacation in August (see the center’s calendar for specific dates) and one week mid-winter vacation during the Freeport Schools’ February break.

**Late fee**

A late or over-time fee is charged for picking up a child after the center’s closing time. A charge of $5.00 is added for the first 5 minutes and a $1.00 a minute after the first 5 minutes. Please always call or text if you are going to be detained; taking into consideration the driving conditions.

**Part-time enrollees**

If your child is enrolled on a part-time basis, we ask that you adhere to the schedule you have arranged with the center. We cannot guarantee that an opening will be available on alternate days or that you will be able to add extra days to your child’s schedule. A waiting list is available for parents or guardians interested in adding an extra day. Little Friends requires a minimum of two days per week for part-time enrollment.

**Reduction, Change of Enrollment, Withdrawal**

A one month notice is required to request a reduction, change, or withdrawal in enrollment. Please understand that Little Friends may not be able to accommodate a change in scheduling. The center is a year-round program and seasonal spots are not available.

**Contract Signature and Agreement**

When a spot is reserved for your child/children and the Contract is signed, there is an expected one month notification fee that will be expected to be paid in full. A one month payment or 4 weeks fee is expected to be paid if a withdrawal is requested after the contract is signed.

**Snow Days**

Little Friends may have to close for severely inclement weather. If Freeport schools are closed, it is possible that our program will be canceled as well. The decision will be made by 6:45 a.m. We will send you a message regarding any weather-related delays or closings. Information about Freeport Schools’ closings is posted on Channel 6 (Storm Center). If you do not receive a message regarding a closing by 6:45 a.m., you can assume the center is in session.

**Early Release/Delayed Opening**

Depending on weather conditions and forecasts, the center may be opened late or closed early. Please call us at times of inclement weather for up-to-date information. If the center must close early, a staff member will contact you as soon as that decision is made. Contact will be made by Text Message alert.

**Emergency Closings**

The fee will be required when the center is closed due to emergency closings beyond the control of the director (severe weather conditions, power outages, health epidemics.)

**II. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Transition into LF**

Children often reflect the emotions and attitude that they see and hear from their parents. If a parent is anxious, worried, or nervous a child will sense this and they too will be anxious, worried, and nervous. LF has found a simple, brief goodbye coupled with positive communication is most successful.

**Notification of child’s absence**

Parents/guardians will call or text the center by 9:00 a.m. to report the absence of a child or change in schedule for the day. When reporting an absence details of why the child will not be at school must be provided, especially illness symptoms.

**Drop off, Pick up**

Parents/ guardians assume responsibility of their child at all times when on school property, including indoor and outdoor play areas as well as the driveway.

Parents agrees to keep child’s personal items and toys at home.

Parents/guardians will inform the center in advance if a child cannot be brought or picked up at the regular time.

Parents/guardians must call, text, and/or leave written permission to allow a child to be picked up by anyone other than the adults specified on the “emergency contact” form.

Please help us ease your child’s transition to Little Friends each day by communicating your needs at drop-off and pick-up times. The staff is willing to assist as needed on an individual basis. We ask that parents avoid the rest time for pick-up/drop-off, as this tends to disrupt the other children. We also ask that parents strive to arrive at the center by 9:00. If you cannot drop off by 9:00, please wait until 9:30 so as not to disrupt circle time.

Parents/Guardians assume responsibility of a child until a teacher receives your child at drop off at the gate or once contact is made with your child at the gate at pick up. When you pick up a child at the gate your must remain with the child. Children are safest when they do not access to the gate which is why we teach that ONLY parents/guardians and teachers may open and close the gate. Thank you for your help in this regard.

**Emergency at school**

Parents agree to stand by and wait for all information to be released including follow-up instructions and/or details. Please do not text back and interrupt the flow of communication.

**Cases of illness**

Parents/guardians agree to pick up a sick child and/or keep a child home in case of illness. (Please see our illness guidelines.) Dr notes are required to return to care. Exceptions can be made for a known transfer of an illness that does not require antibiotics.

**Appropriate dress**

Parents/guardians agree to dress the child properly for the weather at all times. We will spend time outdoors each day, weather permitting. Seasonally appropriate spare clothes must also be provided to the center.

**Change of contact information**

Parents/guardians will report any changes in address, telephone number, email address, or physician-contact information to the center in a timely manner. Parents agree to update Child’s record annually as required by Maine Licensing Rules.

**Materials to be provided**

Parents/guardians will supply a crib sheet for rest-time.

Parents agree to supply a set of spare clothes to remain at LF.

Parents agree to donate baby wipes monthly.

Parents/guardians agree to supply slippers, spare clothes, diapers/pull-ups (cloth diapers are prohibited by Maine Licensing rules), and wipes, as well as seasonal needs such as sunscreen or bug spray.

The day-care center will provide afternoon snacks for the children each day. Parents/guardians agree to supply a morning snack and a nutritional lunch ( no candy).

**Birthdays**

Each child will receive recognition on his or her birthday. Parents/guardians are welcome to send a special snack to enhance the celebration. Healthy snack options are encouraged.

**Written notification/withdrawal policy**

Written notification will be given by parents/guardians for: changes in the child’s day-care needs, vacation schedules, and administration of medications.

**III. PARENTAL ADVISORY**

Parents/guardians are welcome to ask for assistance at any time they feel inconvenience or at risk using the outdoor steps to the day-care center.

Parents/guardians understand that the children will engage in the following activities over the course of the year: playing on the wooden play system and swings; using sports equipment such as bats, balls, and hockey sticks; and sledding during the winter months.

Students’ photographs and artwork will be displayed within the day-care center. From time to time Little Friends' staff will take pictures of special events/moments of the children in attendance. We would love to be able to share those pictures with parents/guardians if your children are included in the same picture. Please let the director know if you do not want your child’s picture shared with other parents. \*\*\*These pictures will be shared through text message only and it is expected that no parent/guardian post any pictures received from Little Friends that includes children other than their own on social media.\*\*\*

Email addresses of parents/guardians may also be displayed in email communication to the Little Friends community.

Parents/Guardians are asked to keep appropriate, professional boundaries with Staff including resisting a relationship through any type of Social Media with Staff.

Parents/Guardians must maintain professional boundaries with respect to confidentiality issues regarding Staff and other children, at all times, including off LF premises.

Parent agrees to allow staff to re-apply sunscreen as needed.

Parents/ Guardians may not hire LF Staff as primary caregivers for 6 months after the departure from LF.

**IV. LITTLE FRIENDS’ NOTIFICATION/TERMINATION POLICY**

Written notification will be given by the day-care center for the following: rate changes, school calendar, or any proposed changes in this agreement.

Notification will be given to parents regarding termination of the contract. Termination may occur if the terms of this agreement are not fulfilled.