



*...a place where every
day has something
special in store*

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide children, and their families, with a secure, enriching environment to foster individual development, self-esteem, creativity, and spiritual growth.



Dear Parent:

Selecting a childcare center or preschool program can be a very frustrating experience! With so many options, it is hard to know just what will be right for your very special child. The First Beginnings Child Development Staff offers every child a loving and nurturing environment, a place that is stimulating, and a place where every day has something special in store.

Weekday childcare has been a part of First United Methodist Church since 1970. Starting as a Mother's Day Out program and through the years evolving into a full day childcare center, First Beginnings operates as a weekday paid tuition program. While First Beginnings is a First United Methodist ministry, our program is nondenominational and open to families of all faiths throughout the community.

Please carefully read this entire handbook. It will explain our philosophy, policies and procedures, activities, class structure, schedule and tuition. Due to yearly updates in our tuition agreement, a separate contract is provided and your signature is required. It is very important that you understand all First Beginnings policies and agree to follow them. After reviewing it, please sign the last page and return it to the office within one week of admission. If you have any questions, please feel free to give us a call.

This First Beginnings Child Development Center is looking forward to a year filled with new opportunities and experiences. If you should ever need to speak with someone regarding your child's care, please contact the office at **318-429-6890** or you may reach me on my cell phone at **318-347-8571**.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Rogers
Director

P.O. Box 1567, Shreveport, LA 71165-1567
Telephone: 318-429-6890; Fax: 318-429-6894; Voice Mail: 318-347-8571

www.fumcshreveport.org

www.firstbeginnings.com

Administration

A team comprised of parents, church members, and the director of the center governs First Beginnings Child Development Center. The group meets quarterly and acts as an advisory panel that sets guidelines and policies in support of the director. For a list of current Board Members, please contact the office.

Child Development Philosophy

The First Beginnings Child Development Center's program emphasizes interrelated areas important for the growth of the whole child - intellectually, socially, physically, emotionally, and creatively. We seek to meet the needs of the individual child in a group setting. We strive for a daily positive feeling of success and self-worth at his or her level of maturity. A love of learning is fostered through a Christian environment, rich in opportunities for growth. We will stimulate children's natural curiosity as they investigate, discover, and solve problems in their daily experiences. We have set some common goals to assist you with the task of providing a nurturing, secure, fun, and challenging environment for your child while they are in our care.

Security

First Beginnings is dedicated to the safety of our children. Along with full-time security personnel on site, each room of the center is monitored by a state-of-the-art recorded surveillance system (restrooms being the only exception). Each child is electronically signed in and out upon arrival and departure with a predetermined code, and only by authorized individuals. The names of the approved persons should be submitted on the child's master card, which is reserved on record in the office.

Our Goals for Your Child

- Become aware that each person is worthy of God's love and the love of other human beings.
- Develop an ability to communicate effectively with teachers and classmates, to hear and initiate sounds and form words, and to understand and follow simple instructions.
- Develop a growing concept of the relationships of numbers, time, space, and form.
- Have opportunities for observing and understanding the basic phenomena of weather and seasonal changes.
- Be introduced to the growth cycle of plants and animals.
- Develop and encourage musical appreciation, awareness, and participation.
- Build understanding of self and others through informal role-play.
- Provide hands-on arts and craft opportunities, increasing recognition of shape, color, and textures.
- Stimulate personal responsibility growth for self and others.
- Develop understandings, attitudes, and skills appropriate for the child's particular age.
- Experience the loving care of adults whose own lives exemplify commitment to the Christian community.
- Develop a healthy body and promote wellness through practice of good hygiene.
- Enhance physical development through opportunities to exercise both gross and fine motor skills.

Parent Expectations

- Please read all of the information contained in this handbook and make sure you have a clear understanding of all the policies and procedures. If you have any questions regarding stated policy, please refer them to the office personnel.
- Children will not be received prior to 7:30 a.m., as the teachers will be preparing for the day. If minimum class requirements are met, early care will begin at 7:00 a.m. (an additional charge will be applied). Please notify the office personnel if you are interested.
- We ask that all children be dropped off by 9:00 a.m. so that scheduled activities may begin promptly without unnecessary interruptions. The exceptions to this request are any unforeseeable event that may have occurred that morning and any child enrolled in the infant program.
- We will not accept children or visitors between the hours of 11:30a.m. and 2:00 p.m., for this is our scheduled naptime. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher if exceptions must be made.
- Our doors will be locked from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Security personnel will be in the lobby at all times to monitor entry.
- Infants and young toddlers may be picked up from the front door entrance. We do ask that you not leave your vehicle unattended with the engine running, so please turn the ignition off when picking up your child.
- Always speak to your child's teacher when you drop your child off and pick them up – ensuring the teacher has acknowledged your arrival and/or departure from the classroom.
- Late fees will be assessed for children who stay beyond 5:30 p.m. (refer to the fees section of this handbook)
- Parents are expected to maintain accurate records regarding their address, phone numbers, emergency information, immunizations, etc. for the safety and well-being of their child. Parents should notify the office immediately of any changes that need to be made.
- Parents are expected to inform the child's teacher of any allergies and special circumstances that may contribute to a change in your child's behavior.
- Food or drink belonging to the center cannot be taken home at the end of the day.

- Please do not send your child to class with chewing gum, money, personal items, toys, or toy weapons.
- Parents should inspect their child's cubby daily for important papers and information sent home by administration regarding procedural changes, dates, events and other general interest information.
- Do not send your child in boots or flip-flops.
- Upon arrival, we ask that each child be taken to the center's restroom. Please ensure that your child's hands have been washed and he/she has a fresh diaper (if applicable) before going to class.
- Due to regulations from the Health Department, the staff is not allowed to clean soiled underwear. Please provide your child a change of clothing.
- Shoe covers are provided for parents and must always be worn in the Infants room. Older children are not allowed in the Infants room and they are not to access shoe covers at any time.
- For security reasons you must sign your child in and out every day using your fingerprint on the touch screen monitor in the lobby. Also each person listed to pick up or drop off your child will be fingerprinted as well.
- Parents are required to contribute \$200.00 in gross sales, per child in fundraising activities each calendar year. Contact the office for more information.

First Beginnings is an active participant in the Louisiana Quality Start Program, a child care rating system. For more information go to www.grslouisiana.org

Staff Requirements

Staff members at First Beginnings are required to display the following personal and professional qualifications:

- Good physical and mental health.
- Experience working with young children.
- Demonstrate enthusiasm for working with young children.
- Respect for children and adults.
- Promote positive relationships with children and adults.
- Must acquire a minimum of 15 clock hours per year in child development classes.
- Must acquire annual Red Cross CPR and First Aid training.
- Possess or actively pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development Associate (CDA) certification.

First Beginnings is committed to excellence, therefore we have joined with the Department of Social Services – Office of Family Support in the Quality Start Child Care Rating System (QRS). It is our goal to achieve the highest rating possible. For more information on this voluntary program, please visit www.qrslouisiana.org.

Admission Requirements

The following records are required by the Louisiana State Licensing Department and/or First Beginnings Child Development Center to be completed and on file prior to the first day of your child's attendance.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| *Master Record | *Tuition Agreement |
| *Record of Immunizations (must be current) | *Registration Fee |
| *Health and Personal Records | *Emergency Plan |
| *Parent Handbook Agreement -signed | *Health Policy |

Prior to entering your child's classroom, all children must be taken to the restroom and also must have their hands washed. Children in diapers must have a clean diaper and their hands must also be washed. Hand sanitizer is not a replacement for hand washing and should not be used on children.

General Operational Policies and Procedures

Health Policy

As a Louisiana licensed childcare center, we are required to follow state guidelines regarding illnesses, medication administration, and notification of communicable diseases. In accordance with those guidelines, we have established policies that help us manage the overall wellness of the children in-group care. A separate detailed health policy will require your signature prior to admission.

Parent Notification

Parents will be notified if a child becomes ill at the center or if a communicable disease is developing in the classroom. If a child develops a contagious disease at home, the staff should be notified.

Medication Administration

Because of the great responsibility of giving medication to children, we ask that parents give any necessary medication to their children when possible. If a child is well enough to be in school but needs to finish a prescription to avoid re-infection, we will dispense it. The parent or guardian must complete an authorization slip daily as long as the medicine is to be dispensed. Only medication with the original label and container will be administered.

Soiled Clothing

It is common for children under age four to have a wetting or soiling accident. We make every attempt to assist you and your child with toilet training, but sometimes a child is not quite ready. After two occasions of wetting or soiling accidents in one day, then the teachers will put the child back in diapers. Teachers must also dispose of any soiled clothing for sanitary reasons and regulations. The teachers are not allowed to wash soiled garments and return them to you. Please make sure a change of clothing is always available for your child and that it is seasonally appropriate. Occasionally donated clothing is available should your child ever need to borrow clothing, however please make sure it is returned promptly.

Discipline Policy

We believe that discipline is a form of constructive guidance. Our discipline will be fair and consistent, with encouragement and praise being offered for good behavior. Our purpose in disciplining a child is to help the child learn acceptable behavior through understanding. The child's age, intelligence, emotional make-up, and experiences will be considered when re-directing and guiding the child's behavior. No worker at the center will ever shout at, shame, or hit your child. Time-out may be used if redirecting is unsuccessful. Time-out takes the child away from friends or an activity, giving him or her the chance to start over or calm down. One minute for every year in age will determine the length of time the child may sit at the table or a chair away from the group.

Safety

We ensure in every way possible that your child has safe places to play throughout the day. We utilize cabinet locks, outlet plug covers, padded floor spaces, soft material underneath climbing equipment and other items made for accident prevention. Security cameras record the activity in the classrooms, hallways, and outdoor areas. The cameras are monitored in the center's office. We also utilize the expertise of security personnel to monitor the entryways of the center on a full-time basis. Security personnel will be glad to assist you in any way possible.

Emergency Plan for Safe Haven

In the event of an emergency that requires us to transport the children to an alternate location, we will either be at Broadmoor United Methodist Church on Youree Drive or Louisiana Technical College on North Market. It will depend on the type and location of the situation. We will make every effort to contact you by phone to let you know where we are. If we are unable to contact you, we are prepared to care for your child until it is safe for us to return to the center or until you arrive at our location. A copy of our Homeland Security Disaster Plan is in the office and a copy is kept at the front desk.

Arrival/Departure

Children are expected to arrive at their classroom, dressed and ready for the day. Since special classes and planned learning begin at 9:00 a.m. for all classes, you are encouraged to have your child in the classroom no later than that time (infants are an exception to this policy). Please make sure your child's teachers are aware of your child's arrival before you leave the center and make sure the teachers are aware of your child's departure in the afternoon.

Who May Pick Up Your Child?

Please note that the master card form has a space for you to list the names of persons authorized to take your child from the center. Those you list are the ONLY individuals, other than you, who will have permission to take your child. They may also be contacted in an emergency if we cannot locate you. Each family member will be registered in our database through fingerprinting.

Weather Closings

It is possible that we will have to close the center due to bad weather. On days when closing might be questionable, you are advised to observe channels of the news media. We will follow the Caddo Parish School Board decisions regarding school closure due to inclement weather. Typically, if Caddo schools are closed, we will also be closed. Please review the separate detailed listing of holidays that we will be closed.

Clothing

Children should wear washable play clothes and shoes that are not slick (preferably rubber-soles). No boots of any kind are allowed. Please send extra clothes for anticipated needs. Some children will need to change more often than others do. Place your child's name on clothing and other belongings to avoid confusion and loss. Groups play outside all winter, which may require warm clothing, including hats and mittens. Do not send special items or toys with your child unless requested by your teacher.

Meals and Snacks

First Beginnings will provide lunch and two snacks for all children beginning at the toddler level. Because of licensing requirements, we cannot allow any food or drinks to be brought into the center or taken home at the end of the day. A nutritious lunch and drink will be provided for your child (100% fruit juice or milk). **Please inform your child's teachers of any allergies** that your child may have, and include any known allergies on the paperwork provided (last page of handbook and master card).

Birthdays

We understand the significance of a birthday for both the parent and child. When a child reaches their next milestone in development, a celebration is a natural expression for the family. However, traditional celebrations often enjoyed in the home are not always appropriate for our environment at the center. We invite you to share your celebration with your child's friends but ask that you please keep the celebration simple. You may bring treats for the class, but this must be coordinated with your child's teacher. Due to possible allergies, we do not allow any products that may contain peanuts or nuts of any kind.

Suggestion Box

Our Check Box is also used as our suggestion box. It is outside of the First Beginnings office mounted on the wall. Please feel free to make suggestions or comments.

Curriculum

Our curriculum provides appropriate developmental experiences for all of the children with fresh ideas throughout the year for creative expression. The teachers also incorporate holiday-based activities into our program.

Developmental Activities

Preschoolers

Children learn most effectively through a concrete play-oriented approach. Our classroom environment includes a housekeeping center, books, and manipulative toys, blocks, and art materials. Teachers plan for daily experience by using their knowledge of child development to identify the range of appropriate behaviors, activities, and materials for specific age groups. Topics for unit themes are recognized as those, which hold meaning for the child in his/her daily living, and incorporate our goals for each child.

Infants and Toddlers

Children learn to master appropriate tasks of growth and development through personalized loving care in a clean and safe environment. As warm positive relationships with adults develop, infants and toddlers gain a sense of trust for the world and a feeling of competence. Children are given many opportunities to use self-initiated repetition to practice newly acquired skills, and experience feelings of autonomy and success.

Parent Volunteers

We encourage parents to participate in their child's preschool experience through volunteer work. There are many different areas for parents to assist the teachers:

- Provide classroom materials
- Teacher helpers
- Field trips
- Fundraising activities
- Provide relief for a teacher to attend a meeting or a luncheon at noon

Classes

Full Day:	7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Five days per week
Half Day*:	8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Five days per week
Part Time* **:	8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Three days per week (Any three days, but must be consistent)

*Not available for Infant class

**Not available for Pre-school class

Our Day

The Full-day classes begin at 7:30 a.m. and end at 5:30 p.m. Half-day classes are from 7:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. A typical schedule follows:

Morning:

7:30 a.m.	Children begin arriving
8:30 a.m.	Part day and Half day arrivals
7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Informal activities for children
9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.	Snack
9:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.	Morning enrichment activities; clean up; and outdoor play (schedule determined by age)

Afternoon:

11:15 a.m.	Lunch served
11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Naptime (see policies and procedures for restrictions)
2:00 p.m.	Outdoor play and supervised informal activities (schedule determined by age)
3:00 p.m.	Half-day classes end
3:15 p.m.	Afternoon enrichment activities; snack; and outdoor activities (determined by age – weather permitting)
5:30 p.m.	Full day classes end

A calendar for each classroom will be placed in your child's cubby

Age Groups and Staff Ratios

First Beginnings is licensed for 134 children. Age groups range from infants through 4 years. A maximum number of four infants are placed with one adult. The student/teacher ratios in other age groups are developmentally appropriate to provide quality childcare. A child is always in the presence of two or more staff members or volunteers. The time a child meets with the Speech Pathologist or Mental Health Consultant is the only exception to this policy – however, the child is never behind closed doors.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Whenever necessary, you may ask for a conference with your child's teacher or the director of the center. Special problems or occurrences affecting a child will be brought to the attention of the parents as needed. In the spring, our pre-school teachers will invite parents of children to schedule a conference. Annual assessments will be completed at this time.

Parents are welcome to visit their child's classroom unless this proves to be upsetting to the children. Due to scheduled naptime, parents are asked to not drop children off between 11:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. If an exception must be made, please make arrangements with your child's teacher.

Enrichment

For an extra fee the following classes are offered for pre-school age children;

- PC Kids, Inc.
- Spanish Classes

Chapel

Our preschool children join together weekly to sing and give glory to God through song and brief meditation led by the First United Methodist Christian Education Minister.

If you are interested in more information about *First United Methodist Church* and the programs we offer, please contact the office or you may call the church directly at
318-424-7771.

Business and Tuition Contract Policies

We do not send statements of tuition due. All tuition payments are due on the first of the month. Any variation from the stated procedure must be made in advance by special arrangement with the director. Anyone who has not made payment by the fifth must make special arrangements with the director or withdraw the child from the program. A \$20.00 late charge is added after the 5th of the month. Accounts that continue to be overdue will be turned over to the credit bureau.

All parents are asked to participate in our Check Draft program for paying the tuition. If you choose not to participate in this option for tuition payment, tuition checks should be made payable to First Beginnings and have your child's name written in the lower left corner. Place tuition checks in the acrylic box hanging outside the office door or mail to the following:

First Beginnings
c/o First United Methodist Church
P.O. Box 1567
Shreveport, LA 71165-1567

A fee of \$18.50 will be charged on all returned checks. The family must pay for the returned check with cash, money order, or a certified check. After two returned checks, the tuition must be paid in cash, money order, or certified check.

A one-year enrollment contract is required at the time of registration, along with a registration fee. Monthly installments will be accepted, due by the 5th of the month. Additional fees that may apply are as follows:

Late payment fee -	\$10.00 for payments received after the 5 th of the month
Unpaid balance charge -	\$20.00 each month for unpaid balances
Late pick up fees -	\$5.00 per minute for every minute past 5:30 p.m.
NSF charges -	\$18.50 for all returned checks

You will be asked to withdraw if outstanding balances consistently remain unpaid; parents are responsible for the fulfillment of the tuition agreement. Termination of the contract can only be accepted with a thirty day written notification. If monthly tuition is a zero balance at the time of withdrawal, the contract may be waived. If there is an outstanding balance, the contract holds true and the parent is liable for the balance and remaining months in the contract. The registration fee is non-refundable, and is due annually during registration for the next school year.

No refunds are made if the center is closed due to unavoidable circumstances, such as bad weather, building maintenance problems, or holidays. No refunds will be given for days that enrolled children do not attend.

Any time a child is left past 5:30 p.m., the center will levy a \$5.00 charge for every minute the child remains after designated times. If a parent is late more than three times, the late fee will be doubled and will remain doubled for the remainder of the school year. In case of emergency, when tardiness is unavoidable, the center MUST be notified. If a parent is consistently late, the parent will be asked to withdraw the child from the program.

Parents are expected to participate in fundraising activities. \$200.00 in gross sales per calendar year, per child is required.

For prospective parents:

In order to reserve a position for your child after September 1 of any school year, the full monthly tuition must be paid by the 5th of each month regardless of your child's prospective enrollment date. The registration/supply fee must also be paid at the time of registration.

For more information on this or any of our policies, please contact the First Beginnings Office: 429-6890.

Discipline Policy

Discipline is a form of guidance and shall be constructive, its purpose being to help the child learn acceptable behavior through understanding rather than forcing him/her to conform to adult standards. Discipline should be fair and consistent and every effort should be made to help the child see it as such. Encouragement of good behavior is more effective than punishment. The child's acceptance of discipline and his/hers ability to profit from it depend largely upon his/her feeling that he/she is liked and accepted. No child shall be subject to physical punishment, corporal punishment, verbal abuse or threats. Cruel, severe, unusual or unnecessary punishment shall not be inflicted upon children. Derogatory remarks shall not be made in the presence of children about family members of children in care or about the children themselves. No child or group of children shall be allowed to discipline another child.

Redirection or time out will be used as a form of discipline.

The child's age, intelligence, emotional make-up, and his/hers past experiences should be considered when redirecting and guiding the child's behavior. For example, if a child is two years old, he/she may sit away from the group for a maximum of two minutes. The decision to rejoin the group is the decision of the child. When a child is removed from the group for disciplinary reasons, he/she should never be out of sight of a staff member. No child shall be deprived of meals or any part of meals for disciplinary reasons.

Health professionals are available if a parent should want to schedule a consultation. However, a child may be asked to withdraw from the center if unacceptable behavior becomes a problem.

Complaint Policy

Parents, be advised you may call or write the Bureau of Licensing should you have significant, and unresolved licensing complaints:

Department of Social Services
Bureau of Licensing
P.O. Box 3078
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3078
Phone: 225-922-0015
Fax: 225-922-0014

<http://dss.state.la.us/>

Discrimination by childcare centers on the base of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, handicapping conditions, ancestry, or whether the child is being breast-fed is strictly prohibited. Any suspected abuse and or neglect of a child in a childcare center must be reported in accordance with Louisiana Revised Statute 14:403. The phone number for Child Protection is 318-676-7622.

Parents are welcomed to visit our center anytime during regular hours of operation, as long as they have a child enrolled. Please note that the children have naptime between 11:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., therefore we ask that your visits circumvent that time period. Likewise, we ask that parents refrain from bringing children during that designated time - they are accepted between 7:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

The use of alcohol, tobacco, and the use or possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances, fireworks, firearms, pellet or BB guns (loaded or unloaded) is prohibited on the childcare premises.

First United Methodist Church
Head of Texas Street – Post Office Box 1567
Shreveport, Louisiana 71165 – 1567
Telephone: 318-429-6890
Fax: 318-429-6894
Voice Mail: 318-347-8571
Church Office: 318-424-7771
www.firstbeginnings.com

You may call and ask for your child's teacher anytime during the day:
318-429-6892 or 318-429-6893.

Hours of operation: Monday – Friday 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Please detach this page from the handbook, complete the required information and return it to the First Beginnings Office within one week of your child's admission.

ALLERGY INFORMATION

My child _____ is allergic to
the following _____

or

My child _____ has no allergies

Parent Signature _____

List any dietary restrictions due to religious beliefs:

HANDBOOK AGREEMENT

I have read and understand the parent handbook. I am also aware that First Beginnings Child Development Center utilizes recordings and/or tapings of my child, such as digital recordings, videotaping, and audio recordings, in the center for observation/security purposes.

Parent's Signature:

Mother _____ Date _____

Father _____ Date _____

Email: _____

Are you a member of First United Methodist Church? _____

Church affiliation _____