

Joyful Noise 2026 Handbook



Cherry Conley and Meaghan Conley
32230 Shavox Road
Salisbury, MD 21801
443-783-1953 and 443-366-4620
joyfulnoisechildcare.net
cherryconley@gmail.com

Joyful Noise Childcare Parent Handbook

Welcome to Joyful Noise Childcare. This handbook has been prepared as an informative guide for parents so that they may know and understand our childcare philosophies, and expectations. In an effort to make our relationship as enjoyable as possible, the following pages contain mutually beneficial requirements that are necessary to ensure that there are no misunderstandings between either party. Please read this handbook carefully, and feel free to ask any questions or share any comments. Open lines of communication benefit everyone.

Mission Statement

By sharing God's love and grace, Joyful Noise Childcare strives to provide quality childcare experience for all children by creating relationships that foster open, honest communication between parents, our family, and the children in our care, creating an environment for each child to feel safe and secure, allowing them to learn and grow to develop to their fullest potential physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Joyful Noise Childcare serves all children and families regardless of race, religion, or cultural background.

Child Care Philosophy

At Joyful Noise Child Care, we believe that children's play is their work. Our childcare program is modeled after the Reggio Emilia approach to child development, along with an understanding of Lev Vygotsky's child development theories and Maria Montessori's teaching practices. We believe in the child being competent, curious, inciteful, with unlimited potential. Children learn how to interact with the world around them as they manipulate the environment during play. Adults facilitate creative learning experiences, by structuring the childcare environment both inside and outdoors, allowing for exploration as well as individual and group play. The environment is seen as the third teacher and is structured to allow the children the freedom to move between activities at their own pace. Small periods are structured, adult-led, activities in a group, such as singing songs, calendar, weather, Storytime, or a game. These experiences teach the children about following directions, taking turns, and working in a group, all skills they will need to succeed in school. The integration of academics into child-centered play provides the best outcomes for the young children in our care. Using the children's previous experiences, and their own interests we build their minds, increasing vocabulary, while also developing their bodies and strengthening their social skills. The timing of activities such as outdoor play and art or cooking may change depending on when babies are sleeping; as I strive to meet each child's individual needs.

The materials we have chosen to add to the childcare environment include toys, rattles, puzzles, tables, and chairs made of wood instead of plastic which develop an

appreciation for nature and quality and show respect for the child. We have also added many natural materials to the environment, such as rocks, sticks, or plants, along with natural soothing colors. Materials are kept neatly on shelves, hung on hooks, sorted on trays, and separated into baskets. This also makes putting things away much more logical and enjoyable. Toys and books are rotated – taking out those that have not been chosen lately and limiting choices so that the children do not become overwhelmed and feel in control of their environment and making clean-up manageable. Materials are chosen to reflect the lives and experiences of the children we serve.

The child development theorist, Lev Vygotsky, theories of child development impact the



structure of our program. He believed that children have two different levels of development: independent performance and assisted performance. Vygotsky believed that through scaffolding, adults and peers could help support children's achievement of more difficult skills. Scaffolding includes adults demonstrating, modeling, and asking questions to move a child from his current skill level to a higher level. In our multi-age group environment, the children have many

opportunities to support others as well as to be supported by others. We believe that all children thrive and succeed in this type of environment, regardless of their developmental strengths or weaknesses. They learn teamwork, compassion, and empathy, while developing strong social skills.

Joyful Noise provides an emergent curriculum. This means that the teachers observe the children and carefully learn about what interests them and what questions they have about the world. We try to allow the children to do as much as they can independently. Learning to wash hands, put nap mats away, and clean up after meals is taught to children beginning at about 2 years. Putting coats and shoes on to go outside becomes a learning activity, as does cleaning up toys, and following directions. By taking observations, we plan new experiences and activities for the children to meet their interests, skills, and even struggles. The observations are used by teachers to ensure that children are progressing developmentally. It is our goal to come alongside parents, working with them to facilitate the children's ability to have fun while nurturing a love of exploration and learning. This all takes place in a safe, secure environment, where each child is accepted and loved as a unique individual. We want to see every child with the skills that prepare them to be ready to learn when they reach Kindergarten.

Program Goals

- To structure the childcare environment to encourage exploration and learning through play based on the child's interests.
- To ensure every child is nurtured and comfortable.

- To prepare the environment to provide appropriate play experiences which will contribute to the developmental needs of each individual child
- To facilitate and guide children of all ages to manage social skills, so they can be ready to learn and function in a group of peers, as necessary for a positive school experience.
- To help children foster positive self-help skills, building the confidence they will need for success in life.
- To create an educational environment and work jointly with parents/guardians so each child has the necessary skills for school success.
- To provide each child's parent/guardian with daily verbal and/or written accounts of how a child is progressing throughout the year.
- To adapt the learning process to fit each child's learning style and any special needs, including working with the Infant Toddlers Program if necessary and following a child's IFP (Individual Family Service Plan).
- To provide developmental screening with the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ3)
- To provide the opportunity to parents for conferences, to discuss developmental milestones based on the ASQ3 screening as needed.

Professional Development

I, Miss Cherry, chose the field of family childcare as my profession. I began this career in 1992. I love what I do. I am honored that you have chosen us to care for your child. In addition to being registered by the Office of Child Care through the State of Maryland, as a licensed family childcare provider, I also hold a Level 6 Childcare Credential, and MD EXCELS Level 3. I was a nationally accredited family childcare provider for over 12 years. In the process of achieving these credentials, I have taken many childcare and child development classes. In December 2018, I finished my bachelor's degree in child development through Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Level 6 Maryland Childcare Credential

The Maryland Child Care Credential is a voluntary program that recognizes childcare providers who go beyond the requirements of State licensing and registration regulations. There are six credential levels, each one recognizing a childcare provider's achievement of a specified number of training hours, years of experience, and professional activities that lead to quality childcare. Participating providers complete training in topic areas to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to provide the highest quality care for the children and families they serve. The Credential is valid for one year and may be renewed annually. I am at a level 6 in the Credentialing Program, since completing my bachelor's degree in child development.

NAFCC National Accreditation

The National Association for Family Child Care has developed and is implementing the National Accreditation Program for Family Child Care. National Accreditation assesses family childcare providers and their facilities. Six quality standard areas must be assessed. These include Relationships, Environment, Activities, Developmental Learning Goals, Safety and Health, and Professional and Business Practices. There are requirements within these standards that must be met before a provider can receive National Accreditation. Providers must complete a minimum of 125 hours of training, complete a self-study, and be observed by a nationally approved early childcare observer. Once all the requirements have been met and the observation visit has been successfully completed, National Accreditation is awarded for a period of three years. I received my first National Accreditation in March 2003, and I was accredited through January 2020. At this point, I have chosen to drop my NAFCC Accreditation. Daily struggles with my own daughter, who was diagnosed with Autism, have led me to decide, that the childcare children I care for, and the staff who work with me, as well as myself and my daughter, would be better served by creating a lower stress environment. I learned a lot and believe the accreditation process helps create a higher quality childcare environment. I just don't believe that repeatedly redoing paperwork and training makes a better quality environment. Each provider only has so much time during the day and I would rather spend that time with the children, not doing paperwork.

Maryland EXCELS Level 3

Maryland EXCELS is a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS is a program that awards ratings to family providers, center-based childcare programs, public school preschool programs, childcare programs, and school-age before and after-school programs that meet increasingly higher standards of quality in key areas. Maryland EXCELS includes standards in different areas of early care and education, including licensing, learning environments, staffing and professional development, developmentally appropriate learning and program practices, child assessment, program administration and policies, and accreditation. I was at level 5, but currently hold a level 3, which is as high as I can go with pursuing a NAFCC Accreditation Renewal.

A little about me

Joyful Noise Childcare began providing reliable, loving care in New Jersey in 1992. I was a single mom with a love for children and a desire to stay home with my daughter. After several negative childcare experiences with my own child, I set out to provide a safe, nurturing environment for other children while staying home with my daughter. In 1997, I married Jon, my supportive husband, and we had two additional beautiful daughters. We moved to Salisbury, Maryland in October 1999, and have continued to provide the same quality care for the children here on the Eastern Shore. In 2007, we

became licensed foster parents and soon adopted another daughter. In 2010, we were blessed with our fifth daughter, who we later adopted. In 2015, we adopted twin dynamic 8-year-old sons. We are now parents to five beautiful daughters, who range in age from 35 years old down to 15 years old, and twin 21-year-old sons.

Our 2 youngest children are still at home. Our 26-year-old daughter, Meaghan, returned home in 2019 with a husband, Alex, and two stepchildren, Kayleb and Aubrey. In 2021 Meaghan and Alex welcomed a son, Nate. Our 24-year-old daughter returned home after serving four years in the United States Marines. In April 2025, Meaghan and Alex welcomed a second Son, Joseph. Together we form a large extended family that works together.

Meaghan currently works with me in our childcare program as a co-provider. She has taken all the basic training required by the state of MD, and in December 2023, she finished the Infant/ Toddler Critical Competencies. This is an additional 24 clock hours in teaching infants and toddlers. During the winter of 2025, Meaghan attended Childcare I and Childcare II through Chesapeake College. She currently has the credentials necessary to qualify as a pre-k teacher in a childcare center.

I continue to improve my professionalism through additional training, membership in the Mary State Family Child Care Association, as well as through articles and emails about changes in the field of child development and childcare. I also mentor and train other providers. The process of obtaining my childcare credentials has changed my mission. While I still strive to provide a safe, nurturing environment, I also aim to prepare each child to have the necessary skills to succeed when they start school. Each day, we can be found doing a lot of playing, but the playing now has a purpose.

Communication

Communication is important to me. When we accept a new family into my business, we want to be sure every parent feels comfortable sharing, any concerns or asking questions that may arise. There must be a similar childcare philosophy between us. Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. we welcome questions, feedback, or discussions, that are oriented towards a positive outcome for the children. Sensitive issues will be discussed privately, outside of regular childcare hours, either by telephone or conference.



We use the Bright Wheel App to communicate with all parents, so each parent is aware of what their child is learning throughout the day. We upload a yearly calendar with days off, and any other pertinent or fun information that may be of interest to our clients. Once a parent signs a contract with us, we send a message with instructions on how to register for the app.

Parents are encouraged to call us at any time. Please be aware we may be busy with the children and unable to answer. If you leave a message, we will return your call as soon as possible. We maintain an open-door policy during childcare hours. We will also discuss your child's daily activities and routines with you regularly. We encourage parents to participate in our daily activities, as your schedule permits. Together, we will love and nurture your child in hopes of developing a mature, responsible, loving, and independent individual, ready to face the world and all its challenges.

Enrollment Policy

There are several forms that we must have completed and turned in to us **BEFORE** we can assume the responsibility of caring for your child. **NO EXCEPTIONS!!!** The forms are as follows: signed Contract and Rate Agreement, Consent for Medical Treatment, Authorization for Transportation, Emergency Information Form, All About My Child, Health Inventory, Immunization Certificate, and your child's IEP and IFSP, if applicable. If your child takes any medications that we will need to distribute, we will also need a medication information form. Parents are required to keep me informed of any change of address, telephone numbers, and other pertinent information listed on all the above forms. Please feel free to ask if there are any questions about completing the above.

State Licensing

We are licensed by the state of Maryland Office of Childcare, 210 Baptist Street, Suite 32, Salisbury, MD 21801. They can be reached at (410)543-6731. You may find our Childcare license posted next to the front door. Please check out *The MSDE Parents guide to regulated Care*. This link is also available on the Joyful Noise Childcare Website. https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/2/guide_to_regulated_child_care.pdf

Security Deposit

When new families enter care, a security deposit will apply for all slots held longer than one week. Parents will be required to pay the regular weekly fee for two weeks as a security deposit. All fee rules apply. These monies are non-refundable should you withdraw your child before our agreed-upon start date. Childcare slots are offered on a first come first serve basis, so slots will not be held unless a security deposit has been paid. If paying a deposit for an infant spot, which is currently occupied by a child who will be turning two; All paperwork must be returned to me no later than three weeks before beginning care to hold a spot. If a parent is interested in holding an infant spot that will become available in the future due to a child turning two, they must be willing to pay half rate for this spot until it becomes available. This fee is unreturnable. It often takes months for our program to fill a spot. We cannot hold a spot, even one that will be available in the future, without a commitment from a parent. Otherwise, the program ends up losing income.

Trial Period

All new children will be cared for on a two-week trial period beginning on the child's first actual day of care. During that time, the parent or provider may terminate the childcare agreement with 24 hours' notice. Fees paid are non-refundable. After the trial period, a two-week written notice is required to terminate the agreement. (See termination policy)

Payment Procedures

Your specific rates will be outlined in your contract and rate agreement. Payment is payable in advance, no later than pick-up time on Friday of each week. Drop-In care must be paid for at the beginning of the week, at drop-off time. Payments are due *prior* to holidays or vacation days. In cases of illness, payment is still expected. If childcare is closed due to my illness or emergency, payments are still expected. All payments are made through the Bright Wheel App. Once we have reached an agreement for services and paperwork is completed and returned to us, we will send a link with instructions on how to register for the Bright Wheel App. There will be a late fee of \$10.00 for each day payments are late. Repeated late payments may be grounds for termination. I ask you to consider how you would feel if your employer came to you on your expected payday and told you that your paycheck would be delayed. I will give you a minimum of two weeks' notice of any increase in your childcare fee.

Children will not be permitted in care the following Monday morning unless payment has been made.

Teacher's Clause- A teacher or professor can choose to keep their child home through the summer when school is not in session. They are still responsible for the payment for the childcare spot if they would like a childcare spot the following fall. The cost of the childcare spot can either be distributed throughout payments during the school year, or they can choose to continue normal payments throughout the summer. Only if I can fill a summer spot with a school-age child, I am willing to discount the summer rate. Keep in mind that the costs of operating a childcare do not go down when a child is not present. Many teachers choose to send their children two or three days a week during the summer. This keeps the child in the routine of coming to childcare while giving them personal time and quality time with their children.

Absences

Payments are made to secure a childcare spot in our program. Therefore, there are no discounts for absences, holidays, or vacations.

Childcare Subsidy Program

Unfortunately, Joyful Noise Childcare does not currently accept the MD Childcare Scholarship. This has become necessary due to repeatedly being paid late, by the state

of Maryland, repeated mistakes, and Childcare Central losing paperwork multiple times. We are choosing to spend more time with the children and less time and frustration doing paperwork. Maintaining a quality program is not possible when we are not being paid consistently.

Hours of Operation

Normal hours of operation are Monday through Friday, from 7:30 AM to 5:15 PM.

Your specific hours will be outlined in your contract and rate agreement. We require two weeks' notice if parents need to change enrollment hours. We also reserve the right to terminate if the new hours do not work with our childcare business. We offer full-time and part-time care. Parents are responsible for paying all fees for contracted days, regardless of whether their child is in attendance or not. **Please be courteous and call if your child will be absent or arriving late.** This is extremely helpful for planning purposes for both the provider and the other children.

Late Fees

Parent contracts/Rate Agreement state scheduled childcare hours. If your child is dropped off before, or picked up after these times, you will be charged a late/early fee. Joyful Noise will charge an after-hours rate of \$5.00 per child per hour for prearranged late care or early morning drop-off. (Note: This is only if prior arrangements have been made with us. Early drop-off requires notification by 9:00 pm the previous night.) If no prior arrangements have been made for late/early care, there is a charge of \$5.00 for every 5 minutes or portion thereof. Late fees will be strictly enforced. This is to ensure that children are picked up on time so as not to impose on our family time. Late drop-off does not constitute late pick-up. Unscheduled early drop-off or late pick-up fees must be paid in cash at the time of pick-up. If cash payment is not made at this time, it will be required the next day when dropping off. No child will be allowed to stay for care on that day, or until payment is made. The above penalties will also be charged to parents if Grandma or another person is supposed to arrive to pick up the child and is late/early. It is each parent's responsibility to have their child dropped off or picked up at the allotted time. Parents will need to make alternate arrangements if they will be unavoidably late, it is each parent's responsibility to have an authorized alternative person pick up their child. **Continuous early drop-off or late pick-up will mean a breach of contract, and childcare will be terminated.**

****Please understand that there are planning, preparation, and cleaning activities that are associated with the business, which cannot be completed during normal hours of operation. For us to be the best providers we can be, it is important to have adequate time to spend with our family. Cooperation with time scheduling is greatly appreciated.**

Arrivals and Departures Transitions

Please Sign all children In, on the Bright Wheel App upon arrival.

This gives us a written record of each child's attendance, hours, and the person who brought/picked up the child each day. Attendance is required by the Office of Childcare for licensing. Parents must sign in and out daily. Any parent not signing in and out will be charged a paperwork maintenance fee of

\$5.00/week for repeatedly not signing their child in and out of care. Consider that if we need to do it for parents, with eight children in care, it ends up being 10 to 15 minutes per day, our time is taken away from the children.



Children are to arrive clean and fed (unless they arrive just before mealtime). It is normal for some children to have difficulties separating from a parent, or to cry when being dropped off for childcare. Parents can help their child take off their coats and shoes. Meaghan and I will provide hugs and cuddling to any child if they have difficulty separating. Children arriving during quiet time will be expected to remain quiet until the end of quiet time, so that others will not be disturbed from their naps.

Please be very brief with dropping off (5 minutes should be sufficient). Prolonged "goodbyes" make separation more difficult for children. This is a time of testing, when two different authority figures are present (parent and provider), and the children like to test to see if the rules still apply. We will try our best to send each child home with a clean diaper and would appreciate the same consideration when they are dropped off at childcare. During arrivals and departures, parents are expected to reinforce the rules of childcare. If a parent chooses not to reinforce childcare rules, we will remind your child that their behavior is inappropriate and take immediate action to correct him/ her if needed. Parents must be in control of their children during these transition times.

Please remember to sign your child out on the Bright Wheel App at the end of the day.

Parents are required to enter the house at the time of drop-off, as well as pick-up time. Parents are never to just "let the kids out" without coming inside. Please refrain from using cell phones during drop-off and pick-up. This allows for better parent/provider communication. Please help us in the enforcement of these rules to create a better environment for all.

Our normal procedure is to release a child only to their parents or another pre-authorized adult. If someone other than the parent is to pick up the child, we require prior notice. Please inform emergency contacts or people designated to pick up your child that if we have not met them previously, we will need to ask for photo identification. **There will be no exceptions!** This is not meant to offend anyone. This is simply a measure to protect your children.

Please park all cars in the driveway on the right side in the grass. They must be turned off. Idling Cars are not permitted in Childcare drop-off/pick-up areas per the Maryland

Department of Education.

Holidays and Vacation

Childcare will be closed for the following holidays: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and the Friday after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and



the day after Christmas. When any of these holidays fall on a Saturday, Childcare will be closed on the preceding Friday, with pay. When the holiday falls on a Sunday, childcare will be closed on the following Monday, with pay. Parents will be required to pay for these Mondays or Fridays taken if that day their child is normally in attendance. For us to be the best providers we can be, we need time to relax with our family and to accomplish household or childcare projects, or attend training, seminars, or conferences.

Each year, we may take up to ten personal/professional/sick days. These days are paid in full. We take three weeks' vacation throughout the year. Parents will pay the normal weekly rate for vacation time. One of these weeks is taken off the week between Christmas and New Year's. A second week is taken off during the summer months. The third week is taken as three/four day, weekends spread out throughout the year. A calendar is provided with most professional/vacation/holiday days in which Joyful Noise is closed for the year, by the end of January. Occasionally, some changes need to be made. We will give two weeks advanced notice if there is a change to the calendar.

Substitute Care

There will be occasions when one of the primary providers needs to be absent for short periods (i.e., doctors' appointments, childcare training, or field trips with the older children). Either Meaghan or Cherry will always be with the children. When one of us is not available, my daughter, Meredith, my son-in-law, Alex, and my husband, Jon, are all licensed substitutes. Parents will be notified of the time of the providers' absence and who the substitute provider will be.

Although we will make every attempt to be available each day, there will be occasions when another family member or I am ill. If we are unable to provide service due to any personal or family illness or emergency, all parents will be notified as soon as possible. It will be their responsibility to obtain backup care and to arrange payment for this care.

Personal Belongings

Please discourage children from bringing toys from home. Little ones have a difficult time sharing with others, and it's even harder with toys from home. If it is necessary, they bring a toy and limit it to one special toy. Toy weapons are not permitted under any circumstances (NO EXCEPTIONS). If personal toys from home become a problem, they will be put away in a safe place, and given to the parent at the end of the day. Children may bring a special blanket or "lovies" for nap time. Joyful Noise Childcare will not be responsible for loss or breakage of a child's personal items. All personal items must be

clearly marked with the child's name.

Supplies

Parents are responsible for supplying diapers, baby wipes, and a full change of clothing appropriate for the weather. We ask all parents to supply mud/rain suits and rain Boots to be left at childcare. During the summer months, please supply a bathing suit, Crocks or water shoes, sunscreen, and bug spray for your child. Parents may bring a whole package of diapers. (We will let you know when supplies run low.) Soiled clothing will be sent home, and a clean change of clothing should be brought in to replace them the next day. **All items need to be labeled with your child's initials.** It is the parents' responsibility to make sure we have all necessary supplies for your child. Failure to do so will be grounds for termination of childcare. Please keep in mind, that if each child does not have a needed item, (such as boots, coat, or swimsuit) it may prevent all the children from going outside or participating in activities. **If it becomes necessary for us to purchase supplies, the parent will be billed accordingly on their next payment due date.**

Curriculum



Our educational activities are based around a literature-rich, seasonal, theme-based curriculum. The children learn about the wonderful world of literature, puppets, the alphabet, phonemic awareness, social studies, science (from a biblical perspective), early math concepts, gross motor skills, fine motor skills (needed for writing and using scissors), art exploration, music appreciation, cooking, and tactile exploration. They also learn responsibility, independence, and empathy, along with other social skills necessary to thrive in life and succeed in school. Curriculum and activities are planned based on developmental guidelines, found in Healthy Beginnings and the Maryland Early Learning Standards. More information can be found on the Healthy Beginnings website at: <http://www.marylandhealthybeginnings.org/>.

While some of our activities are adult-led, much of the children's day is spent engaging in child-led activities. Joyful Noise Childcare is an environment structured to allow self-exploration and learning based on the Creative Curriculum for Family Childcare. Activities and toys are changed on a bi-weekly basis to support the various seasonal themes we are learning about, and the developmental milestones each child is working on based on Maryland Early Learning Standards.

We teach values based on biblical principles. Our curriculum includes field trips and other activities to teach your child about the world around them. Our goal is for all children to leave our care with a natural love of learning and exploring. This will enable them to become successful students and productive members of society.

Outdoor Educational Experiences, and Physical Fitness



At Joyful Noise Childcare, we want to provide every child with great educational experiences and a childhood they will remember. After much research and planning we decided to make Joyful Noise a childcare program that embraces the outdoors with a strong emphasis on nature. Research has shown that children who spend time outdoors have better self-regulation and become confident and empathic. They learn about other living things and love the natural world while engaging in numerous hands-on multi-sensory experiences outside of four walls. Outdoors children have the opportunity for child-driven explorations in the natural world which allows them to follow their interests and boosts their natural curiosity. The children develop strong gross motor and fine motor skills while learning about awareness of their body in space. The below list are all skills children gain through nature exposure which help them to succeed in school and later in life.

Increased feelings of calmness

Increased endorphin levels and dopamine production (promotes happiness)

Restored capacity for concentration and attention

Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression

Reduced irritability

Lowered blood pressure and reduced cortisol (stress hormone)

Reduced feelings of isolation.

Encouraged freedom and self-direction

Increased social skills and cooperation

Increased opportunities for multi-sensory experiences which help with the development of self-regulation

Increased flexibility, dexterity, and strength

During most days we spend as much time out in nature as possible, weather permitting. We believe that there is very little bad weather on the lower shore of Maryland. All weather is fun and exciting to children when they are dressed for the weather. They love puddles and mud, which usually isn't high on grown-ups' lists of must-do activities. We are outside in all kinds of weather. We eat lunch outside many days, we read outside, and we plan our educational activities for outside. Many days we even take afternoon naps outdoors. In spring and fall many days we are outdoors for most of the day. While every day we aim for at least one hour outdoors, in some instances this is not possible such as in stormy weather, when it is colder than 40 degrees Fahrenheit, or over 90 degrees with high humidity. If the weather makes it difficult to go outside, due to rain, or extreme heat or cold, other indoor gross motor activities will be provided for the children to participate in with their friends.

All children are encouraged to participate to the best of their ability. Some activities will be altered to provide ways for a younger child or a special needs child to participate.

When the children sleep outdoors they are on the mats with rubber mats under them to insulate them from the ground. They are offered extra blankets in colder weather. We have found the children are most comfortable sleeping outdoors when it is over 50 degrees. We also consider the humidity levels during warmer months. During the warmer months, there are always numerous ways to spend time in the shade.

We ask parents to provide mud/rain suits along with boots to leave at childcare. We ask parents of all children to bring warm winter coats, mittens, and hats for cooler weather. In the summer, bathing suits, extra changes of clothing, and crocks or water shoes are required for warm weather. The children learn so much from free play and instructional time outside, allowing them to experience the seasons firsthand

Special Needs

Every child has special needs (either health or developmental) that must be met by both the child's parents and his provider. However, some children may require more intense, long-term special care. Since there is such a wide variety of "special needs" each case will be reviewed individually. The provider will request a copy of a child's IEP or IEP (if one has been written) for lesson planning purposes and to help the child reach his or her goals. Therapists can (and have) worked with children while in care at Joyful Noise. All children are included in daily activities to the best of their abilities. As with all children graduating to a school environment, the provider will work with the parents, the child, and any other agency/therapist, the child needs to provide a smooth transition of care into the school environment.

Daily lesson plans are made to meet each child at their own level. We strive to work with each child so that they are challenged, but not frustrated. This enables each child to grow to his greatest potential. Daily informal assessments are made, and activities are adjusted to provide meaningful learning experiences without frustration. Activities are altered as needed for different children's developmental levels.

Activity Fee

Joyful Noise strives to provide a great educational start for each child. Due to rising costs, we are finding it necessary to begin changing a yearly activity fee. This fee will cover the cost for a researched based phonics curriculum. (more info to follow) as well as many of the consumable materials we use daily.

For 2026 the activity fee will be
\$50.00 for children under 2 years of age
\$125.00 for children 2 years of age and over.

This fee will be invoiced for February 13th payment unless other arrangements are agreed upon for existing clients. It is payable at contract signing for new clients.

Screen Time



Joyful Noise believes it is in the best interest of young children to limit television watching and computer play. Therefore, television is used as a teaching tool to reinforce our current lessons. Children are only allowed limited computer time to play educational games or to work on schoolwork as needed. Internet access is only permitted for school projects. Children must be sitting at the table, in sight, when working on an electronic device. Children are always offered other activities during viewing times. Those under two are engaged in other activities at these times nearby or in adjacent rooms.

Developmental Screenings and Conferences

The children are observed through play to determine if they are meeting developmental guidelines through Ages and Stages of Developmental Screenings. Screenings are done within ninety days of enrollment. All children are screened twice a year, once in the fall (Sept-Dec) and once in the spring (April-June). These observations and screenings will be shared with parents in person or through notes sent home. Conferences are available on an “as needed” basis, after childcare hours at the end of the day, to allow us to share the results of the developmental screening and to plan for upcoming goals for each child. Please feel free to ask any questions or offer insights into your child’s development. A note will be sent home or announced in a newsletter to notify parents of the opportunity to sign up for conferences. If a parent has any questions or concerns about their child’s growth and development, we welcome their questions and can schedule a conference at their request. At Joyful Noise, we observe each child regularly. This is done to ensure all children are learning and progressing as they should. Daily observations will be shared verbally and through the parent app. We are willing to share observations with other community resources working with an individual child, such as Easter Seals, Infant/Toddlers Program, or Early Intervention at the parents’ request. If a parent determines that they would like their child to be assessed by Infant and Toddler, we will be available to provide documentation about your child with consent. We know your child and see them daily. Our screenings and observations provide a more accurate picture of your child’s strengths and weaknesses than an unfamiliar specialist working with a child for a few hours.

Daily Schedule

The daily schedule is posted in the playroom. Young children and babies enjoy a structured schedule that allows for flexibility. A schedule helps the day flow more smoothly and allows the children to anticipate coming events. We will adhere to the schedule to the best of our ability, keeping in mind that things do not always go as we want when working with children. There will be times when we must adjust the

schedule. We would appreciate it if parents considered the schedule when picking up or dropping off their children. It is better if arrivals and departures do not occur during quiet time. If a child needs to be picked up or dropped off during these times, please take note that the children may be asleep. If a child is attending part-time, please keep our daily schedule in mind when allowing a child to sleep in or feeding a child late in the morning. We do not have the time and ability to keep children up at naptime or to feed them mid-afternoon if they don't eat lunch with everyone at noon. Children coming into the program at non-traditional times need to be on similar schedules for them to fit into our program.

Field Trips / Outings

Occasionally, we may have the opportunity to take field trips. All children will be placed in safety-approved car seats as required by Maryland state law. Parents may be requested to pay any fees associated with the trip and will be required to sign a permission slip that we will carry with us. Staff carry copies of each child's emergency medical forms. All children have a name tag inside their clothing listing Miss Cherry's name and cell phone number in case they get separated from the group. Children are also instructed to find a person who works in the place we are visiting should they be separated, and to stay in one place to help us find them. In the event of an emergency, a parent will be notified immediately. It is not required that your child attend the field trips, but it will be each parent's responsibility to find alternate care if they choose not to participate. Regular childcare fees will still apply. Since our children are home-schooled, we must transport all children regularly, for extracurricular activities, and social outings. Therefore, we require you to fill out a general permission slip for these purposes, as well as a "Consent to Transport" form. Please be aware that this form is different from the Regular Permission slip form.



Transition Policy for School-age Children Returning from School to Program

When children come back to Joyful Noise Childcare from school at the end of the day, they are offered a snack. They can engage in free play or play outside, weather permitting. We do not do homework when children come in from school. They need this time to decompress and relax. We believe parents become more aware of their child's progress in school when helping with their homework.



Entering School_Transition Policy

Prior to each child entering school for the first time, the provider will work with each child through hands-on role-playing, reading about things to be expected at school, providing information on the annual Resource Fair sponsored by the Wicomico County Board of Education, assisting each child with learning how to write his full name, ensuring they know their address and phone number, providing information necessary for school registration, altering the child's schedule to wean them from the need of an afternoon nap, and any other task that may make your child's transition to school as easy as possible.

Children benefit when both the provider and parents are involved in the transition to school process. Please keep in mind that some local schools do NOT offer before and/or after school for children in Pre-K. You are welcome to apply to the Wicomico County Board of Education for special permission to attend Beaver Run Elementary School, our local elementary school. If given special permission, your child could remain in our program for before and after-school care, but please plan accordingly. Special permission is granted on a case-by-case basis and is dependent on enrolled class size. If you wish to keep your child enrolled, we are willing to walk your child to and from the bus stop. We will be happy to provide your child's most recent Ages and Stages Screening, and any other needed documentation for this transition to school.

Parents will need to provide appropriate outerwear and an umbrella. The umbrella may be stored at childcare in the child's cubby; to be used as necessary to keep dry in transit.

This is a special time for your child, and we will be there to support both you and your child at this time. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with us so that we can work together to ensure your child's success.

Nutrition

Joyful Noise Childcare strived to provide safe nutritious food for all children in care. This begins with hand washing. Meals are planned according to FDA guidelines. Please let me know if your child has any dietary special needs. Meals are served family style, allowing the children to help themselves. All breakfasts include a starch, a fruit, and 1% milk. (Children under 2 years of age are required to be given whole milk). Some breakfasts include a protein, but not all. (Federal Food Program policies, not mine) Lunch contains, meat, a starch, two vegetables and or fruits, and milk. Afternoon snacks include servings of foods from any two food groups. All juice offered to the children is 100%juice cut in half with water. This is offered to encourage the kids to drink more water with fewer calories than a glass of 100% juice. The children also have unlimited access to water for drinking during the day. Joyful Noise Childcare is part of a whole

food household. We aim to provide the foods which are closest to nature. We use very little processed or commercially premade foods. The children are offered whole wheat bread and several natural grains. We make every effort to avoid foods high in saturated fats, high fructose corn syrup, food dyes, and artificial sweeteners. Our menus are planned around the fresh fruits and vegetables that are available in season, locally as much as possible. The children will receive at least four fresh fruits and vegetables a week. We are happy to share any recipes your child likes with you so that you may serve them at home too. Any foods sent from home will be monitored to ensure they meet FDA guidelines. Joyful Noise aims to provide all children in our care with the fuel they need to succeed and grow at no additional cost to parents.



candy with your child.

There are set mealtimes on the schedule, posted on the parent bulletin board. Breakfast is served from 7:30 until 8:45 AM. Lunch is served from 11:30 to 12:15 p.m. Snack is served from 3:30-4:00 pm. You are responsible for feeding your child if he/she arrives after mealtime **(No Exceptions)**. All menus are posted by the door. Except for special occasions and when requested, please do not send food, drink, or

Please notify us if your child has any food allergies or sensitivities. As required by the Federal Food program these must be documented by a note from your child's physician. We will accommodate these in meal preparation and scheduling. Cultural and religious dietary preferences can also be considered in meal planning.

We believe mealtimes should be a pleasant time; children are always offered food but not forced to eat it. We do encourage each child to try one or two bites of everything. They must try a little of everything before being given seconds of anything. Sometimes they are surprised by what they like. If a child refuses to eat their meal, no additional food is served until the next designated meal/snack time. We will not administer a modified / special diet to your child unless medically necessary.

Infant Nutrition

We can offer food for infants, but we have found it is easier for both parents and the provider if parents supply food until the child has been exposed to all types of foods. If parents choose to bring food, this will include formula, infant cereal, and baby food. If a mother is breastfeeding, breast milk may be brought in bags labeled with the child's name and date. We have a shelf in the freezer for storing breast milk. We will take it out as necessary and thaw it for feedings. Infants are always fed on demand. All infants are held while receiving a bottle. Parents will need to supply bottles, which need to be labeled with the child's name. Parents can bring a can of formula, bottles, cereal, and baby food to leave at childcare, or they may bring these items daily. The Federal Food Program and Office of Child Care Licensing require that we have more breast milk or

formula on hand than your child usually eats in a day. Please supply additional breast milk to freeze or an extra can of formula to leave at childcare. This is necessary to cover times when your baby goes through a growth spurt, and decides they are hungrier than usual. Hungry, crying babies are not happy and upset everyone. Once a child has been introduced to all foods except for nuts and eggs, we will work towards transitioning your child to eating with the other children and enrolling them in the Federal Food Program. The Office of Childcare requires all childcare providers to create an emergency plan, which includes having adequate food to feed all children for up to three days in case of an emergency.

Toilet Training

Toilet training is done in a relaxed manner with the cooperation of the family when their child is ready. Until he/she is successfully, using the toilet, he/she should wear clothes that promote his/ her independence. In addition, parents must supply two or more complete changes of clothes (including socks). Try to avoid tight clothing, pants with snaps, zippers, belts, overalls, and “Onesies”. These are difficult for children to remove “in a hurry”. Parents must supply training pants and rubber pants. In our years of childcare experience, pull-ups are not a very effective tool for potty training. The children quickly learn they can wet in them, and it does not matter. Pull-ups feel dry even when wet. Training pants allow the child to feel wet, which is the natural consequence of not using the toilet. We highly suggest parents read the book Potty Training in Three Days by Brandi Brucks. It is a great program that parents can implement over a three-day weekend, and we can continue at childcare. We have had great success with this program.

Naps and Quiet Time

All children (regardless of age) are required to lie down for a rest period in the afternoon. All children must rest quietly during this period, on their mats. Children may bring a “lovie” to cuddle during nap time. Older children will be allowed to read books during this time. Quiet time gives everyone a much-needed break. It is our only opportunity to take a break, clean up, do paperwork, and work on curriculum planning. Infants nap at varying times, and their schedules will be accommodated. Infants, under 12 months, nap in a Pack-n-Play. Over 12 months, they are given a mat, crib sheet, and blanket for rest periods. Children over 12 months, whose parents want the child to remain napping in a Pack-n-Play, may write a letter stating that they wish for their child to continue sleeping in a Pack-n-Play until the parents and provider feel it is in the child's best interest to be moved to a nap mat. This is a State of Maryland Policy.

Open Door Policy

Parents are invited to drop in, unannounced, at any time during childcare hours. We would appreciate your taking into consideration the schedule when dropping in or calling. Remember that visitors usually cause children to react in an excited manner which does not usually occur when I am alone with the children. We do ask that parents try to avoid naptime, if possible, as barking dogs tend to wake the children.



Parental Involvement

Parents are welcome and encouraged to participate in childcare. Some ways in which parents can participate include chaperoning and helping their child at home with concepts that we are working on. Parents can also attend parent/provider conferences, read the app daily, volunteer to read, or help provide treats or other items for a holiday party. We encourage parents to feel free to stop by as your schedule permits. Parents are required to enter the house at the time of drop-off, as well as pick-up time. This allows for better parent/provider communication.

We will be planning quarterly family activities, such as bonfires, potlucks, outdoor movie nights and family fall and spring clean-ups for the outdoor classroom. We look forward to spending time together.



Parent Resources

The provider has available and/or access to a wide variety of program information. If a parent has a question or need, please ask and we may have information readily available or provide leads to other programs in the community. Currently, we have information on the local library services plus their quarterly calendar, the Delmarva Shorebirds game and event calendar, Wicomico Infant and Toddler

Program, Child Find, LOCATE Childcare, information from the IRS, WIC information, Childcare Subsidy information, Energy Assistance information, and application, as well as information on local fairs and events as they happen. We love it if parents could share any information that the other parents may find interesting. We can add fliers to the Daily Connect app. All information is updated as new information becomes available.

Birthdays and Parties

Each child's birthday is their special day. Parents are invited to provide a cake, cupcakes, or treats to celebrate their child's special day. We will also have a holiday party for each

major holiday. Sign-up sheets will be posted on the bulletin board, for your assistance on these days.

Pets

In our home, we love animals. We have three dogs, Dolly, Sophia, and Lucy, along with a cat, Nickle. My daughter, Meredith also has a dog, Dave and three cats, Bluey, Kate, and Leo. The children interact with the animals daily.



Meredith's animals come for visits. The cats tend to hide. The dogs love to be loved on and played with. The children often help to feed the animals or give them treats. Everyone is taught to use gentle hands with the animals. We also have a flock of chickens in a backyard coop. The children help feed them and bring in the eggs daily. We encouraged the children not to move quickly around the animals or to sneak up on them. The dogs are great companions and love to curl up with the children. It is our goal

to help the children learn respect and compassion while befriending the animals in our program. While we do our best to keep everyone safe and happy, occasionally minor accidents will occur. This is part of learning how to interact with animals.

Alcohol, Cannabis, Illegal drugs, Smoking and Vaping

Joyful Noise Childcare does not permit any adults in the childcare setting to* possess, consume, or be under the influence of alcohol, cannabis, or an illegal or nonprescribed controlled dangerous substance while present at the childcare program. This applies during the hours of operation while providing or assisting with the care of children during an off-site program activity, and during transporting children. Alcohol, tobacco, cannabis edibles, smoking, and vaping paraphernalia and byproducts shall be stored appropriately and kept out of the reach of the children in care.

House Rules

Please respect us, our profession, and our home. The respect that you show us including our home, furnishings, equipment, yard, and other children and adults, will communicate itself to your child. Mutual respect makes for a better working relationship. There are certain house rules that all children will be taught and expected to follow. The following rules are enforced for the safety and well-being of everyone. There will be no running permitted in the house. Standing or climbing on chairs, tables, or furniture is not permitted. There will be no use of obscene, derogatory, or disrespectful language. Children are not permitted to lift and or carry other children while in our home or on our property. Respectful treatment of other people and all property, toys, and furniture is expected. Willful destruction of property will be charged to the parent at the cost of replacing the item. No smoking will be permitted on the premises. (no exceptions).

Positive Behavior Strategies

Joyful Noise Childcare strives to provide an encouraging, positive, and supportive environment. The environment is structured to allow children to make many daily choices as to what they want to play and explore, and with whom they want to play. Our goal is to teach children to respect each other and the environment while being held accountable for their behavior.

At the beginning of the year, the children, Meaghan, and I sit down and work on creating a list of four to six rules. They are posted on the wall with the morning meeting materials. We review these rules daily and the children provide explanations of how they can obey these rules. If a child disobeys a rule, we will ask them what they are doing wrong. It is often another child who will remind the child what they are doing wrong. If we discover that children are not picking up, we will ask everyone to put their listening ears on and think about why this is a problem and how they can fix it. They respond with answers about breaking the toys if they get stepped on, and people tripping and getting hurt. The children work together to clean up. We encourage them and redirect a child who is not helping by asking them which type of toys they would like to put away next, or who they would like to help. We try to allow the children the opportunity to correct their behavior by asking questions to redirect.

Positive behavior is reinforced with lots of high-fives, and we try to catch them being good and praise them. If we are waiting in line to wash hands, we will pick out a child who is standing quietly waiting their turn, and praise them for their good behavior.

Finally, if a child is being uncooperative or struggling to positively interact with their peers repeatedly, they may be asked to go to the Quiet Corner. In the Quiet Corner, there is a picture list of positive behavior strategies on the wall. These are choices of how they can choose to handle a confrontation, such as telling an adult, using their words to explain, walking away, and playing something else. There are also quiet bottles of sand filled with little objects to occupy them and help them redirect themselves as they cool off, and several books about manners and emotions. After several minutes (depending on the child's age), I will ask them if they are ready to talk. We will then discuss how they could have handled the situation differently. The child then decides if they are ready to apologize to whomever they have offended. They choose to either hug or shake hands with their friend and apologize, or they can stay in the Quiet corner until they are ready to apologize and join their friends.

If we feel there is a chronic behavioral issue, we will contact the parents, so that we can work together to resolve the problem. If the problem continues, other arrangements for the care of your child will have to be made for the safety and well-being of all. There will be no spanking, physical/verbal abuse, or isolation used. Neither food nor sleep will be withheld as a means of punishment. As a registered family childcare provider, we have the responsibility, by law, to report any evidence of child abuse or neglect. This is for the benefit of your child.

Illness Policy

There is always much concern about the health and well-being of children in childcare. In a childcare environment, illness and infection pass very easily from one child to another. Parents and childcare providers also end up sick, causing an illness cycle that is difficult, if not impossible to break. When this happens, parents may have to lose time from work when there is no alternate care available.

Children who are ill: will have a fever (101 or above), who have a constantly runny nose (yellow or green), who have a persistent cough and/or diarrhea, who are fretful, whining, and miserable, or who have a contagious disease ***must be kept home!*** As a parent of a child in care, it is each parent's responsibility to notify the provider when their child has contracted a contagious disease, as soon as it is diagnosed, so other parents can be made aware of this.

To further control the spread of disease and germs, children should be taught and reminded often to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze, to ask for and use a tissue to blow their nose when needed, and to keep their fingers away from and out of their noses. Children should also be encouraged to keep things such as toys, fingers, clothing, foreign objects, etc. out of their mouths.

Sick Children:

- *Are fretful and miserable most of the day.
- *Require 3 to 4 times more attention than usual.
- * Do not want to participate in activities.
- * Keep caregivers from engaging in activities with the children.
- * Spread disease, germs, and infections to the other children.
- * Do not want to eat.
- * Do not nap.
- * Prevent other children from napping.

Symptoms requiring removal of the child from childcare:

1. Fever
2. Temperature is over 101 degrees, the child needs to be fever-free for a minimum of 24 hours, without the aid of Tylenol or other fever-reducing aides, before returning to childcare.
3. Diarrhea, runny or watery stools (two or more) within 4 hours.

4. Vomiting
5. Runny nose, discharge of any color other than clear.
6. Persistent cough
7. Runny and or crusty eyes – watery, matted, and or red/pink eyes.
8. Rash (excludes diaper rash)
9. Any communicable diseases – chicken pox, measles, strep throat, ringworm, lice, etc...



If a child becomes ill while under our care, their parents will be notified immediately. We require parents to pick up their child within 1 hour of notification. We reserve the right to determine when a child should be sent home due to illness. Children may return to care 24 hours after symptoms of illness have ended, or with written authorization from your child's physician. Please keep in mind how you would feel if another parent were to bring their sick child to childcare and expose your child to their ailment. Sick children are usually irritable and fussy. This makes participation in normal activities difficult for your child, as well as the provider and other children. Therefore, for all concerned, please keep your sick child at home. **If over 50 % of the children are ill, we will provide 12 hours' notice to close for a day to clean and sanitize.**

Medications

Prescription medications, ointments, and creams can be given to your child if needed. Parents are required to supply any medication in their original container, with their child's name on the box or bottle. A parent must complete and sign a medication consent form before medication can be administered. The provider can give non-prescription medications once per illness, with verbal parental consent. If continued use of non-prescription medication is needed, they will be required to complete, and have their doctor sign, the medication consent form.

Medical Emergencies

In case of emergency, we will administer necessary first aid. We will call 911, and your child will be transported to the nearest hospital. **YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY.** If an ambulance is called to transport your child, the cost of the ambulance will be your responsibility. You are also responsible for all costs involved in emergency medical treatment.

The owner of Joyful Noise Childcare, or employees, or my family will not be held liable for any sickness/injury of either parents/guardians or child, while on these premises, or while the child is on field trips or outings.

Inclement Weather Policy

On snowy or icy days, when roads are not passable and /or the federal, state, or county government is closed, Joyful Noise will be closed with no reduction in fee. It is your responsibility to contact us to find out if there will be a closing or late opening. If the government closes during the day due to changes in weather or electric outage, Joyful Noise may close with no reduction in fee. If we are caring for the children, we can not shovel the driveway and sidewalks. Without electric, we can find it difficult to meet the childrens' needs and maintain required temperatures. We want everyone to stay safe



Termination Policy

We reserve the right to terminate childcare for the following reasons (but not limited to): failure to pay (will result in immediate termination), failure of child to adjust after a two-week trial period, physical or verbal abuse of any person or property by parent or child, lack of compliance with handbook and contract policies, serious illness of provider or any member of the provider's family, serious illness of a child in care, false or misleading information given to the provider by the parent either verbally or in written form (will result in immediate termination, at provider's discretion).

You are required to give two weeks' written notice when you decide to terminate childcare. The two weeks will be paid in full, regardless of whether or not your child is in attendance. I will also give two weeks' written notice of termination for which full tuition is due, whether or not your child is in attendance. I reserve the right to give written notice of immediate termination where there are extreme circumstances that affect the well-being of myself or other children in attendance. In this situation, the two-week payment of tuition is still required. Termination notice will not be accepted while the provider is on vacation. You may pay two weeks' fees instead of two weeks' notice.

Rate Increases

We chose family childcare because we love working with children, and we think it is important to have a variety of happy, healthy, and safe places for our children. However, contrary to popular belief, there is not a lot of money to be made providing home childcare. What parents pay will buy quality childcare, nutritious meals, and a nurturing environment for children. Childcare fees must also cover my and Meaghan's income, including taxes and social security. Childcare fees also pay for special insurance, training, food, toys, equipment, art supplies, and all the other things the children will use. Like other self-employed workers, family childcare providers do not get the benefits that many employees take for granted such as health / dental insurance, life insurance, unemployment insurance, retirement, and flexible time off. Family childcare is also very restrictive; the state of Maryland dictates the size of my business. There is no room for growth. Also, We cannot take time off for appointments or obligations without careful

planning and covering our responsibilities. To protect our rights and income, Parents will find that a guaranteed wage is part of our contract. We hope this provides everyone with a comprehensive picture of the true cost of childcare.

We have been providing childcare for over 30 years. Meaghan and I continued to learn from others in the early childhood field and through education, striving to operate this business more efficiently. As operating costs continue to increase, we must include a 5 % cost-of-living rate increase, which is reflected in annual contract renewals, signed every February. We will do our best to keep rates as low as possible. We appreciate everyone's understanding in this matter.

Revisions to the Handbook and Contract

A new contract will be signed by all families each February and/or when changes are made. We reserve the right to make changes in policies as necessary or as required by the state of Maryland. Parents will be notified in a written addendum, to be placed with their parent handbook, of any changes to the contract documents. Any changes of the Parent Handbooks and contract will be available on the Joyful Noise Website, the Bright Wheel app, and paper upon request. There will be two weeks notice prior to any changes taking effect.



In Closing

Please remember that although we chose this profession because of our love for children, it is also our job. Our family depends on this income, just as your family depends on yours. Prompt fee payment, adherence to drop-off and pick-up times, consideration for your sick child, and consideration for our personal time are greatly appreciated. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to speak with us. Thank you for choosing Joyful Noise Childcare.