



Odyssey

early learning

Parent Handbook

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ABOUT ODYSSEY EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Contact Information:

434 E. Poindexter St.

Dillon, MT 59725

Phone: (406)988-0008

Email: info@odysseyelc.org

Hours of Operation: 7:30 am – 5:30 pm Monday through Friday

MISSION

Odyssey Early Learning Center is a non-profit early learning center whose goal is to support the whole child by fostering happiness, achievement, and growth. We believe that providing the highest quality learning opportunities empowers individuals and benefits the community.

TEAM

Operations Director: Kelsi McRae kelsi@odysseyelc.org

Education Director: Estee Aiken

Lead Teachers: Lakota Becker lakota@odysseyelc.org 4-5 classroom (Pre-K)
Kylie Bradley kylie@odysseyelc.org 0-3 classroom (Infant/Toddler)

WELCOME TO ODYSSEY EARLY LEARNING CENTER!!

We are pleased to welcome you and your family to Odyssey Early Learning Center and serve you with the best care and education that suits the needs of your child.

At Odyssey ELC, we believe that partnering with families in the care of children is the cornerstone to having a successful program. You have entered a child care and education program that values the uniqueness that you and your family bring to us. You are encouraged to participate in our program and fully as you are comfortable. Our doors are always open and you are welcome to drop in as often as you choose.

We care for children ages 6 weeks to 8 years old in a variety of programs tailored to the children's age group. Your child will receive care and education services that are individualized to their needs, interests, and abilities. Children under the age of 5 have a very unique task; one that is not often thought of as "school" skills. Their job is to be a child, explore like a child and learn all about themselves, how they relate to the outside world and how the outside world impacts them. Thus, at Odyssey ELC, you will find that our focus is largely on social and emotional skills. Children will learn to be self-aware, emotionally stable and socially adept. These skills will benefit them beyond kindergarten readiness, to the community at large. When children have a grasp of their social and emotional skills, they are ready to tackle all things academic and have an easier time adjusting to school settings and expectations.

As education is our joy, we hope that we can fulfill your parenting educational needs as well. Look for information about young children, their development, parenting and guidance strategies, healthy living and nutrition, etc. in our newsletters, website, emails, and other forms of communication. If there is a specific topic that you are interested in, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you for choosing Odyssey Early Learning Center! We look forward to building a lasting relationship with you and your child.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Odyssey Early Learning Center believes in learning that is limitless. Learning opportunities are given to all children regardless of their age and the stage that they “should” be in. Children build learning out of their interests, ability and needs; only pausing to sleep and recharge. At Odyssey Early Learning Center, children will be engaged in learning experiences throughout their entire day that focus on social-emotional skills, community building and academics. Because children learn, process and retain information best through play, learning experiences are delivered in this mode. Teachers are tasked with intentionally incorporating skill building into each area so children are able to choose the play that they are most comfortable in. Worksheets, crafts and teacher-directed activities have their place with specific outcomes but they are rarely used at Odyssey ELC. Teachers at Odyssey ELC will opt for a more hands-on approach to learning.

Children at Odyssey ELC retire to kindergarten with many more skills than knowing their alphabet and how to count. Children who complete the Odyssey ELC experience will know how to interact with other children and adults, be flexible in their approach to learning, will be curious and eager to learn more in-depth concepts and will have a firm foundation of success within the classroom.

Relationships that we build at Odyssey Early Learning Center extend far beyond those with the children. Families and the community relationships help our program grow and remain strong. Raising children and giving them the experiences that they need extends to many facets of the environment that we live in. At Odyssey Early Learning Center, we believe that caring for children requires a give and take between families and the program. Families know their child best and can offer much needed information for the proper care and education of their child. Staff at Odyssey Early Learning Center have much education and experience. They can offer parents advice and information about those areas of parenting and raising healthy children that parents feel they struggle with.

A healthy Early Education and Care facility requires love and support from everyone involved. Families, staff, community partners, friends and volunteers make up a community that helps to grow a child.

OUR SCHOOL YEAR:

September – August: Odyssey Early Learning Center is a year-round learning environment.
Monday through Friday 7:30 AM – 5:30 PM

Odyssey Early Learning Center encourages families to spend as much time as possible together. Our hours of operations are simply the hours that our doors are open for care each day. Parents are welcome to bring their child and pick them up as their daily schedule permits.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Odyssey ELC is committed to being open 48 weeks each year. Holidays and breaks are specifically chosen with parents, teachers and staffing needs in mind. The dates listed below are scheduled days of closure and will not change unless noted as “subject to change”. Odyssey reserves the right to close an additional 4 days during the September-August school year, as needed. Parents will be given a minimum of 2 weeks’ notice before a school closure unless an emergency arises.

September 4	Labor Day
TBA	Open House – UMWestern Center
November 27 closed at noon	Thanksgiving break
November 28-29	Thanksgiving Break
November 27-Dec 1	Parent Teacher Conferences
December 23-January 1	Winter Break
January 20	Martin Luther King Jr Day
February 17	President’s Day
April 18-21	Easter/Spring Break
TBA	Parent Teacher Conferences
May 26	Memorial Day
July 4	Independence Day
August 26-30	End of the Year cleaning and prep week (subject to change)

CURRICULUM

OVERALL CURRICULUM

At Odyssey Early Learning Center, we believe that children are learning in every moment of every day. Therefore, our teachers and staff provide opportunities for them to capitalize on each experience. We foster learning in social-emotional, cognitive, physical, language, creative, and self-help skills. We strive to support and empower children in becoming strong individuals who can speak their mind and show initiative to try new ideas.

Teachers at Odyssey ELC take care to observe and seek children's interests, then facilitate learning based on those observations. The teacher's role is to provide materials, encourage children to seek out answers to their questions, and build an environment that is based on the children, their interests and their developmental needs. Odyssey ELC works closely with state and national standards for early learning to help ignite curiosity and subsequent learning.

Research indicates and Odyssey staff believe that:

- Play is at the cornerstone of learning. Children must process information through the exploration and practice of play to create meaning and relevance.
- Children are creative beings whose skills will dissipate over time without use. Teachers strive to ignite the creativity in each activity that children are engaged in.
- Children learn best when they are given opportunities to engage in "hands-on" activities and exploration of materials in a stress-free environment
- Over-reliance on coloring books, worksheets, or teacher-directed activities can stifle creativity and does not lead to true learning and understanding
- Providing intentional open-ended activities, materials, and questions promotes creativity and exploration.
- Activities must be developmentally and academically relevant to be meaningful.
- Children benefit from having independent choices regarding their learning.
- Communities of learners help inspire social, emotional, physical, artistic and overall academic growth.
- Activities and materials are best set at slightly above a child's developmental level to create more engagement and pride in learning.
- Field Trips, community members, professionals, and families give our students authentic experiences.
- An atmosphere of flexibility and individuality creates trust.
- An environment should be established to inspire children's natural curiosity and eagerness to learn.
- Opportunities to learn from authentic sources and experiences enhances a child's success
- Planned activities teach the whole child to promote social, emotional, creative, physical, cognitive, and language development.

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

CAREGIVERS The care that infants and toddlers receive is a large part of their curriculum. When babies are born their primary task is to build trusting relationships with those who care for them. This trust of others will serve as a foundation for social interactions throughout their lives. Understanding the importance of trusting relationships, teachers at Odyssey ELC are committed to developing this relationship and supporting you (parents and caregivers) in your relationship with your infant/toddler.

The Lead Teacher

The Lead Teacher in the Infant-Toddler room will have the unique task of providing oversight to each of her assistants in the care of your child. The Lead Teacher will get to know all of the children on a personal level so parents are comfortable and confident in approaching her/him with questions, comments, concerns and instructions. The Lead Teacher will have the additional responsibility of planning for each child's needs, abilities, routines and schedules.

Primary and Assistant Teachers

Primary and Assistant teachers will be assigned specific children as children of focus. Each will be responsible for connecting with these children and building a safe and secure environment for them. In a center with numerous children, have a particular teacher to look to provide continuity and predictability of care that very young children need for attachment and trusting relationships.

Primary Assistant Teachers will have a leadership and responsibility role in the Lead Teacher's absence as well as act as the Lead Teacher's sounding board as (s)he makes decisions and prepares for the children's needs in the classroom.

Volunteers & Foster Grandparents

As our number of infants and toddlers grows, so will the need to hold and cuddle them. Our Volunteer and Foster Grandparent Program will allow for extra hands to be present to hold youngsters, rock them to sleep, feed them and attend to many of their basic needs. Volunteers & Foster Grandparents will be vetted through the State of Montana through their fingerprint and background check system as well as interviewed by Odyssey Administration to ensure their dispositions support Odyssey ELC's mission and the children and families served.

DIAPER CHANGING

Children will be monitored for diaper changes a minimum of 5 times throughout the day and changed when wet or soiled. Parents are expected to provide a minimum of 5 diapers per day. A weekly supply can be kept on hand at Odyssey. Please do not send boxes of diapers to Odyssey with your child. Odyssey has limited storage space. A teacher will alert parents if their stores are becoming low and need to be replenished during the week. Please plan to supply a new stock of diapers every Monday.

Diaper rash creams may only be administered if you have given permission on the Over-the-Counter medications form.

Diaper rash cream must be supplied by the parent and the child's name written clearly on the usable packaging. Teachers will alert parents when the cream is becoming low in order to replenish. Teachers will NOT use diaper rash creams that are not specifically authorized for the child.

TOILET TRAINING

Odyssey teachers are happy to walk alongside parents in toilet training their child. Parents will determine when their child is ready to begin and develop a plan with their child's primary caregiver(s) and the lead teacher. Teachers will support the family in this process. Please consider that Odyssey team members will not toilet train your child for you; all efforts must be consistent between Odyssey and home.

Parents are expected to bring enough diapers/pullups and extra clothing to support their child's learning process. Accidents will happen, so expect to see your child in different clothing than you dropped them off in. Additionally, Odyssey upholds their position in healthy eating patterns. Teachers are happy to follow your reward system using stickers, stamps, songs, hugs, etc. Please do not expect caregivers to reward with candy or cookies.

SAFE SLEEP POLICY

Adequate opportunities for sleep will be given during the day suited to the infant's and toddler's individual needs. Parents will discuss their child's sleeping patterns with the teacher/director upon enrollment and a written sleep schedule will be developed and followed. To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), all infants, up to the age of 12 months, will be placed on their back on a firm surface without incline in a crib or playpen. Infants will not be allowed to sleep in swings, carseats, or other apparatus'. Cribs and playpens will be free of all other items including blankets, pillows, toys and stuffed animal, bumper pads, and other soft surfaces. Children will utilize sleep sacks for warmth and comfort. Sleep sacks will be provided by the parent. Children under the age of 3 months may be swaddled with medical documentation on file.

With a parent's written and signed permission on file, children ages 12-18 months will utilize a sleeping cot for naps. Children over the age of 12 months may use a blanket during nap time. All napping materials will be sent home weekly for laundering.

All cribs, playpens and sleeping cots will be cleaned and disinfected between use. Sleeping items including blanket, pillows, stuffies, etc. will be stored separate from other children's items and sent home weekly or as needed for laundering. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child has everything they need to be comfortable and comforted during their nap.

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY (FOR CHILDREN AGES 2+)

Odyssey ELC recognizes that outdoor play is an essential part of your child development. Outdoor play is planned for every day. Children should be prepared to go outside in all weather conditions. Air temperature, quality, and wind chill will be monitored each day to ensure safe playing conditions. Outdoor play will be required when temperatures are above 20 degrees or under 90 degrees. Children may go outside if conditions indicate safe play under 20 degrees or over 90. Please send clothing and shoes that are appropriate to all weather conditions.

Sunscreen is considered a topical ointment (medication) by the State of Montana and required to have on hand at all times of the year. Parents will fill out an Over-the-Counter Medications form in the enrollment packet. This will allow Odyssey to apply sunscreen that has been provided by the parent and has the child's name on it. Reminders to send more will be sent when sunscreen is getting low, however, if a child runs out, they will be sent outside without sunscreen for a short amount of time, then kept in a shaded area or inside for the remainder of outside time.

Child/Teacher Ratio: When children are combined, teachers will ensure that a ratio of 8:1 is maintained. Teachers will make sure that the ratio is being met before leaving the area for any reason. Teachers will maintain watch on all children and do a headcount periodically throughout their outdoor experience.

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY (FOR CHILDREN UNDER 2 YEARS)

Infants and toddlers will engage in outdoor and/or large motor activities daily. Children will go outdoors as weather and outdoor conditions permit. Teachers will monitor the standing air temperature, wind chill, and air quality before taking children to play outdoors. Weather conditions may differ from those for children 2 and up. Gross motor activities will be provided indoors in outdoor conditions are not permissible. Parents will supply their child with appropriate outdoor clothing and needs, expecting that the children will go outside every day.

Infants and toddlers will have a play yard that is separate from that of the older children to provide for safe, individualized play. This area will be complete with age-appropriate toys and apparatuses as well as a shaded area. A ratio of 4:1 will be maintained at all times for children under the age of 2.

Sunscreen: Teachers will apply sunscreen to all children over the age of 6 months. Sunscreen is considered a topical ointment (medication) and must be supplied by parents in its original container with the child's name on it. A child may NOT use sunscreen that is not designated specifically for them. Infants under the age of 6 months will be required to have a hat and other protective clothing to reduce sun exposure. Young infants will be kept in a covered or shaded area as much as possible during outdoor play.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Odyssey ELC is designed to be inclusive of all children. We welcome children with diagnosed disabilities. We will make reasonable modifications to the environment, activities and staffing, with the assistance of parents and/or specialist, as necessary and within our financial means, to meet each child's individual needs. Our teachers are not Special Education Teachers or Specialists. If a child is suspected of having a disability, teachers will conduct unofficial assessments and documentation and assist in referrals for further evaluation. This will only be done with parental permission or upon parental request. Parents are required to approach Special Education professionals to request evaluations. Teachers are available to assist in this process. Teachers also welcome the opportunity to participate in Child Study Team and Individual Education Plan meetings, as necessary.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Field Trips:

Teachers are encouraged to plan as many authentic experiences for the children as possible. These experiences may include a visitor or field trip. Parents will be notified of a field trip at least two weeks in advance with all pertinent information, including destination, date, time, reason for the trip, cost, and mode of transportation. Parents are required to give written permission for any excursion away from the premises of Odyssey Early Learning Center or UMW campus. Teachers may send a "blanket" permission slip for recurring trips, such as walks around the block, but must communicate to parents the route taken. Many field trips require extensive planning. You may be asked to participate in the planning or execution of the field trip. Permission slips MUST be returned BEFORE the date of the trip. Parents will also confirm the permission in Brightwheel on the day of the trip.

Any child without permission, either by choice or neglect, will join another classroom with availability or must remain at home until their class returns to Odyssey.

Attending on a Non-scheduled Field Trip day: Children not scheduled to attend Odyssey on a day which a field trip has been planned may attend in one of two ways:

1. Extra Care: Request an extra care day. This day will be honored as long a space within the class is available and enough supervision is planned. Parents are responsible for the fees associated with an extra day of care.
2. Meet them there: Children and parents may meet the class at the destination. The parent/guardian MUST stay with their child for the entire trip. If the parent must leave for ANY amount of time, they must sign their child in and will be charged for an extra day of care. Parents will continue to be responsible for ALL transportation of their child(ren) from the field trip site.

Teachers are ONLY responsible for children who are signed in and have a signed permission slip.

Transportation:

Odyssey staff may transport children on foot to various locations away from the Odyssey ELC building. Permission will be acquired to take children offsite. Children will always be accompanied by at least two Odyssey staff members and/or volunteers. Supervision will be such that staff members can locate themselves strategically to be able to see all the children in the designated space. In large spaces such as the park, one teacher will be at each end to ensure children's safety.

Attendance will be taken using Brightwheel before leaving and upon arrival to and from Odyssey and the place visiting. A headcount will be taken periodically during the visit.

Providing Transportation for Field Trips:

Parents will be relied upon to provide transportation to and from the field trip destination. Protocol is as follows:

- a. Each car will be assigned a student(s) in addition to their own to transport. It is the teacher's and the parent's responsibility to ensure that each car has the children assigned.
- b. Parents will not transport more than 4 children (including their own).
- c. All children will ride in their own car seat, provided by the child's parents. Adaptations and shared car seats are not acceptable. Children will remain buckled in their car seats at all times.
- d. Children will ride in the back seat(s) only.
- e. A direct route to the destination will be outlined by the teacher. All vehicles must use this route.

Holidays and Birthdays ALL TREATS MUST BE STORE BOUGHT

Families have different values and beliefs surrounding holiday and birthday celebrations. Parents are in the best position to make decisions about what beliefs they want their children to have and how they will teach these. Odyssey ELC will participate as minimally as possible during these times.

Holidays: Since churches, stores, & media are all involved in celebrating holidays, children and parents have a variety of opportunities to engage in holiday events. Studies reveal that holiday curriculum consumes many days of each school year. Children are typically exposed to the same holidays, the same information, and often even the same activities every school year. Additionally, holiday hype can be very stressful on children. Children often have a rollercoaster of emotions which translates into a rollercoaster of behaviors. Since it is all around them in the outside world, Odyssey will keep hype to a minimum and provide the structure and stability of their routine throughout the season. Therefore, to maintain inclusivity of all religious and secular beliefs, our curriculum will not be one that is holiday dependent. Instead, we may focus on some of the underlying themes and values that surround the time of year. **Odyssey will not have holiday parties.** Parents are asked to refrain from bringing holiday items even if siblings are participating with them in other programs.

Birthdays: Each classroom has the freedom to create a birthday celebration as it pertains to the children in their classroom. Classrooms are filled with many children who respond differently to these celebrations. Teachers are asked to carefully observe the children in their classroom and provide an experience that can be benefitted by all AND create a special day for the birthday child. Teachers will also recognize those children and families who choose not to celebrate.

Birthday Treats: Odyssey ELC asks that the treats you share be specific to your child. Rather than large sugar-laden snacks, think about what your child loves to eat or snack on and let your child share a small portion of that instead. Healthy snacks are a great option too: fruit kabobs, cheese and crackers, or use your imagination to create picture representations with food (an Oreo spider, pear bunny, etc.) If sugary treats are preferred, choose something very small such as mini cupcakes, M&M's, fruit snacks, etc. Remember children usually are expected to nap after eating these treats.

ITEMS FROM HOME

Personal Belongings

A change of clothing or two (including socks and underwear) should be provided to keep at Odyssey. Check for soiled or wet clothes regularly and replenish the supply when needed. If a child is potty-training, several changes of clothing should be provided and updated daily. Extra clothing is limited but will be used if a child does not have necessary clothing changes. Please wash and return borrowed clothing promptly. If nothing is available for a change, parents will be called to bring clothing immediately. Note that children may be required to wear only a diaper/pullup until appropriate clothing is obtained.

PLEASE MARK ALL PERSONAL BELONGINGS!

Teachers try very hard to make sure clothing and other personal items are returned to the correct families, however, when things are not marked, it can be difficult to remember. Also, many children come with the same or similar items, making it impossible to know whose is whose. If items cannot be identified, they will be placed in a lost & found basket. Please look through this basket regularly. Items not claimed at the end of each month will be placed with the extra clothing.

A list of items to bring for your child is provided at the end of this parent handbook.

School Supplies:

School supplies look a little different in a child care setting vs. a public-school setting. Maintaining a healthy and safe environment for your child to play is of utmost importance. Therefore, Odyssey will supply all materials needed for teaching and learning. We ask that parents contribute health and safety supplies on a regular basis as necessary school supplies. These items include gloves, disinfecting wipes, Kleenex, etc. (for a full list of supplies refer to the school supplies list at the end of this parent handbook.) School supplies will be requested as needed or at regular intervals throughout the year. Please note that if your child is potty training or in diapers, items such as wipes and gloves should be contributed monthly.

Toys, Food, and Candy from Home

PLEASE DO NOT BRING TOYS, FOOD, OR CANDY FROM HOME. Children are often reluctant to share their personal belongings at school causing other children to have hurt feelings. In addition, toys may get lost or broken. Odyssey ELC does not accept the responsibility for lost or broken items that are brought from home, nor should we be expected to monitor it for its whereabouts. Should children bring something from home without parental awareness, it will be expected to remain in the child's backpack for the entire day or a teacher will keep it safe and return it upon departure. Please ask for it before leaving. Any play toys brought into the school with awareness *WILL* be sent home with the parent, no exceptions. Parents will be expected to calm the child from a meltdown or tantrum before leaving. Additionally, children who insist upon wearing accessories (necklaces, sunglasses, hats, etc.) will be expected to wear the item or keep it in their backpack. If the item becomes a distraction, the child will be asked to put it in the backpack and staff members will request that the child not bring it in the future.

SECURITY ITEM: Some children need a security item to help them through difficult transitions during the day. Children may bring ONE security item to use during arrival, stressful periods, and naptime if such an item is needed. Generally, this is a blanket or stuffed toy, not a toy for play. These items will be used in a designated place within the classroom. When the transition is complete and the child wishes to engage in classroom activities, they will be asked to store the item in the cubby or backpack. The item will not be used at any other time. Naptime comfort items that are not used at home may be stored with napping articles and taken home weekly for cleaning.

ENROLLING YOUR CHILD AT ODYSSEY

A planned enrollment visit will be scheduled for each family enrolling at Odyssey ELC. During this time, families will visit the classroom that the child will be enrolling in. This is a great time to allow children to meet other children or become aware of their surroundings. Children feel more comfortable staying when they have met the director, lead teacher and/or staff. Parents should be prepared to fill out all enrollment paperwork and have copies of immunizations. Parents will be introduced to Brightwheel, upload the app and receive a tutorial of basic functions.

On their child's first day, parents are encouraged to stay until their child feels comfortable. Teachers will work with parents to develop a transition plan that meets the needs of parents and their child.

ENROLLMENT PACKET

The following forms must be completed and returned to Odyssey ELC before your child's first day:

- Registration contract
- Personal Information
- Odyssey permission and release form.
- Over-the-counter medication form.
- Written Consent form
- Emergency contact form.
- CACFP Income Eligibility Form
- Parent Handbook signature page
- A copy of immunizations from your physician's office. (Blue cardstock form preferred).
- ImmTrax – this form allows Odyssey to retrieve updated immunizations by contacting the public health office

Infants and Toddlers only

- Infant Health Form
- Infant Feeding Schedule
- Infant Napping Schedule; Cribs or Cots form

Children's files will be updated yearly. Parents are required to verify, initial and date each state form or fill out a new form with updated information. CACFP requires a new form be filled out each year to reflect income eligibility changes.

YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMMING

Odyssey ELC is a year-round learning program: September through August. Odyssey ELC follows neither the School District nor the UMWestern calendar; though both calendars are considered during planning. Odyssey ELC provides consistent care and services throughout each season of the year, including the summer months.

We are aware that some families consider the summer months a "break from school" and wish to withdraw their child temporarily. Families who choose to do this risk losing their spot to summer enrollees who continue into the fall. However, Odyssey ELC will ensure that all open spaces in the fall are filled with those who wish to return before offering them to the public. Parents will be sent an email in mid-July requesting re-enrollment and will be given any paperwork that needs to be updated. Parents are required to submit this paperwork before August 1 in order to reserve the space. Paperwork received on or after August 1 will be enrolled with the general public on a first-come first-serve basis.

CHILDREN'S RECORDS

Children's records will be made available to program staff, licensing representatives, program accreditation assessors, food program auditors or any other persons having a legally identified interest. All information shared with staff in the form of written documentation or verbal information will be kept confidential. Persons having access to children's records will not discuss or disclose any information from those records, except to authorized individuals.

Children's records will be reserved for a minimum of one year following withdrawal from the program.

WAITLIST:

A waitlist will be maintained for any classroom that has reached capacity. A waitlist form must be filled out and will be kept on file until a space becomes available,

Priority will be given to siblings of current students before looking to the general public. Waitlists utilize a first-come-first-serve system. Any person denying a waitlist invitation but requesting to remain on, will be placed at the end of the list.

BRIGHTWHEEL: Families will be asked to register in Brightwheel and encouraged to download the app during the enrollment process.

Management Hub:

Brightwheel is Odyssey ELC's management hub. Brightwheel has a variety of uses including:

- easy access by families, administration and staff of children's and staff information and emergency contacts,
- sign in and out
- enrollment procedures
- recordkeeping for attendance, ratio adherence, health records
- billing and invoicing
- communications
- document storage and retrieval
- children's academic growth and documentation
- staff recordkeeping and time management
- meal planning
- and much more

Brightwheel Personal Identification Code:

When a family member or approved pickup person is entered into Brightwheel, they will be issued a personal identification code. This code is used to identify the person picking up or dropping off your child. This code is personal to each person and **MAY NOT** be used by anyone else. Please do not give your code to anyone for the purpose of retrieving your child. We will not release your child to anyone who does not have their own code.

The App vs. Website: www.schools.mybrightwheel.com

Most functions that parents need can be completed on the app. However, there are times that the website is needed to retrieve information or manage your child's account. Families are encouraged to become familiar with both.

Family's Personal Information:

Teachers rely on Brightwheel for easy access to a child's records. It is the family's responsibility to ensure that all important personal information is entered and updated into their child's account to ensure accuracy. Information should include, but is

not limited to: address, phone numbers, email addresses, allergies, birthdate, emergency contacts, authorized releases, and any other information necessary for your child's success.

Sign in/Sign Out:

Families can use the app to sign their child in and out of Odyssey' care, using the QR code available at Odyssey and their personalized 4-digit code. When signing your child in, you will be asked if you discussed your child's health status with a teacher and any other questions that may be necessary for the day's activities (such as permission for field trips, meal counts, etc.) You must respond to each of these questions. If questions are unanswered, the Director will call to verify.

Signatures:

Signatures of ANYONE signing children in or out MUST be their own. PLEASE DO NOT LET YOUR CHILD "SIGN" THE SIGNATURE PAD. The document generated is a federal document and used by local, state, and federal agencies for reporting. Additionally, Odyssey staff monitors these documents for consistency.

Authorized Pick up:

Families can add or delete any person they wish to pick up their child from Odyssey, through the app. On your phone you will press the + at the top of the Approved Pick up section and enter their information. Please be sure to enter a contact number. If they wish to upload and use the app, click on the orange "invite to Brightwheel" button on the bottom of your screen. When you enter them into Brightwheel, a personal code will be generated that will be required at drop off or pick up. THEY MAY ONLY USED THEIR CODE. To find the code, go into the profile and scroll to the bottom of the page.

Communications, Photos & Videos:

Communication between parents, family and teachers is vital to excellent care of your child. Brightwheel is a safe and secure platform for you and your child's teacher to share information, messages, photos and videos. Look for these from your child's teachers on a regular and as needed basis. Teachers may share what your child is up to, ask questions, let you know what is coming up, alert you to needed supplies, send happy-grams.... the list goes on. Please feel free to message Odyssey teachers or administration in this same way with any comments or questions.

Understand that caring for the children is our main priority at Odyssey. Messages sent may not be responded to immediately. If your message is urgent, please call Odyssey' office and an administrator will get the message to the teacher. Additionally, please give adequate (1/2 hour or more) notification if you wish to have your child ready when you arrive. Likewise, staff will call parents directly with urgent messages.

Photos and videos that are shared through Brightwheel remain within the Brightwheel app. Photos and videos will NOT be shared with anyone outside of Odyssey without a parent's permission.

SCHOOL SUPPLY LIST: *subject to change without notice, items may be requested more than once per year.*

Please be sure to check your child's cubbie and replenish it, as necessary. Children having regular accidents are considered potty-trainers.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older children and Potty-Trained Children • 1-2 changes of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) • Napping items (light blanket, small pillow, pillow case) • Sunscreen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potty-Trainers • 1-2 changes of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) • Box Baby Wipes (2 per month) • Box 100 vinyl gloves (1 per month) • Napping items (light blanket, small pillow, pillow case) • Sunscreen • Diapers/Pullups (min. 5 per day) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants & Toddlers • 1-2 changes of clothing (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) • Box Baby Wipes (2 per month) • Box 100 vinyl gloves (1 per month) • Napping items (light blanket, small pillow, pillow case) • Sunscreen • Diapers/Pullups (min. 5 per day) • Bottles • formula
<p>Classroom Use School Supplies (to be replenished as needed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Box 100 vinyl/latex gloves • Clorox Wipes • Box Kleenex • Box Gallon Ziploc Baggies • Box Baby Wipes 		

BILLING POLICIES

TYPES OF CARE

FULL TIME CARE

Regular full-time care is defined as the care of children between 25 and 45 hours per week, regardless of the number of days the child attends. Full-time care includes all meals, snacks and activities offered by the program during the hours contracted.

PART-TIME CARE

Part-time care is defined as the care of children less than 25 hours per week, regardless of the number of days a child attends. Part-time care is limited to a minimum of 2 days per week. Children enrolled in Part-time care will receive all meals, snacks and activity opportunities available during the hours of contracted care. Children wishing to attend field trips or other special events on non-contracted days will be charged an Extra Care fee. Days of care are not interchangeable, children may attend only the days that they are contracted for. Families needing care on days that are not contracted for will be charged an Extra Care fee.

AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Children receiving afterschool care at Odyssey ELC will be enrolled in Odyssey ELC and have a contracted monthly schedule. Parents will be billed at the rate designated for the scheduled need at the beginning of each month. (See the rate schedule below.) Contracted care includes after-school hours and *half-day school closures* only on days contracted for. Full day school-closures and half-days outside of the contract are subject to availability only and an Extra Care form must be completed. Additional fees will apply. Please provide Odyssey with a Public-School calendar so we are mindful of dates that your child will be attending as extended days and confirm the dates of attendance at least 2 days before the extended day occurs.

School age children may ride the bus to Odyssey ELC if it is available. Children will be met at the bus stop by a staff member. If a child has not arrived on a scheduled day and notification has not been given, staff will call or message a parent or emergency contact to locate the child.

WASHINGTON STREET CENTER ONLY: Parents MUST alert Odyssey staff to dance schedules. If your child will be attending Odyssey after dance, a Odyssey staff member will meet your child at the Dance Studio. Dance studio staff will be required to sign your child in. Odyssey is not responsible for students attending dance.

DROP-IN CARE

Drop-in care is a membership service offered by Odyssey ELC and is defined as care needed less than 2 days per week or on an irregular or sporadic basis. Families will pay a monthly membership fee and care fees on the days that care is needed. The membership fee is per family and care fees are per child. Families requesting drop-in service will be required to register their child, filling out the necessary paperwork to be a "student" at Odyssey ELC. Space is limited to availability at the requested times and will only fill open space. Extra staff will not be provided to care for drop-in service. All classrooms will be required to meet ratio standards as defined by State Licensing Regulations.

Parents leaving their child at Odyssey must provide all supplies necessary to help the child have a safe, healthy, successful day at Odyssey. These items will include:

- changes of clothing,
- diapering/toileting needs: diapers, gloves, wipes
- napping items: small pillow, light blanket
- water bottle
- feeding and/or food needs: bottles, formula, lunch, etc.

TUITION & FEES – 2024-25

Tuition and fees are charged at the beginning of each month, before services have been received. This is to allow funding for wages, materials, meals, and supplies that your child will need to have a successful experience. If additional charges occur mid-month, such as changes in schedule, extra care, etc., they will be reflected on the next monthly invoice.

TUITION RATES:

Pre-K Classroom (3-5)

	Full Day	Half Day	After School
4 - 5 Days	760	480	200
3 Days	575	365	150
1 - 2 Days	420	245	125
Drop - In	Membership Fee: \$25/month + \$8.50/hour		

Infant-Toddler Classroom (0-2)

	Full Day	Half Day	
4 - 5 Days	860	545	
3 Days	645	410	
1 - 2 Days	465	275	
Drop - In	Membership Fee: \$25/month + \$8.50/hour		

TUITION RATES WILL BE CHARGED UNTIL YOUR CHILD MOVES TO THE NEXT CLASSROOM ACCORDING TO THEIR AGE. CHILDREN WILL BE PLACED IN AN OLDER CLASSROOM UPON AVAILABILITY. CHILDREN WILL NOT BE PLACED IN AN OLDER CLASSROOM BEFORE THEY ARE AGE-ELIGIBLE.

PARTIAL MONTH OF ATTENDANCE: Odyssey ELC does not prorate tuition for partial months of care. Families utilizing Best Beginnings Scholarship will be responsible for charges not paid by the scholarship.

PROGRAM FEES

All enrollment contracts will be subject to the following fees per child.

Non-refundable Registration Fee	\$50 per child
Materials fee (Upon enrollment <i>and</i> October, February, & June)	\$50 per child
Beyond Hours Fee: (up to 15 minutes)	\$15 per child
Beyond Hours Fee: (exceeding 15 minutes)	Half day rate
Late Payment Fee	\$25
Insufficient Funds Fee	\$35
Extra Care Fees	\$42 Full Day/\$29 Half Day/\$15 After school
Membership per family	\$25
Drop-In	\$8.50 per hour per child

BEYOND CONTRACT HOURS

Families will contract with Odyssey ELC for specific hours of care each day. Odyssey ELC recognizes that each day brings its own set of challenges and these hours need to be flexible. Odyssey ELC agrees to be as flexible as possible with your child's schedule, however tardiness affects ratios and quality of care. Parents must contact Odyssey ELC alerting them to the late pick up or early drop off. Families will be charged \$15 for the first 15 minutes of extra care. Children left beyond 15 minutes will be charged for an extra half day. If notification has not been received, the half day rate will be charged regardless of the amount of time tardy. If care extends beyond normal operation hours, charges will accrue until the family has left the building. All "Beyond Contract" fees will be billed on the next billing statement. Families who are consistently early or late will be asked to revise their contract to accommodate the time.

Procedure for Excessively Late Pickup

1. A child not picked up after 15 minutes without notice: A parent and/or someone from the emergency contact list will be contacted. Parents must indicate a timeframe for pickup. The Director will be called to stay with the child.
2. A child is left for 1 or more hours without contact or a plan of care in place: authorities and Child Protective Services will be called.

Procedure for Continual Late Pickup or Early Drop off

Parents who consistently pick up or drop off their child outside of their contracted hours will

1. First Contact: After it is determined that it is a regular occurrence, be asked to arrive on time with or to pick up their child
2. Second Contact: If space is available, be asked to change the child's contract to reflect the additional time, tuition rates will apply.
3. Third Contact: be terminated from the program.

Parents are responsible for all additional fees regardless of who picks the child up. BEYOND CONTRACT HOURS FEES ARE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

PAYING BILLS

Parents receive a bill for advanced* care each month and will include any additional fees that were assessed from the previous month, i.e. late payment charge, extra care, etc. Billing statements will be generated through Brightwheel and emailed to the primary email address given on the enrollment contract. Payments are due on the first of each month. Payments may be paid through Brightwheel as Automatic withdrawal or credit card payment (additional bank fees will apply) We also accept cash, check, cashier's check or money order onsite. *A locked payment box will be available near the front door to deposit payments. Checks can be made out to **Odyssey Early Learning Center or Odyssey ELC**.* Prompt payments are expected and appreciated.

Tax statements will be issued through Brightwheel for the previous tax season. Look for those on the Brightwheel website.

Cash payments: Cash payment must be placed in a sealed envelope with your child's name, your name, amount inside, and reason for payment (i.e. May tuition, Extra care, etc.) A receipt will be issued from the director's office.

LATE PAYMENT POLICY

PAYMENTS ARE DUE BY THE 1ST OF EACH MONTH AND ACCEPTED AS ON TIME UNTIL THE 10TH. Odyssey ELC relies on the prompt payments to be able to provide for teachers, space, food, and supplies. A late payment charge of \$25 per child will be assessed for any amount unpaid on the 11th. LATE FEES WILL BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

NON-PAYMENT POLICY

Non-payment of any billing statement by the end of the month of care will result in the loss of care until the delinquent charges, late fees and current month's charges have been paid. Charges not paid by the 10th of the following month will result in a termination of the contract. Should the family wish to continue care at Odyssey, they must bring their account up to date and re-enroll their child. All enrollment fees will apply. Future delinquencies will result in immediate termination of care.

INSUFFICIENT FUNDS

Any payment return to Odyssey for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$35 fee. Payment plus the fee will be expected immediately upon notification. More than one returned check may result in termination of care.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarship and Employer Benefits are available to families who qualify.

Odyssey ELC recognizes that the cost of child care is tremendous and a great burden on most families. We, at Odyssey, seek to help parents find sources to make childcare more affordable while providing for the employment of quality team members and services. Odyssey administrators will alert parents to any opportunities that will benefit families and their child care needs. Parents and families are responsible for apply for any/all subsidies.

BEST BEGINNING SCHOLARSHIP

Odyssey ELC gladly accepts the Best Beginning Scholarship. This scholarship, for families earning a low-income wage, is contracted through Butte 4-C's and will pay the tuition for specified days or hours each week. Parents are responsible for paying all tuition and fees that are not covered by Best Beginnings Scholarships. These fees may include but are not limited to copays, registration fees, materials fees, late charges, and fees for exceeding the daily drop off/pick up times. If the State rate does not amount to the total contracted tuition, parents will be charged the difference. It is a parent's responsibility to contract with Butte 4C's and contract for only the number of hours needed for care. Care contracts can be updated on a month-to-month basis and must be turned into Butte 4C's BEFORE the first day of the month of change. Parents are encouraged to update when long absences, vacations or school closures occur. This will reduce the chance of being charged for days not attended.

Children on Best Beginning Scholarship are encouraged to attend ALL of the days that they are contracted for, except when ill. Best Beginnings contributes to your tuition bill for ONLY the days your child attends. Parents are responsible for the remainder of tuition that is unpaid by Best Beginnings contribution.

EMPLOYER BENEFIT

Odyssey ELC encourages businesses to reserve space for their employees to support Dillon's workforce and provide necessary childcare for its employees. Employers will be charged an agreed upon rate for a year-round space regardless of use. Employers are responsible for defining the terms of the benefit. Please inquire at your place of business

CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES GRANT PROGRAM

The Child Care Subsidies Grant Program is available to employees of university systems. This program is funded out of Stanford University and grants subsidies to eligible families on a semester basis according to their specific needs. To access the application visit: <https://cardinalatwork.stanford.edu/benefits-rewards/worklife/financial-assistance/child-care-subsidy-grant-program-ccsg/program>

Odyssey continues to seek opportunities and will alert families as new opportunities are found.

ATTENDANCE

It is highly recommended that children attend according to their weekly schedule. Though circumstances arise, keeping a consistent schedule helps with predictability and stability. Your child will be able to better regulate their emotions and decrease the incidence of separation anxiety. Our hours of operation dictate the program that we run. Our schedule is maintained each day. However, we recognize that families do not always run on the same schedule. Families who need a later drop off time or earlier pick up time are welcome to do so. We do recommend that you keep a consistent pickup or drop off time for the stability of your child and the program.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Children are to be escorted by their parents or responsible adult to their designated classroom. No child will be left unattended on the premises of Odyssey Early Learning Center, including siblings who are waiting in the car.

Parents are encouraged to help their child settle into class by helping them put away their things and finding their first activity.

Parents are required to connect with a teacher and sign their child in, answering any questions in the app, before leaving Odyssey. This ensures that teachers and parents get any and all information necessary to help the child be successful at school and adults to be well-informed. Please allow enough time during arrival to sign paperwork and provide/receive any necessary instructions. Please share any and all of these topics with your child's teacher: early/late pick up, alternative pick person, health issues, how your child's night and/or morning went, joys and concerns, any other information that the teacher should be aware of.

Signing your child in can be done using your phone or Odyssey' tablet through the app. A QR code will be made available on the wall of the classroom for ease of use.

Procedure for signing in:

1. Scan the QR code
2. Type your 4-digit code into the app
3. Answer the health, safety and/or permission questions
4. Sign YOUR name
5. Click on Submit and wait for the GREEN confirmed signal.

If, for some reason, you forget to sign in or Brightwheel does not register that you have signed in, a classroom teacher will sign your child in and make a note of the name of the person dropping your child off and the time. An adjustment may be made in Brightwheel by the Director for recordkeeping purposes.

Parents are discouraged from sneaking out to avoid separation issues. Separation anxiety is a natural part of childhood and does not last long. If it is hard for you to leave your child when they are crying, please ask the teacher to send you a note when your child has settled down. The goodbye process helps your child to know that you are comfortable leaving them in this space and that they will be safe and cared for. Look to the teachers if you need guidance in creating an appropriate and loving goodbye routine.

During the arrival process, a teacher will perform a health check, noting any symptoms that the child may present with. Children with symptoms that indicate illness or health concerns will be sent home. Children who present with common or mild symptoms will join the class as usual unless they worsen during the course of the day. (See Illness Policy in this handbook)

REFUSAL OF ATTENDANCE: Occasionally a teacher may refuse attendance of a student. Odyssey Early Learning Center reserves the right to refuse attendance to any child with or without cause. Possible reasons for refusal of attendance may include:

1. Lack of staff to maintain appropriate ratios as determined by State Licensing Regulations
2. The need to maintain licensing regulations
3. A child is deemed too ill to attend or a child has been ill after attending the day before.
4. Domestic situations that present a safety risk to child, staff, other children enrolled in the center if the child remains present.
5. Parent's failure to uphold the code of conduct requirements
6. Parent's failure to maintain accurate or updated records
7. Parent's failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.
8. Parent's failure to follow tuition policy as outlined in this handbook

DEPARTURE PROCEDURE

Only parents and authorized adults will be allowed to sign a child out of care. Authorized adults include ONLY those adults, 16 years of age and older, who are listed in Brightwheel as "Approved Pickups". Parents can add or delete permanent or temporary Approved Pickups using the Brightwheel app on their phone or through the website. Parents should notify the morning teacher if someone other than a parent will be picking up their child.

Each authorized person will be issued their own 4-digit code for use in Brightwheel. It is expected that people will ONLY USE THEIR OWN CODE. Odyssey staff can look up codes if a person forgets. If a person arrives to pick up a child and does not have a code of their own, staff will NOT immediately release the child to the adult. Instead, the following procedure will be followed:

1. Ask for ID to verify the person's identity.
2. Call the parent to verify that the person has been authorized.
3. Request the parent add the person to the Approved list
4. Generate/look up the person's code

Children will not be released to anyone using a code that is not their own. Odyssey ELC reserves the right to ask for a person's ID at any time for any reason.

Parents or authorized adults should connect with a teacher to give and receive information about their child's day and any other notes, comments, and instructions. Parents will be required to sign any accident/incident reports. If a parent is not present, the teacher will contact them and have them sign it at the next available meeting. Parents not able to pick their child up from Odyssey should assign someone to pick up the child on a regular basis and have written approval to receive information about the child. This person will be able to sign incident/accident forms and receive information about the child and their day. Authorized adults should relay the information to parents. Teachers will make every effort to connect with all parents they do not have contact with on a regular basis.

It is expected that parents will be on time to pick up their child. Parents arriving beyond their contracted hours will be charged according to the Beyond Contract Hours policy.

IMPAIRED AUTHORIZED PICK-UPS

The staff of Odyssey Early Learning Center will call the local authorities and/or custodial parents should the parent or authorized adult arriving to pick up a child appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Staff will deny access to the child to any non-parent, contacting the parent to retrieve the child. The parent's right to immediate access requires that we permit access to a parent, however, staff will do its best to delay departure for as long as possible while contacting the other parent, law enforcement and/or Child Protective Services.

ABSENCES

Parents are required to contact Odyssey ELC of an absence or late arrival by 8:30 am. If contact has not been received by ½ hour past their contracted arrival time, they will be counted as absent and their space will open up for drop-in care.

When contacting Odyssey about an absence, please state the nature of the absence. All unreported or illness-related absences of 3 or more consecutive days, requires a doctor's note upon return. Three days may or may not include school days.

REQUESTING EXTRA CARE

From time to time, a day outside of contracted hours may be needed. This request will be made with the Director at least 24 hours in advance. Odyssey reserves the right to deny the request due to staffing ratios, daily enrollment numbers, or other critical needs. Accommodations to your request will be made if possible. A Request for Extra Care form will be completed outlining the need and additional fees that will be added to the next billing statement. The rates for care are noted on the tuition chart in this handbook.

These rates apply regardless of the number of extra *hours* attended. A full day is defined as more than 4.5 hours, half day is 4.5 hours or less, after school hours are 3:30-5:15.

Care requested without notice will be treated and charged as Drop-in service, only if space is available.

PERMANENT CHANGES IN SCHEDULE

Life can be a roller coaster of changes and care schedules may change. In the event a permanent change needs to take place, notify the director immediately upon awareness. Parents will be required to fill out a new enrollment contract noting the change of schedule and the start date. *See section for requesting extra care or absences if the change will not be permanent.* Two weeks' notice is required before a billing change can occur. Because payment is requested before services rendered, the billing change will be reflected on the next cycle. Credits will be given after the two-week notice period for days not used. If extra days are needed before the two-week notification, they will be billed as described in this parent handbook under Extra Care.

ODYSSEY SCHOOL CLOSURES

Odyssey is committed to being open a minimum of 48 weeks per academic year, offering 20 days of closure due to cleaning, professional development, breaks and emergencies. Tuition is based on this minimum number of days and divided into 12 equal payments. Odyssey ELC **does not** follow the public school or college calendars. However, we are mindful of those schedules and may ask for an attendance headcount on days when those systems are closed. *Odyssey will be closed for all State and Federal holidays including the day after Thanksgiving and the Friday and Monday surrounding Easter.* When the holiday falls on a weekend, the Friday or Monday may be taken as the observed holiday. These days are not included in the 20 days of school breaks. A schedule of closure will be sent out to parents at the beginning of the school year and listed in this parent handbook incorporating all known breaks. Odyssey reserves the right to be closed, inside the 20-day allotment, for cleaning and Professional Development. Parents will get at least a two-week notice of any non-emergency closures not on the schedule to be able to locate alternate care. Odyssey ELC Board of Directors reserves the right to change this schedule with notice.

In extreme or emergency conditions, Odyssey ELC may call for school closures. In the event of an unexpected closure, parents will be notified by Brightwheel, phone, text and/or email by 7:00 am or called to retrieve their child if it is determined that Odyssey must close mid-day. Conditions may include (but are not limited to) extreme weather and temperature conditions, power outages, threats to health and safety, or inability to provide the minimum ratio of staff to child due to illness or other unexpected circumstances. Please see the Emergency Preparedness folder located in the Parent Information area for details on emergency evacuations and procedures.

WITHDRAWAL OF CARE BY PARENT

A minimum of two-week notification is required when parents wish to leave Odyssey ELC. Parents are required to fill out a Withdraw from Care form when they no longer require services from Odyssey ELC. The 2-week notice period will begin **upon receipt** of this completed form. Verbal or email notification is not accepted. Should a form not be completed and/or returned, the two-week notice will begin at the end of the month last attended. Tuition and fees will be assessed for the two weeks following notification or until the child's last day whichever is later. Parents will also be responsible for additional fees as they relate to the month of discharge, such as material fees, extra care fees or late pick up fees. To avoid additional charges, please notify Odyssey ELC's director or lead teacher, complete and return the form as soon as you know a change will be made.

TERMINATION OF CARE BY ODYSSEY ELC

Although we make every effort to meet the needs of each family, there are rare occasions when Odyssey ELC is not the best fit.

Odyssey reserves the right to terminate care when:

- Tuition and fees are not paid and up-to-date
- Families do not adhere to the Parent/Family code of conduct (as defined in this parent handbook)
- Behavioral or educational needs cannot be met
- Other (at the discretion of the Director and/or Board of Directors)

PARENT PARTICIPATION & VOLUNTEERS

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Odyssey ELC strives for an inclusive multicultural educational program. Odyssey Early Learning Center does not discriminate against anyone for any reason. We provide service regardless of all ethnic, racial, sexual, religious, or other backgrounds. Families are encouraged to share their personal beliefs, traditions, and culture with the Odyssey team and children, as appropriate. We seek to know and understand the traditions, parenting styles and beliefs of all families. In doing so, we are better able to create a school culture that is a good balance of homelife and new experiences.

PARENT PARTICIPATION:

Parents are a child’s first and most important teacher. Sharing experiences and perspectives enhances communication and the ability to meet each child’s needs. Throughout the year, Odyssey ELC offers many opportunities for parents to share information, learn about parenting, be involved, and to volunteer their services. These may include:

- Brightwheel App: Available for notes, pictures and comments between parents and teachers to help in daily care.
- Brief exchanges when picking up or dropping off children
- Phone calls: We have voicemail if no one is available to answer the phone
- Parent teacher conferences
- Newsletters
- Weekly menus
- Parent meetings
- Family Engagement Activities

Please feel free to contact staff about questions or concerns that you may have or to request an individual meeting with a teacher. It is also helpful for Odyssey staff to know about any significant life changes or anything that you feel would be important to the developmental process of your child.

Parents can be involved by:

<p>Gaining information about parenting & activities to do with your child through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters and other publications • Asking teachers for specific information • Community & center workshops • Observing their child and the teachers at Odyssey ELC 	<p>Volunteering to assist Odyssey by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteering in the classroom • Sharing a skill or talent • Participating in Family Events and Work Days • Joining a field trip • Making or providing learning materials • Participating in fundraising or community events • Sharing lunchtime • Advocating to your or other businesses for sponsorship • Seeking scholarship opportunities or funding • Participating in seeking or writing Grants • Participate in UMWestern lab student activities and projects 	<p>Providing input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting goals for your child • About your child’s and family’s interest and need • Effective techniques • Policies and Procedures • Curriculum ideas • Ideas for fundraisers, parent events and other involvement activities • Serving on the Board of Directors
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Parents are always welcome to stop by and visit, announced or unannounced. We encourage parents to ask questions, voice concerns and offer input of any kind. Our program values building parent and family relationships and relies on these relationships to create and maintain a successful program.

VOLUNTEERS:

Odyssey ELC encourages volunteers of all ages to help with the care and learning experiences of the children. Regular adult volunteers at Odyssey will be required to complete a fingerprint background check. A regular volunteer is defined as having a designated monthly schedule or spending more than 3 days in a classroom per month. Volunteers can help with things like preparing activities, helping with meals and special occasions, cleaning, interacting with children during play, reading, etc.

Volunteers will NOT be left alone with children, change diapers, help children in the bathroom or with wounds, or be expected to do anything that is not acceptable to the volunteer.

UMWESTERN LAB STUDENTS

In partnership with UMWestern, students will be completing lab activities with the Children of Odyssey. UMWestern lab students MUST have a fingerprinted background check on file in the Education Office. UMWestern students will have the opportunity to observe best practices, participate in the running and function of the classroom, practice skills and techniques that they learn in class, interact with children and parents, collaborate with teachers, design an environment for learning, create and teach lessons. UMWestern lab students will NOT be left alone with children, change diapers, help children in the bathroom or with wounds, or clean (except to clean up messes from their own lessons and activities). Teachers will provide lab students with the necessary materials and time to complete their assignments as well as answer questions and model appropriate teacher behaviors and practices.

Parents and children are encouraged to participate in the activities that UMWestern students do at Odyssey. Their lab experience requires that they interact with children and parents in specific and non-specific ways.

FOSTER GRANDPARENTS

Odyssey ELC welcomes seniors to join its foster grandparent program. This is a volunteer program in which able-bodied senior citizens spend a few hours in the classroom supporting the care and learning opportunities of the children. Foster grandparents must have a fingerprinted background check and will be able to do such activities that they are able including: holding and rocking babies, feeding babies, playing and interacting with children, supporting teachers during activities, soothing young children, mild cleaning, etc.

DONATIONS:

Odyssey ELC accepts donations of all kinds. We appreciate the thoughtfulness and generosity of our families and community members to contribute items, new and used, to the work of our center. Some items that Odyssey can always use are:

- Toys –no lights, sounds or TV/movie themes
- Clothing
- Winter gear: hats, mittens, boots, coats, etc.
- Blankets
- Other: if you think it might be useful, please ask
- Baby Formula
- Diapers, wipes, latex/vinyl gloves
- Outdoor play items
- Ride on toys
- First Aid supplies

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

POSITIVE CHILD GUIDANCE is emphasized at Odyssey ELC. Guided by James Hymes' definition: "Discipline is the slow, bit by bit process of helping a child see the sense in acting a certain way." Our goal is to enhance self-concept while helping children become self-disciplined. When behavior problems occur, teachers will utilize natural and logical consequences, redirection, "I"- messages, reflective listening, conflict resolution and problem-solving techniques. One of the primary responsibilities for children during the preschool years is to learn how to interact positively with others. This is a long and complicated process. Each behavior is viewed as another opportunity to work toward this goal.

Odyssey ELC recognizes that children's social emotional development and mental health rely on how they are interacted with and the discovery of self and their own abilities. Odyssey staff commit to helping children build self-esteem, confidence, self-efficacy, positive interactions with others, and the ability to self-regulate and control their behaviors. Through positive interactions and targeted guidance, children will be empowered to take action, problem solve and create strong relationships with others, inside and outside of the classroom.

Additionally, families will be sent information and resources about utilizing a guidance approach to discipline at home.

BEHAVIORAL NEEDS:

Children display a variety of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors throughout each day. Odyssey staff work with the children using their understanding of Positive Guidance strategies to help children understand their emotions and develop skills to self-regulate and play peacefully. Occasionally, children's behaviors may become excessive, violent or recurrent. Odyssey staff are committed to getting to the root of the problem as they seek to extinguish the behavior. When staff have exhausted all of their abilities to help your child maintain composure, parents may be called to retrieve the child. Should the behaviors continue over a length of time, a conference will be held with parents, the teacher and director. A plan will be set in motion to help maintain consistency and appropriateness. Recommendations may be made at this time regarding outside help.

PREVENTING AND REDUCING EXPULSION POLICY:

Odyssey will expend all reasonable measures to prevent and reduce expulsion of students. Our policy is aimed at maintaining the best opportunity for each child in our care. Expulsion will result if the child's behavior is consistently and overwhelmingly disruptive to the classroom and/or the matter cannot be resolved without overwhelming the Odyssey resources.

If a pattern of disruptive behavior is observed, teachers will notify the parents and initiate planning and communication on how Odyssey will manage future issues, communicate how disruptive behavior will be documented and communicate outside resources available to the family, such as therapeutic and educational support. If the issues cannot be managed with available resources, a timetable for expulsion will be established. In exceptional cases, such as wonton violence, a pattern of behavior need not be established and Odyssey reserves the right to take reasonable immediate measures to maintain safety in the classroom.

CORPORAL AND PUNITIVE PUNISHMENT:

Physical and verbal forms of corporal and punitive punishment are not used at Odyssey. We will not allow anyone to participate in these activities on Odyssey grounds. Parent education is an important part of Odyssey' philosophy. Just as we teach the children and allow them to practice, Odyssey staff educates the adults and allows them to practice. Teachers and staff will help parents use guidance techniques to solve problems and encourage cooperation. (See Adult Code of Conduct in this handbook)

ADULT CODE OF CONDUCT

Odyssey Early Learning Center strives to provide an environment that is respectful of all who enter. Responsible adults maintain composure and model appropriate behaviors when in the presence of children. Showing respect to children and other adults, even in the midst of tension, is an important way to help children learn how to solve problems in a civil manner. Odyssey ELC requires that all adults behave in a manner that is conducive to a learning environment. Anyone who violates this Adult Code of Conduct will be asked to leave the premises and will be prohibited from having access to school property.

DRESS CODE

Parents are required to be dressed in appropriate clothing while at Odyssey ELC or attending Odyssey sponsored events. Inappropriate choices include any clothing that is revealing, extremely short, ripped or torn in inappropriate places or see-through. Additionally, clothing should be free of inappropriate or suggestive language or images.

SWEARING AND CURSING

At no time will an adult be permitted to use inappropriate or offensive language or slurs, whether in the presence of children or not. Vulgar language is offensive to many people, even in common use. Frustrated or angry adults will use appropriate language to express their feelings.

THREATING OF STAFF, ADULTS, OR CHILDREN

At no time will an adult threaten another person at Odyssey ELC. Odyssey ELC will not tolerate threats of any kind and we will not sit by and allow such actions to happen. Threats of any nature will be reported to the appropriate authorities and be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Adults MUST be in control of and responsible for their actions at all times.

CONFRONTATIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES, PARENTS, OR ASSOCIATES OF ODYSSEY ELC

It is expected that adults will avoid confrontational interactions with other adults. Any adult engaging in verbal or physical confrontations will be asked to leave the premises immediately. Odyssey ELC reserves the right to call the authorities if any adult refuses to calm themselves or leave.

PHYSICAL OR VERBAL PUNISHMENT OF YOUR CHILD OR OTHER CHILDREN

While Odyssey ELC supports parents in their own discipline strategies, Positive Guidance strategies are used at our center. Parents are encouraged to use Guidance strategies while at Odyssey. We understand this model may be new to many parents, staff are available to help and model these for you. Odyssey ELC prohibits the use of physical or verbally demeaning forms of punishment while on the premises.

Adults are prohibited from physically or verbally disciplining children other than their own. Adults who see other children displaying inappropriate behaviors should seek the assistance of a staff member to resolve the issue. Additionally, adults should not seek out the parent of another child to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior.

Odyssey staff will not discuss another child with adults other than their parents and authorized caregivers. Please do not try to begin a conversation or ask about another child, their skills and abilities or behaviors.

SMOKING & DRUGS

Odyssey ELC, its buildings and grounds, as well as The University of Montana Western, is a smoke-free, drug-free establishment. Anyone wishing to indulge must vacate Odyssey property.

POLICY FOR HANDLING PARENT CONCERNS

If a parent has a concern, they should first bring it to the attention of their child's teacher. If a resolution cannot be made, the parent and teacher should schedule a meeting with the Director. The issue will be discussed and problem-solved for strategies to find resolution. If a resolution still cannot be reached, the concern will be brought to the attention of the Board of Directors.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy applies to parents and family members, employees, UMWestern students, volunteers and the Board of Directors. Technologies include, but are not limited to Social networking sites (Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, etc), Blogs, Discussion Forums, Collaborative online spaces, Media Sharing services (YouTube), and Microblogging (Twitter, etc.)

Odyssey ELC aims to protect your child and safeguard privacy and security. Therefore:

- ONLY pictures of your OWN child may be posted for public viewing. Group photos of your child with one or more other people, including staff members, are prohibited from posting.
- Public comments or discussion about Odyssey' children, staff members or families are prohibited. Comments that may be interpreted to have an impact on Odyssey' reputation or that would be considered offensive are prohibited.
- Parents must only post comments that name Odyssey in a positive manner.
- Parents are not allowed to set up public or private social media accounts without the express written permission of the Board of Directors.
- Exception #1: Pictures and discussion for marketing and fundraising purposes are excluded from this policy. Children used for this purpose WILL have a signed permission form.

VIOLATIONS OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Any person found in violation of the Social Media Policy will be found in breach of confidentiality and dismissed from the program.

FIREARMS AND WEAPONS

At NO time will firearms or weapons be allowed on Odyssey ELC property, except when worn by uniformed law enforcement officers or other persons of local authority.

SAFETY: CONDUCT, PRIVACY

PARENT'S RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS

All parents and legal guardians of children will have express access to their children at all time, without prior notice, as directed by law. This policy applies to parents who are separated or divorce, regardless of who the custodial parent is. In cases where the child is subject of a court order, Odyssey ELC must have a current certified copy of the order with attached amendments. See section below...

COURT ORDERING AFFECTING ENROLLED CHILDREN

Children subject to a court order will have a **current Certified Copy** of the court order and its amendments on file. The court order will be strictly adhered to unless the custodial parent requests leniency in writing. In cases where both parents are involved, both parents must sign the order of leniency.

Equal access will be afforded to both parents unless a parenting plan is on file at Odyssey ELC. This is in accordance with Montana State law. If a situation arises in which one parent does not want the other to have access, Odyssey ELC recommends that the parent keep the child with them.

MANDATORY REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

All employees of Odyssey Early Learning Center are mandatory reporters and **MUST** report any **suspicion** of child abuse or neglect. Employees are not required to discuss these suspicions with the parents before reporting. Additionally, they are not required to investigate or know how the case is progressing. Mandated reporters can be held liable if they fail to report suspicious marks, behaviors, or conditions. This system, under the Child Protective Services Act, is designed to protect children from undue harm and is in the best interest of the child.

Odyssey Staff cannot be held liable for reports that are determined to be false. All reports are done so in good faith and not meant to cause undo stress and angst to the family.

Causes for reporting may include circumstances such as:

- Unusual bruising marks or cuts
- Vivid and unusual comments that are uncharacteristic of the child
- Excessive knowledge and understanding of sexual interactions
- Witness of severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing related to size, weather conditions, and cleanliness
- Transporting an unrestrained child
- Arriving at Odyssey under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Not providing food required for meals
- Leaving a child unattended

- Failure to attend to a child's special needs
- Other

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality of the families and children enrolled at Odyssey ELC will be strictly adhered to. Sensitive information will be shared on a "need-to-know" basis with Federal and State agencies focusing on Children and Families, such as State Licensing and CACFP, a child's healthcare team, public health authorities, and teachers and staff involved in the child's care.

Confidential information includes educational status and needs, medical information, and status of the family. A family directory will be made available to all families enrolled at Odyssey. This directory includes residential information such as address, phone number and email address. Families may opt out of the directory by checking the box on the Personal Information page of the enrollment forms.

Anyone sharing personal information, pressuring others into disclosing, or gaining unauthorized access to children's records will be found in breach of this policy and may be exited from the program.

CHILDREN'S DRESS CODE

Children should be dressed in a manner that promotes their success each day. Children's learning is typically very active and can be messy. Parents should be prepared to see dirt or mud, paint, markers, or other messy marks on their children's clothing. Teachers do their best to minimize stains and dirty clothing, but it is impossible to keep children completely mess-free.

Jewelry, sunglasses, hats, and other accessories are discouraged. Your child will be asked to wear the item or keep it in their backpack. Items that become a distraction will be confiscated and returned upon dismissal. Makeup of any kind, including lip gloss, Chapstick, and other lip ointments, are prohibited. Chapstick or other lip ointments needed for chapped lips are to be signed in as medication and will be kept in the lock box until use is necessary.

Perfume, cologne, and other fragrant toiletries are discouraged.

Children should have all necessary clothing for outdoor play as dictated by the weather. Children go outside during many different weather conditions. Odyssey ELC staff may expose children to rainy and snowy weather if the conditions are right. Having boots, warm coats, mittens, hats, snow pants, and any other clothing that promotes play in the daily weather. Odyssey ELC has a limited supply of extra clothing and may not have the items that your child needs to stay warm and dry.

Children should also have one or more changes of clothing stored at school. These items should include pants, shirt, underwear, socks and shoes. These items should be replaced when used or as your child grows. Odyssey ELC has a limited supply of extra clothing. Staff will do their best to find clothing that fits your child. Please understand that sometimes appropriate and gender specific extra clothing is not available and your child may wear whatever is available.

****NOTE:** Donations of clothing items, including shoes, boots and outdoor clothing, are always appreciated when your child outgrows them***

All items must be labeled with a child's name or initials. Odyssey ELC is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing. A lost and found box is available for items that lose their owner. Please check the box on a regular basis,

SAFETY: MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION

POLICY

Odyssey ELC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all children, staff, and any other persons participating in the program. Our commitment is to respond to the needs of the child if injured, becomes ill, or is traumatized while attending the center. We are committed to ensuring safety and appropriate administration of medication in accordance with Montana state law.

SUPERVISION POLICY

Children are never left unsupervised. At a minimum, Odyssey ELC follows the child-to-adult ratio of 10:1 for children 4 and up, 8:1 for children ages 2-3 and 4:1 for infants and toddlers as set by the State of Montana. Though rare, Odyssey ELC reserves the right to close classrooms unexpectedly or combine classes due to inability to comply with child-to-staff ratios

IMMUNIZATIONS

State law requires that every child enrolled in a childcare program be immunized. Please update immunization records as needed. Religious exemptions are **not** accepted at Odyssey ELC as per State regulations. It is also highly recommended that each child has a flu shot every year. **Please provide a new record of immunizations whenever they have been updated.** Immunization schedules are available for those unaware of the immunization timeline for children. The public health nurse performs a check of immunizations each year to aid compliance. If your child's file is found to be incomplete, you will have seven (7) days to become current. Children and staff with incomplete immunizations will not be able to attend until they are current.

HEALTH CARE STATEMENT (INFANTS AND TODDLERS)

All children under the age of 2 years will be required to have a signed health record form signed by a physician indicating any special health risks that would affect other children. This form will be made available with the enrollment packet and must be returned before care will be given.

HEALTH CHECK

State regulations require each child to be visibly checked when they first arrive at Odyssey ELC each day. The lead teacher will ask parents to take a visibly ill child out of the program until the illness/symptoms disappear without medication. If the child is too ill to participate in daily activities, including outdoor time, then the child is too ill to be at Odyssey ELC. Please do not ask for exceptions; we do not normally have the staff and facilities to handle these special cases. Also, please err on the side of caution when you suspect illness. If your child has been ill during the night, (vomiting, diarrhea, continuous cough, etc) they should not come to Odyssey.

ALLERGIES

Allergies and suspected sensitivities along with their reaction and how to treat it, must be disclosed on the personal information and written consent forms in the enrollment packet. Odyssey ELC will disclose this information to all staff who may work with your child. Any medication necessary for treatment must be signed in and the appropriate forms filled out. Forms must be updated every 12 months. All medication must be in its original container with your child's name on it. Prescription medication will only be given to the child in which it is prescribed. If your child needs an epi-pen, please ask for one to be stored at Odyssey ELC. (SEE MEDICATION section).

SICK CHILD POLICY

As listed in the Administrative Rules of Montana Title 16, Chapter 24, Subchapter 4. Use these illness symptoms and indicators and keep your child home if he/she/has:

- **A fever** (above 100 degrees orally). Children must be **without a fever of 100 or greater for 24 hours** before they return to the center, unless the fever is related to immunizations. Keep in mind that reducing a fever with medication does not mean FEVER-FREE.
- **Vomiting or diarrhea:** Children must be **without vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours** before they return to the center. Vomiting includes two or more episodes in the previous 24 hours. Diarrhea is defined as an increased number of stools, increased water in stool, and/or decreased form to the stool that is expelled urgently.
Please keep your child home if he/she vomited or had diarrhea during the night but "seems fine now". If a child discloses that he/she vomited or was sick during the night, parents may receive a phone call for clarification.
- **An undiagnosed rash or a diagnosed contagious rash or contagious disease.** Generalized rashes, including those covering multiple parts of the body, must be evaluated by a health care provider to determine their cause before the child can return to the center. All other rashes or contagious diseases must be evaluated by a doctor and a notice from the doctor must accompany the child upon return to Odyssey ELC.
- The **bacterial infections** listed below must be **treated with antibiotics for 24 hours** before the child returns to the center: Strep Throat; Bacterial Conjunctivitis (pink eye); Scarlet Fever; Impetigo; Skin infections with drainage
- Children with **chickenpox** will not be admitted to the center until their sores dry up, which usually takes 5 to 7 days.
- Children who are **jaundiced** must be excluded until a health care provider evaluates the cause and authorizes the child to return to the center.
- Children with symptoms of **severe illness**, such as uncontrolled coughing, mucus drainage from the nose or eyes, breathing difficulty or wheezing, stiff neck, irritability, poor food or fluid intake, lethargy, or a seizure, must be evaluated by a health care provider before they may return to the center. Please have a doctor's note available upon return.
- Children with irregular COVID-19 symptoms not listed above, such as loss of smell or taste. A doctor's note will be required before return

If a child develops symptoms of an illness while at Odyssey ELC, after the parent has left, we will isolate the child from the other children, contact a parent or caregiver to pick up the child, and will inform the local health department if the illness is suspected to be a communicable disease. All children who vomit or have loose stool for any reason will be sent home upon the first incident.

ALL CHILDREN ABSENT FOR 3 OR MORE CONTINUOUS DAYS DUE TO ILLNESS WILL REQUIRE A DOCTOR'S NOTE UPON RETURN.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

Odyssey ELC should be notified of any contagious disease that children have contracted even if the child has not attended since contracting it. Every attempt to prevent the disease or lessen its effects on the rest of our Odyssey ELC participants will be taken. Children may not attend Odyssey after a contagious disease until they have been cleared by a doctor in writing to return. Common contagious diseases include, but are not limited to: influenza, conjunctivitis (pink eye), strep throat, coronavirus, RSV, whooping cough. For a complete list, please ask the director. Any suspicions of a contagious disease will result in your child being sent home.

In the event that a contagious disease begins to spread rapidly throughout the center or community, our SEVERE ILLNESS POLICY (below) will be implemented.

PANDEMIC & SEVERE ILLNESS POLICY

In the event of an outbreak of any contagious disease, parents will be given an information sheet particular to the signs and symptoms of the particular disease and asked to watch for mild to severe symptoms. All children with symptoms of the disease will be sent home. The child must be seen by a doctor for confirmation and comply with the recommendations of the doctor. A doctor's note will be provided upon return. Any child without a doctor's note must stay out of Odyssey until all symptoms have been extinguished.

If a child has been exposed to anyone who has a contagious disease, the child will be asked to stay out of Odyssey for a minimum of 5 calendar days even without symptoms.

COMMUNITY OUTBREAK: In the event of a community outbreak of a contagious disease, Odyssey will monitor all people who enter the premises. The following rules will apply:

- Pickup and drop off will occur outdoors.
- Authorized persons only will enter the premises.
- Children will refrain from bringing bedding, soft napping articles (blanket/stuffed animals/etc)
- Odyssey will launder all bedding
- Mask will be worn by all school aged children, staff, and parents
- Cleaning and sanitization will occur at a higher rate
- Odyssey will comply with all guidelines issued by the CDC and Local Public Health office without exception

Odyssey ELC reserves the right to close for quarantine and mitigation purposes without notice. Odyssey recognizes this is a hardship for parents and will make every effort to minimize the occurrences. Parents and staff are asked to comply with all measures of mitigation and prevention to keep Odyssey doors open.

LICE

Children determined to have lice will be sent home for treatment and will not be admitted back until all nits have been removed. Odyssey staff will examine the child upon return to ensure that the child can be cleared.

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Children with a regularly occurring (chronic) condition that is not contagious and does not inhibit regular activities will be welcomed each day even when symptoms exist. The condition will be noted on the Personal Information form and written consent form in the Enrollment packet and a doctor's note releasing your child to care will be on file. Conditions may include eczema, hives, allergy or teething drainage, etc. Odyssey ELC reserves the right to send children home if we do not have a doctor's notice and/or the condition worsens throughout the day.

MEDICATION

Odyssey staff will only administer medication as needed regularly for chronic afflictions such as asthma and diaper rash. Medications for colds, teething, chapped lips, etc. administered for a short period of time will be the parents' responsibility. In the event that regular medication be administered, parents must complete a Medication Request Authorization Form before *any* medicine (prescribed or over-the-counter) can be given. Medication includes prescribed and over-the-counter ingestible, creams, lotions, lip balm, diaper rash ointment, essential oils, allergy medications and Epi-pens. **All medication must be in the original container with the child's name on it.** All prescription medication must have written instructions on the label. Medication will only be given to the child it is prescribed for the current illness. We will NOT administer shared prescriptions or prescriptions that are "left over" from a previous illness. Medications should be handed directly from the parent to a teacher. Children should NEVER handle medication, including carrying it in their backpack or handing it to teachers.

Please let the staff know if there are special medical needs or procedures. If applicable, a demonstration, or written "what to watch for" will help staff identify and address any special health concerns.

EMERGENCIES, ACCIDENTS, AND ILLNESSES

In the event of an accident, illness or other emergency, the parent will be notified to come and pick up the child. If staff is unable to reach a parent, they will call the person(s) listed on the Parent Consent form. If an emergency occurs that requires immediate medical attention, staff will take immediate action to secure medical care for the child, while simultaneously attempting to contact parents. All costs of medical care are the sole responsibility of the parent.

BITING

Odyssey ELC recognizes that biting is a typical behavior that many children exhibit as a form of communication. Rarely does a child who bites intend to harm the other child. Reasons a child may bite may include:

- Teething
- Communicating a need or frustration
- Sensory Input
- Exploring cause and effect

Classrooms are equipped to reduce the incidence of biting by providing many opportunities to explore using the senses, toys and items to aid in teething, and positive guidance strategies to help children communicate their needs. Repetition is a key element to teaching children to avoid biting. Teachers will provide children opportunities to learn a new strategy and practice it until the impulse to bite subsides.

When a child bites, teachers will comfort the bitten child and provide first aid to ensure that the bite is clean and able to heal. The teacher will encourage the child who bit to care for the injured child to help the children learn and apply empathy. Teachers will also encourage the children to express themselves and their feelings, providing opportunities for self-empowerment.

Parents will be notified of the incident. Confidentiality will be strictly adhered to when disclosing the event. An incident report will be written for each child, to be signed by the parent. Odyssey ELC recognizes that parents may become upset about the incident, especially if it occurs on more than one occasion, but biting is a normal part of development and despite efforts to prevent it from happening, biting incidents will occur. Odyssey ELC does not exclude children for naturally occurring biting incidents.

FIRST AID POLICY:

When a child is hurt at Odyssey, staff will apply First Aid as trained to the extent necessary. For injuries requiring medical attention, staff will first call 911. Parents will be notified immediately following. It is expected that the parent will come immediately and accompany the child to the hospital, if necessary. If a parent is not available and only if conditions permit, a staff member will accompany the child.

An accident report will be written detailing the injury and events preceding and submitted to Childcare Licensing.

ACCIDENTS REPORTS

Montana State Regulations require that any accident or injury requiring a visit to the hospital be documented on an accident report form. As a way of communicating more effectively with parents, Odyssey ELC will also write an accident report or personally inform parents when a child has an accident or injury resulting in the skin being broken, visible injury or when an accident occurs which may require observation of future medical care.

PARKING

Odyssey ELC, Sparky's Garage, UMWWestern and Shine Studio share parking for our business. At high-traffic times, parking may become congested. Consider safety when getting in and out of your car and when retrieving your child. Modeling safety rules, including pedestrian safety is an important part of parenting.

EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS

In case of emergency, Odyssey students and staff will be evacuated. Parents will be called to retrieve children due to ANY emergency evacuation cause. Children will be counted, and attendance will be compared to the Sign In sheet.

In the case of an emergency, such as flooding, that requires evacuation out of the area, children will be evacuated using employee vehicles to a site not less than 1 mile from Odyssey ELC. Parents will be called to retrieve their child from this designated site. All safety measures and precautions will be taken as possible.

Emergency Evacuation sites for our Poindexter site:

UMWestern Main Hall first floor foyer
UMWestern Practice Football Field

EMERGENCY & INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSURES

Though Odyssey ELC does everything necessary to prevent closures, occasionally Odyssey may need to close due to an emergency, severe weather conditions, severely contagious disease, shortness of staffing, or power outage. Odyssey Staff will alert parents by email, phone, and/or Brightwheel messaging as soon as the need arises, giving as much notification as possible.

MEALS & FOOD

POLICY

Odyssey ELC provides breakfast and an afternoon snack to children at the center. Odyssey ELC does not charge extra for meals. The Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP) offers reimbursement for a part of each child's meal and meals conform to the CACFP guidelines. Odyssey ELC's and each family's participation in CACFP is important to the sustainability of quality, nutritious meals and snacks. Weekly menus are posted near children's cubbies, in Brightwheel and available in print copy upon request. Breakfast is served at 9:00 a.m. and afternoon snack is served between 3-4 pm. **Children bring their own lunch or sign up for the lunch program** and sit to eat by 12:30 p.m. Odyssey ELC provides milk at breakfast and lunch to complete the components for a healthy meal, as necessary.

DIETARY NEEDS OR RESTRICTIONS:

If a child's diet must be modified for health reasons, a physician's written explanation is required. *Please ask for the necessary form(s) for your doctor to complete.* Odyssey staff are only able to modify a diet when the appropriate forms are completed and in the child's file. If a child's diet is modified for cultural or religious reasons, the parent is asked to put the request in writing and will be asked to provide supplemental foods.

FAMILY STYLE MEALS:

Odyssey ELC complies with the CACFP's recommendations for family style meals. This means that everyone sits down together and enjoys the same food choices at meals that Odyssey ELC provides. This is a wonderful opportunity to have pleasant conversations and engage in activities such as songs and rhymes. Children enjoying the same food choices, may choose food that they would normally not eat. Odyssey staff does not force children to eat foods that are not desirable, they present foods as a choice. Conversations regarding healthy and unhealthy foods, likes and dislikes, foods that look unpleasant but taste good and paying attention to bodily hunger cues are encouraged.

After school children will be offered a snack upon arrival. Snack time for afterschool children will be attended to by an adult and served family style. **DO NOT** send snacks or extra food with your child for consumption at this time. Children will be asked to put it back in the backpack as everyone eats the same snacks at Odyssey unless a medical need exists, and necessary paperwork is completed.

FOOD FOR SHARING:

Any food that parents would like to share with students of Odyssey ELC must be store-bought and for special occasions unless approved by the director. Please keep treats for birthdays and special occasions minimal and as healthy as possible. Please **DO NOT** send large cupcakes. Odyssey acts in recognition of CACFP guidelines, minimizing the intake of sugar as much as possible. Treats such as fruit kabobs and frozen yogurt are just as (and sometimes more) well received as candy, cake or cookies. Additionally, please inquire about food allergies and preferences and make accommodations for these children as well.

INFANT & TODDLER MEALS

MEAL TIME SCHEDULE

A small child's eating schedule is important to their growth and development. Parents typically set and follow a feeding schedule at home. At Odyssey ELC we want to maintain and be consistent with your child's schedule. Parents will be given a meal schedule to fill out with their enrollment paperwork. This schedule will be posted for caregivers to see and followed daily. Parents should update this schedule as their child's eating patterns change.

FORMULA AND BREASTMILK

Odyssey ELC encourages parents and mothers to feed their child in the most natural way that suits them. Mothers who breastfeed their babies are encouraged to come to Odyssey to breastfeed their child. Formula and expressed breastmilk will be given to your child at the intervals that have been designated on your child's feeding schedule.

Parents are to provide enough bottles to get through the day without washing. Bottles will be sent home each day for cleaning. As a part of the CACFP, Odyssey will supply formula, however, if a child requires or the parent desires a different formula be used than that which Odyssey provides, they may provide the formula of their choice. Formula must require no more preparation than mixing with water. Formula that is not iron-fortified must be accompanied by a form, provided by

Odyssey ELC, indicating special dietary needs and signed by the child's physician. All containers provided by the parents and/or breastmilk will be clearly labeled with the child's name.

OTHER FOODS

Infants ages 0-11 months will be fed breastmilk or formula at each meal. Other foods will be introduced in accordance with the child's feeding schedule. Parents should supply foods being introduced to ensure consistency in brands and flavor. A food introduction plan will be made with the lead teacher and your child's primary/assigned caregiver(s).

TODDLERS

Children over the age of 11 months will eat meals consistent with Odyssey' regular menu. Menu items will be reviewed weekly for any items that pose risk for toddlers. Similar foods will be substituted as necessary. All menu meals and snacks will include a minimum of two food groups for snacks and 5 food groups for meals. Whole milk will be offered to all children ages 12 months to 2 years old at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY

USDA Non-discrimination statement: In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

COMMUNICATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

Odyssey staff are always interested in learning more about better ways to serve all families. This responsibility and honor is taken very seriously. Please let us know how we are doing. We cannot always make changes to accommodate everyone, but we are willing to try. It's much better to address small problems as they arise than to let them grow into big ones. If you are happy with our center, tell us that too, and tell everyone else as well!

CONCERNS PROCEDURE

If you have a concern regarding billing, classroom activities, or inappropriate interactions, please use the following process in the order that they appear. Feel free to call or to ask for a conference.

1. Speak to the person with whom you are in conflict.
2. Speak to the lead teacher.
3. Speak to the director.

Every effort will be made to achieve resolutions that are in the best interest of the children, families, and Odyssey ELC.

POLICY CHANGES

Odyssey ELC reserves the right to modify policies as necessary and without notice. Families will be notified of changes by email or Brightwheel messaging as soon as they are approved by the Board of Directors.

Welcome to Odyssey Early Learning Center! May your stay be positive and enriching for all!

Children are wonderful, messy little scientists who come to us, eyes lit bright with wonder, all their senses open and their motors running. Children need a laboratory that encourages hands-on active learning, exploration, and discovery, alongside caring and sensitive adults.

Jim Greenman (2000)

**The word parent in the context of this document refers to any legal parent, guardian or temporary caregiver of the child.

Parent Handbook Agreement

Odyssey ELC Copy

(please sign and return this page only – Keep Parent Handbook for your reference)

I/We (the undersigned) have read and understand all the information, policies and procedures outlined in the parent handbook and Covid Policy for Odyssey Early Learning Center. I/We (the undersigned) have received a copy of these policies and procedures for my/our own records and reference.

By signing this agreement I/we consent to all the handbook policies and procedures and agree to them, including the media, billing, payment and late fee, transportation, illness and emergency policies and procedures

By signing this agreement, I/we acknowledge that the information supplied in regard to my/our child(ren) is true and accurate to the best of my/our knowledge.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

FIRST DAY CHECKLIST (if not completed before)

FORMS AND PAPERWORK

All information can be uploaded into Brightwheel. Please take SIGNED paper forms to Odyssey or email.

- First month's payment as dictated on enrollment contract, including materials fees, if applicable.
- Personal Information
- Over-the-counter medication form.
- Odyssey permission and release form.
- Emergency contact form.
- ImmTrax form
- Parent Handbook signature page: *keep handbook for your reference*
- A copy of IMMUNIZATIONS from your physician's office.
- CACFP Food program eligibility form.
- Health Statement (Infants-Toddlers only)
- Meal Time Feeding Schedule (Infant-Toddler only)