



BENCHMARK FAMILY SERVICES, INC.

PARENT HANDBOOK

Revised edition, July 2016

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Contact Information

Benchmark Family Services is located in a quiet residential area in Watertown, NY, just down the street from a public elementary school. We can be reached as follows:

Mailing Address

Benchmark Family Services, Inc.
1635 Ohio Street
Watertown, NY 13601

Phone / Fax

Phone (315) 786-7285
Fax (315) 786-7270

All phone calls go to our main line. If you need to speak with a specific person, such as the staff nurse or director, please let the office manager know who you are, whom you need to reach, and the reason for your call, so your call can be transferred.

After hours, please leave a message on our answering machine, making sure that you clearly state your name, phone number, and the reason for your call.

Documentation, such as immunization records and address changes, can be sent to our fax number during office hours and after hours. Please make sure that they are accompanied by a cover sheet that identifies your child's name and the person the fax should go to.

Find Us Online

Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/BenchmarkNY>
Twitter <http://www.twitter.com/>

Days & Hours of Operation

Benchmark Family Services is open from 7:00AM until 5:00PM, Monday – Friday.

We are closed on the following days:

- ✓ New Year's Day
- ✓ Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- ✓ President's Day
- ✓ Good Friday
- ✓ Memorial Day
- ✓ Fourth of July
- ✓ Labor Day
- ✓ Columbus Day
- ✓ Thanksgiving Day
- ✓ Christmas Day

Additionally, Benchmark Family Services is required to have a specific number of staff training days throughout the school year, and we will be closed on those days. While we don't have a solid schedule of their dates, parents will be notified well in advance when we will be closed for staff training.

Lastly, Benchmark Family Services reserves the right to have a 2-hour morning delay, close early, or remain closed due to emergencies, including severe weather. Most delays and closures will be in winter due to heavy snowfall, ice, or road closures. Although many students come from various school districts, we follow Watertown School District's schedule of closures: if Watertown schools are delayed or closed, so are we.

ABOUT BENCHMARK

Mission Statement

Benchmark Family Services is dedicated to:

- ✓ Nurturing and empowering children and their families,
- ✓ Encouraging growth and development, and
- ✓ Providing insight into the beliefs of Early Intervention

Commitment

Benchmark Family Services is committed to excellence. We will work with you to meet your needs for quality childcare on a daily basis. We want parents to know that their child is cared for by competent, compassionate, and caring individuals.

We have tried to address many of your questions in this parent handbook. However, we realize that there will be situations that need to be considered on an individual basis. We welcome your comments and suggestions that will strengthen our program and improve our care.

Thank you for choosing Benchmark.

Compliance

Benchmark Family Services is licensed by the NY State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to provide quality daycare to children aged 2 years 9 months to 6 years. As such, it is mandatory for us to comply with all OCFS regulations.

The daycare licensing agency may be contacted at:

NY State Office of Children and Family Services
Syracuse Regional Office
The Atrium Building, Suite 350
100 South Salina Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

If a parent / guardian would like a copy of the daycare regulations, please request these through the daycare Director's office at Benchmark Family Services.

Benchmark Family Services is also authorized to provide specialized preschool services through the New York State Department of Education's Office of Special Education (P-12).

ENROLLMENT

Required Medical Records

Benchmark Family Services requires the following medical records for admission:

- ✓ Copy of current immunization records.
- ✓ Copy of most recent physical (Must have been done within the past 6 months.)
- ✓ Copy of lead test results.

Please note: For continued enrollment, vaccines must remain up-to-date and an annual physical is required.

Health History & Immunizations

Benchmark Family Services requires the following information when a child is enrolled:

- ✓ The name, address, and phone number of the child's regular health care provider
- ✓ A copy of the child's most recent physical. Any child who has not had a well-child examination within the past six months will need to have a new physical exam prior to admission.
- ✓ Information regarding **any** special health problems or medical conditions your child has, and instructions on how staff may address these concerns in the classroom.
- ✓ Proof of the child's immunizations. All children must be up-to-date on vaccines prior to enrollment. Please note that, according to Public Health Law (Section 2164), children entering kindergarten in NY State are required to provide proof of varicella (chickenpox) vaccination for all children born after January 1, 2000. Exemptions from this requirement include:
 - A history of varicella disease as documented by a health care provider
 - A letter from a physician licensed to practice in NY State, stating immunization may be detrimental to the child's health
 - Serologic evidence of immunity
- ✓ Results of lead testing.
- ✓ Results of TB skin testing.

Emergency Contact Information

Parents are required to supply Benchmark Family Services with the names of reliable persons who can be contacted in the event the parents cannot be reached by phone. These emergency contacts must be able to come pick up the child in the event of an illness or emergency. Therefore, emergency contacts must have a working telephone and reliable transportation.

Benchmark Family Services will verify all names and phone numbers.

Emergency contact information will be verified and updated periodically to ensure the information is current.

If a parent knows in advance that s/he will not be available on certain days, this information needs to be given to the classroom teachers in advance. The teacher will provide this information to the nurse, who will verify the dates with the emergency contact person to ensure someone will be available to pick up care for the child in case of an emergency.

If neither the parents nor the emergency contacts can be reached to pick up a child in the case of an emergency, such as a child's illness that requires the child to be sent home, we are required to inform child protective services.

Payment

Preschool and daycare at Benchmark Family Services are based on a cost of \$5.25 per hour per child.

Discounts & Assistance

- ✓ Multiple child discount: Applies to any family with two or more children enrolled at Benchmark. Full price for the first child, 50% off for any additional children.
- ✓ Military discount: 10% discount on all services for any child where at least one parent is an active duty member of the armed forces. You must provide a copy of your military ID as proof.
- ✓ Discounts cannot be combined.

Some parents will be eligible to receive assistance that covers Benchmark's preschool or daycare costs, for example through the Department of Social Services (which may require a weekly parent co-pay). If you receive assistance, please provide a copy of the letter to Benchmark so we can bill you correctly.

Due Dates

- ✓ Payment for preschool is required on a monthly basis and due no later than the fifth of the month during which services are rendered. (Example: payment for June is due by 5 June.)

Please note: No adjustments are made for school closings, public holidays, or child absences,

and you do not receive a bill or invoice.

- ✓ Daycare is billed at the end of each month and reflects the actual number of hours your child attended. Daycare is invoiced at the beginning of the following month and invoices show the number of hours and total due. Daycare payments are due no later than the 15th of the following month. (Example: payment for June is due no later than 15 July.)

Monthly Rates

3 Hour Program		5 Hour Program	
Days Attending	Monthly Rate	Days Attending	Monthly Rate
5 days	\$315	5 days	\$525
4 days	\$252	4 days	\$420
3 days	\$189	3 days	\$315

What to Send With Your Child

The following items should be sent in with your child:

- ✓ Disposable diapers labeled with your child's name, if your child uses diapers.
- ✓ Disposable wipes labeled with your child's name, if they will be needed for your child.
- ✓ One extra set of clothing, which should include a shirt, a pair of pants, underwear, and socks. All of these items need to be labeled with your child's name and will be maintained at Benchmark Family Services until they are needed.
- ✓ Toothbrush and toothpaste, labeled with your child's name.
- ✓ Sunscreen, labeled with your child's name.
- ✓ If your child naps, you need to provide a small blanket and pillow, along with a favorite sleep toy (if your child has one). These items will be maintained at Benchmark Family Services during the week and should be picked up for laundering each Friday, then returned on Monday.

DAY-TO-DAY SCHOOL LIFE

Diversity

Benchmark Family Services is located in an area that embraces a wide variety of culturally diverse families, partially due to our close location to Fort Drum military installation. We do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, ethnic background, or disability and support and encourage children in their effort to explore diversity.

Benchmark provides services for both children without disabilities and children with disabilities in our integrated program. We make every reasonable accommodation for both and all children grow and learn in the same nurturing learning environment.

Additionally, we explore and integrate diversity in our curriculum through music, toys, books, and special events. We also encourage parent involvement and invite parents from a culturally diverse background to share information about their native cultures with the children and other families.

Photos & Videos

Benchmark Family Services requires all parents to complete a permission form to either allow (or not allow) their child's photo or video to be taken while they participate in activities at Benchmark.

Video is most commonly used by teachers and therapists to show a child's progress and is not generally shown anywhere in the center or on Benchmark's Facebook page. Occasionally, video may be taken of events or play at the center, which would be used on the Facebook page.

Photos are taken of special events, guests, guest readers, and activities in the classrooms. These photos may be displayed in the center, reproduced on bulletin boards, or posted to Benchmark's Facebook page.

Sunscreen & Diaper Ointment

Benchmark Family Services requires that anything applied to a child, such as medications, ointments, sunscreen, etc. is provided by the child's family and labeled with the child's name. This helps us keep everyone safe and healthy.

Sunscreen

Parents must sign a consent form and provide the sun screen that is used on their child. The sun screen bottle or tube must be labeled with the child's name and be within the expiration date.

Diaper Ointment

Parents must sign a consent form and provide the ointment that is used on their child. The ointment must be labeled with the child's name. Please note: if the ointment is a prescription product (and not an

over-the-counter product), the parent must follow the procedures outlined for any other prescription medication (see Medical section).

Nap Time

Benchmark Family Services provides cots for rest time, while parents are required to provide a blanket and small pillow for their child's use. As with clothing, all personal items must be labeled with your child's name.

Some children like to have a stuffed animal to hold while they are sleeping and this is allowed. Personal items, such as stuffed animals, blankets, and pillows are always kept separately from other students. These items are stored in large zippered bags with the child's name. However, parents are still required to bring these items home on a weekly basis for laundering. They go home with the family each Friday and should be returned on Monday.

Nap Agreement

Following below is Benchmark Family Service's nap agreement, which was included in your child's registration packet. Signed and completed nap agreements are kept on file at our Watertown office.

In conjunction with regulations from the NY State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) 418-1.7 (o), please find the Parent Napping Agreement for Benchmark Family Services, Inc.

Cots

Children nap on cots that are covered with a fitted sheet. The parent or guardian is responsible for providing a small pillow and blanket for their child. The cot sheets are washed daily. The parent is responsible for taking the blanket and pillow home on Friday to launder it, and return it the following Monday.

When the cots are stacked for storage purposes, they do not touch each other. Children's blankets and pillows are stored in individual plastic bags labeled with the child's name.

Supervision

All children are supervised by a staff member while napping. OCFS ratios are maintained at all times, consistent with section 418-1.8. Staff may not use their cell phones or other visually distracting electronic equipment while supervising napping children.

Nap Changes

Typically, children go through stages of napping from needing a daily nap to napping only once or twice a week. The length of the nap will vary as the child ages. If your child does not nap, you may opt for a 20-minute rest period instead.

School Lunches & Other Foods

Although Benchmark Family Services does provide snack to the children in our care, parents are required to provide their child's own lunch. Here's some important information about school lunches:

- ✓ All food must be labeled with the child's full name and the day's date. Food is stored at the appropriate temperature at the center until lunchtime, and it's important that we know whose food belongs to whom.
- ✓ Children who require assistance feeding will be closely monitored and provided with assistance, if necessary.
- ✓ Food items will be cut into pieces smaller than a marble to ensure none of the children in our care will choke on food. Food items that can't be cut into small pieces, for example popcorn, hard candy, or dried fruit, will not be given to children.
- ✓ All children and staff members are required to wash their hands before and after eating, and staff members wear gloves when portioning and handling food. Children's food is served on plates, in bowls, and in cups, even if the food items are sent from home in containers or other packaging.
- ✓ Children are not allowed to share their food with each other.
- ✓ Food brought from home should meet the child's nutritional requirements. Drinks such as Gatorade, KoolAid, or Hi-C should be reserved from home, and "junk food" such as McDonald's should not be sent on a regular basis.
- ✓ Benchmark serves only water or low-fat milk. Please do not send any sugary drinks, juices, sodas, or other drinks with your child.
- ✓ If your child has food allergies or special dietary needs, such as lactose intolerance, please ensure this information is provided in your child's registration paperwork so that the teachers and nurse are aware.

Birthdays & Special Occasions

We realize how important it is to children to look forward to their birthdays. Being that special person for a day is part of building a child's self-esteem. However, while this anticipation can be a positive experience for some children, it can be overwhelming to others, and we ask that our parents take this into consideration.

Children who would like to may celebrate their birthdays while at Benchmark. We only ask that you follow these simple rules to ensure it will be a good experience for everyone:

- ✓ If you plan to bring foods for your child's birthday celebration, such as cupcakes, they must be store bought and not homemade to ensure food safety.
- ✓ Please check with your child's teacher before buying any foods or drinks to ensure that all the children in the classroom will be able to eat or drink these items. Some children may be allergic to certain ingredients, dyes, or additives or have other medical needs that would prevent them from sharing in the fun.
- ✓ It's best to plan your child's birthday with the classroom staff. Please try to give at least a week's notice before bringing something for the class.
- ✓ Please, NO party favors or presents.

Outdoor Play

The NY State Office of Children and Families (OCFS), which licenses Benchmark Family Services, requires that all children participate in outdoor play on a regular basis. This means children will have outside play time unless it is raining, too cold or too hot.

Because of this, it is important that children have appropriate clothing for outdoor play, especially in winter. Your child should have a jacket, snow pants, snow boots, mittens or gloves, and a hat during the winter. All clothing needs to be labeled with your child's name.

If you think your child should not go outdoors to play because s/he is too ill, your child should not be at Benchmark that day. If your child has a note from his/her doctor that states your child should not go outside to play, please give it to the teacher.

Clothing

Your child will be involved in many different activities at Benchmark Family Services, including outside play and messy painting. Because of this, we ask that any clothing your child wears to school is well-fitting, comfortable, and washable.

Children also need to have an extra set of clothing that is kept at Benchmark in case of an emergency. This should include an extra shirt, pair of pants, socks, and underwear. Please make sure that each item of clothing is labeled with your child's name. Our staff members will check periodically to ensure that these items still fit, and we'll return them and ask to send in a new set if your child has outgrown them.

Please do not allow your child to wear necklaces, bracelets, or rings to school. As much as we would like to, we can't keep track of these items, and they may also present a choking hazard.

One last note: children play outside whenever possible, including in wintertime. Please be sure to send in snow boots, snow pants, a scarf and extra mittens or gloves for outdoor winter play. All outer wear, including snow pants and jackets, as well as boots, must be labeled with your child's name.

Discipline

In order to provide quality childcare, children must be supervised at all times.

Positive reinforcement is used to encourage and reward acceptable behavior. Staff members use praise, stickers, charts, and tangible rewards to help develop positive behaviors.

During the course of a typical childcare day, there will be squabbles and arguments among the children. When this occurs, staff will redirect the children to other activities, toys, or another adult.

If a child tantrums, is being disruptive to the group or is aggressive with other children or staff, that child will be removed from the group and will remain away from the group until s/he has calmed down.

If a child is continuously disruptive or aggressive with other children or staff, the parent will be contacted to come in for a meeting. We hope that when this type of situation occurs, staff and parent(s) can work together to help the child gain better self-control. If, after meeting and trying to resolve behavior issues with the parent(s), the child remains aggressive or disruptive, the director will meet with the parent(s). If no resolution can be found, then the parent(s) will need to look elsewhere for childcare. Every reasonable effort will be made to provide assistance to the child and parent before the child is removed from the center.

At Benchmark Family Services, the following are **PROHIBITED** forms of discipline:

- ✓ Use of corporal punishment. This is punishment inflicted directly on the body, such as slapping or hitting, as well as physically excessive exercise, excessive rest, or strenuous or bizarre poses.
- ✓ Isolating a child in a room, hallway, darkened closet, or any other area where the child cannot be seen or supervised.
- ✓ The use of food as punishment or reward.
- ✓ The use of demeaning or humiliating methods for toilet training.
- ✓ The abuse or maltreatment of children by anyone having contact with children, regardless of whether they are employees, interns, or visitors.

Please note: All of Benchmark Family Services' staff members are **mandated reporters**. If we see marks on a child that might be from abuse, or children tell us things that might point to abuse, we are required by law to report these instances to the Mandated Reporter Hotline.

REGULATIONS

Mandated Reporting

In accordance with NY State regulations, all employees working at Benchmark Family Services are mandated reporters for child abuse and maltreatment.

We are bound by law to report any suspicion of child abuse and maltreatment. We are **not** required to investigate, only report.

This is an obligation that we take very seriously. If your child comes into the program with a mark or bruise, and there is no reasonable explanation, we will have to contact the NY State Registry to file a report. Additionally, if a child tells us something that makes us suspect they are being abused or maltreated, we are required to make a report.

Security

Benchmark Family Services considers children's safety to be the center's top priority. Because of this, we have the following security provisions in place:

- ✓ We are a locked facility. This means parents and visitors may enter only through the front door and must be "buzzed in" to access the center's lobby.
- ✓ Outside of members of the staff, any persons entering the building are only allowed to proceed further than the lobby after they have been identified by an authorized staff member.
- ✓ All visitors to the building, including evaluators, parents bringing their children for evaluation, volunteers, guest readers, and other guests, must sign in on the Visitor's Log located in the lobby. They will also be issued a dated visitor's badge that is to be worn at all times while in the building.
- ✓ All Benchmark employees, contracted providers, students, and interns must have employee identification badges.

Additionally, classroom staff members are informed of any changes in custody arrangements whenever official legal documentation is received from the custodial parent. Only legal written documentation is accepted regarding custody arrangements or children placed in foster care. If there are any questions, the program Director or a designee will contact the caseworker or the supervisor.

Parents are asked to designate emergency contact persons when they enroll their child and may update this information at any time to add new emergency contacts, remove emergency contacts, or update their emergency contacts' information. Children will be released **only** to persons who are on the list of emergency contacts. Photo ID must be shown by anyone who is not a parent or guardian to pick up a child.

Confidentiality

At Benchmark Family Services, we take confidentiality seriously. We believe that all children and their parents or guardians have a right to confidentiality.

Therefore, information regarding children and their families is kept in individual files, which are stored in the file room.

- ✓ Information may be released from a file only with a parent's written consent in the form of a Release of Information form. If you need this form, it is available at the front desk. Please note that we are only able to release information that was generated by Benchmark. If your child's file includes documents generated elsewhere – for example, evaluations completed at a different agency or medical records – we are not legally allowed to re-release those to another agency.
- ✓ Only designated persons may access a child's file.
- ✓ Parents may view their child's file at any time following a written request. However, it is suggested that the parent is accompanied by a qualified staff member who can answer any questions the parent may have about the file contents.
- ✓ Parents may request copies of reports contained within a child's file. This request must be in writing. Please note that there will be a .25 cent charge per page for copies made from a child's file.
- ✓ Benchmark Family Services is required to comply with any Requests for Information received from the court system, such as when a subpoena is issued. We are not legally allowed to deny such a request.
- ✓ To ensure the confidentiality of children in our facility, we do not permit cell phone use by guests and visitors, including parents, anywhere in the building, including the front lobby.

Data Collection

Whenever information is requested from a child's file, such as evaluations, progress reports, or teacher's notes, Benchmark Family Services follows the following procedures:

- ✓ The signed release is entered into the file, as well as the record release notebook.
- ✓ The requested records are copied. Please note that Benchmark may not re-release documents or information that was obtained from a third party source, such as medical records, evaluations performed at other agencies, or court documents, including custody arrangements.
- ✓ Records are mailed or released to the person or agency requesting them. A notation is then made in the records release file of the date on which the records were mailed and what

information was mailed or release.

- ✓ Parents and guardians may request information from their child's file at any time, with a written request.

Access to Children's Records

The following Benchmark Family Services staff members have access to your child's records:

- ✓ Program Administrator
- ✓ Finance Officer
- ✓ Clinical Supervisor
- ✓ Nurse
- ✓ School Psychologist
- ✓ Therapists (Speech/Language, Occupational, and Physical Therapy)
- ✓ Teachers (Special and Regular education)
- ✓ Administrative Assistant / Office Manager

Representatives of the following agencies also have access to your child's records:

- ✓ State Education Department
- ✓ Child Protective Services
- ✓ Office of Children and Family Services

Rights of Non-Custodial Parents

Benchmark Family Services directs all mailings, conferences, emergency contacts, and authorizations to the custodial parent, unless otherwise noted in legal custody arrangements.

All parents are encouraged to attend conferences and other functions, but it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to inform the non-custodial parent of those dates and arrangements, unless otherwise specified in legal documents.

Regulations require that we have a copy of the official custody order or restraining order on file. Without an official copy of these documents, Benchmark Family Services are legally required to grant access to both parents.

STAFF

Staff Qualifications

Because Benchmark Family Services is a NY State approved 4410 integrated special education preschool program, we are required to hire only NY State licensed and/or certified staff to provide care and services for the children.

These positions include Registered Nurses, Occupational Therapy Assistants, Occupational Therapists, Speech/Language Pathologists, Teachers of the Speech and Hearing Impaired, Special Education Teachers, Regular Education Teachers, and Program Administrators.

Positions that do not require licensure or certification are Administrative Assistant and Teacher's Aide.

However, please note that all Benchmark Family Services staff, regardless of position, must meet the requirements set forth by the NY State Office of Children and Families (OCFS). This includes a background check, which is initially cleared by the Justice Center and then processed through the NY Central Registry (Child Abuse and Maltreatment), as well as fingerprinting for a criminal background check. Staff members are not allowed to be alone with any child until their clearance has been obtained. Additionally, references are required and checked on all potential employees.

Daycare staff qualifications vary based on position but are determined by the NY State Office of Children and Families (OCFS). All daycare staff members must also meet background and reference checks.

Staff members are required to attend mandatory training, workshops, and seminars that pertain to child development, safety and security, daycare regulations, developmental disabilities, and working with parents on an ongoing basis.

Substitutes

Benchmark Family Services maintains a list of substitute Teachers, Teacher Assistants, Teacher Aides and nursing staff in case a replacement is needed. Although we would like to limit the use of substitutes in order to provide consistency of care for the children, there are times when there may be a number of substitutes in the center due to staff illness, injury, or other emergencies.

These staff members, like full-time staff, are required to undergo fingerprinting and submit information for a criminal background check. They must be cleared before they are allowed to work with any of the children.

Substitute staff members are working with another seasoned employee in the same room.

Staff members are required to attend mandatory training, workshops, and seminars that pertain to child development, safety and security, daycare regulations, developmental disabilities, and working with parents on an ongoing basis.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent Engagement

Benchmark Family Services regards parents (or guardians) as their child's first teacher. We therefore encourage parents and families to become involved to whatever extent they would like and are able to.

When parents get involved in their child's education, they can carry over more of what is presented in the classroom during the course of the day. Parents and guardians who work closely with the teachers can continue working with their child at home to reinforce the ideas and concepts presented in the classroom.

Parent-Teacher Connection

Benchmark Family Services maintains an open door policy for parents. We welcome parents in the center at any time.

Parents and teachers both realize the importance of open, on-going communication. Both realize the importance of each other's role in the life of a child. It is vital that the parent-teacher connection remains strong, open, and honest.

Children need certain components from parents and care givers for continued growth and development. But one thing children need from both parents and caregivers is consistency. Children need routine and boundaries. These need to be consistent from place to place, and from home to school.

When you bring your child, be sure to stop and speak with the teacher or room staff to let them know how your child is doing that day. Sharing information about the child on a daily basis helps everyone. If there are problems at home and it is upsetting your child, let us know so we can work more effectively with your child.

Benchmark has a Facebook page where parents can find information and leave comments and reviews. The Facebook page also features a staff person approximately once a week so parents can learn more about them, and we share photos of events and activities.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parents and teachers work together for the best interest of the child. Having open, regular communication between teachers and staff is very important.

Individual parent-teacher conferences are held twice each year, usually in late fall and spring. These conferences focus on your child's development and present opportunities for a free exchange of information regarding the child's strengths and areas of need.

Any other time a parent or teacher wishes to have a conference, arrangements will be made in a timely fashion.

Teachers keep samples of the child's work from the beginning of the school year (or from the time the child starts at Benchmark Family Services). Other information may be contained in the portfolio as well: for example, test results. These portfolios are shared with parents during parent-teacher conferences.

Sometimes, teachers assign "homework" to children. This may be a simple project to be completed with the parent's help. These projects are NOT graded.

MEDICAL

Accident & Injury Prevention

All staff at Benchmark Family Services are concerned about child safety and injury prevention. Staff provide close supervision for children at all times and an adult accompanies children any time they are not in the classroom, including when they are in the bathroom.

Classroom staff members model safety for the children throughout the day. For example, when children and staff are in the dramatic play area, staff would model safe behavior by ensuring that dress-up clothes don't drag on the floor, which could cause a child to trip.

Classroom staff also ensures the safety of the room through room arrangement. A safe environment ensures children will have minimal chances of getting hurt. This may involve putting items where children cannot reach them, and cleaning up toys after center time.

Classrooms are equipped with gates at all the classroom doors to prevent children from running into the hallways. Some classrooms are also equipped with door alarms, to alert staff members if a child attempts to leave.

Additionally, classroom staff work with children on a regular basis regarding playground safety. Playground rules are reviewed on a regular basis.

Fire & Evacuation Drills

Benchmark Family Services is required to conduct a monthly fire / emergency evacuation drill so that all children and staff members are familiar with the correct procedures. There is no set date or time for these drills – they occur at random each month, just like a real emergency would occur at random.

During a fire drill, all persons inside the building, including all teachers and all office staff, are required to exit the building. Classroom teachers will take their class registers and do a head count once they leave the building with the children and once they return to the classroom after the drill. Teacher Aides and Teaching Assistants are responsible for conducting a sweep of the room to ensure all children have exited with their class.

Evacuation route maps are posted in each classroom, office, and hallway.

Parents and visitors are also expected to exit the building during an evacuation or fire drill. Parents may help their children if they happen to be in or near the child's room when the drill occurs. Otherwise, parents are expected to use the nearest exit.

In the event of an **actual** emergency evacuation, Benchmark staff members will lead the children to the local evacuation site, which is the Ohio Street Elementary School gymnasium.

First Aid

Benchmark Family Services requires all parents or guardians to sign a consent form for the treatment of minor injuries, as well as a medical authorization and delegation of authority form.

When a child is injured, s/he will be taken to the health office to be assessed by the staff nurse or other medically-certified personnel.

In the event of a more serious injury, something that requires more than first aid, the nurse will act as the decision-maker in the parent's absence regarding the child's course of treatment. If it is determined that the child needs additional medical care, 911 will be notified and the child will be transported to the nearest facility. A medically certified staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and remain with the child until the parent arrives. The parent will be contacted immediately after the ambulance has been called. Additionally, we are required to notify the Syracuse location of the NY State Office of Children and Families (OCFS).

Benchmark Family Services completes an incident report any time a child is sick or injured, and two copies are generated. One copy will be placed in the child's file, the other will be sent home to the parent.

What Happens If a Child Gets Sick?

If a child becomes ill while at Benchmark Family Services, the child will be taken to the health office to be examined by the staff nurse, and we will contact the parent to pick up their child.

In the event that we are unable to reach the parent, we will contact the persons listed on the Emergency Contact Sheet to come pick up the child. If neither parents nor emergency contacts can be reached, or none of them are able to pick up the child, we are required to inform child protective services.

Medical Emergencies

If a child develops a condition that requires immediate medical attention, a 911 call will be placed and the child will be transported to the nearest medical facility for evaluation. The child will be accompanied by a medication certified staff member who will stay with the child until the parent or guardian arrives at the hospital.

Conditions that require immediate medical care include:

- ✓ Obvious difficulty breathing
- ✓ Unconsciousness
- ✓ Lacerations (either significant in size or with significant bleeding)
- ✓ Injury to an extremity with obvious deformity
- ✓ Head trauma associated with vomiting or altered consciousness
- ✓ First-time seizure
- ✓ Anaphylactic shock

In order for us to notify parents or guardians, your emergency contact information must be correct. It is the responsibility of the parent to provide up-to-date phone numbers and contacts to Benchmark.

Communicable Diseases

Benchmark Family Services is legally required to report some types of communicable diseases if they have been diagnosed in a child or staff member at our facility. This report is made to the Department of Public Health, and a note will also be sent home to all parents whose children are in our care, to make them aware that someone at the center has been diagnosed, and which signs and symptoms they should watch their child for.

The following are communicable diseases we are required to report:

Poliomyelitis (Polio)	Psittacosis	Rabies
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	Amebiasis	Animal bites
Anthrax	Babesiosis	Botulism
Brucellosis	Campylobacteriosis	Chancroid
Chlamydia trachomatis	Cholera	Cryptosporidiosis
Cyclosporiasis	Diphtheria	E. Coli
Encephalitis	Food-borne illnesses	Giardiasis
Gnoccal infection	Haemophilus influenza	Hantavirus uremic syndrome
Hepatitis (A, B, or C)	Rubella	Salmonellosis
Shigellosis	Staphylococcus Aureus	Streptococcal Infections
Syphilis	Toxic Shock Syndrome	Tetanus
Tularemia	Tuberculosis (active)	Typhoid
Vibriosis	Yellow Fever	Yersiniosis

Exclusion Policy

Any child who has any of the following **cannot** attend the program:

- ✓ A suspected or diagnosed communicably disease, as defined by the NY State Department of Health, until the child is evaluated and approved for inclusion by a healthcare provider.
- ✓ A fever, which is defined as a temperature of 101F or higher orally (in the mouth), axillary (under the arm) or aural (in the ear).
- ✓ A child with a temperature about 101F orally or aural, which is accompanied by a behavior change, stiff neck, rash, unusual irritability, vomiting, or excessive crying.
- ✓ A child who looks or acts very ill, or who is getting worse quickly.
- ✓ Neck pain when the child's head is moved or touched.
- ✓ A stiff neck or severe headache, and sick appearance.
- ✓ A seizure for the first time.
- ✓ Acting usually confused.
- ✓ Unequal pupils.
- ✓ A red or purple rash made up of pinhead-sized spots or bruises that are not associated with injury.

- ✓ A rash, hives, or welts that appear and spread quickly.
- ✓ Breathing so fast or hard that the child cannot play, talk, cry, or drink.
- ✓ A severe stomachache that causes the child to double up and scream.
- ✓ A stomachache without vomiting or diarrhea after recent injury, blow to the abdomen, or fall.
- ✓ Stools that are black or bloody.
- ✓ Not urinating at least once in 8 hours, dry mouth, no tears, and sunken eyes.
- ✓ Continuous clear drainage from the nose after a hard blow to the head.

Exclusion Periods

Infection	Infectious Period	Exclusion Period
Chicken pox (varicella) Shingles (herpes zoster)	From 2 days before to 5 days after appearance of rash	5 days after scabs have formed and no new lesions appear.
Cold sores	While sores are present	Not necessary.
Pink eye (conjunctivitis)	While active	24 hours after treatment has started & improvement is seen
Diarrhea	While there is diarrhea	If 3 or more episodes of loose stools during the previous 24 hours, or if diarrhea is accompanied by fever, until diarrhea is resolved
Fifth's disease (slapped cheek syndrome)	5 days before rash appears	Until well
Glandular fever (mono)	For several weeks	Until well
Hand, foot, and mouth disease	While symptoms persist	Until treatment has started and improvement is seen
Head lice	While lice, eggs, and nits are present	Until 24 hours after treatment has begun and child is clear of lice, eggs, and nits
Hepatitis A	Several days before until several days after onset of jaundice	Eight days after onset of jaundice and child feels well
Impetigo (streptococcal) and staphylococcus skin infections	Until lesions have healed or 48 hours after antibiotic treatment started	2 days after treatment has started & skin improvement is noticeable. All open sores must be covered with dressings or Band-Aids
Influenza	3-7 days from onset of symptoms	Until fully recovered

Infection	Infectious Period	Exclusion Period
Measels	A day or so before rash and 5 days after rash	Until 6 days after the appearance of rash and child feels well
Mumps	From 7 days before onset & 9 days after the appearance of swelling	10 days after the onset of swelling
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)	From 7 days after the exposure to 21 days after onset of cough	1 days after starting antibiotics and child feels well
Ringworm (tinea)	While lesions are present	2 days after treatment started
Athlete's foot	While lesions are present	Until treatment started
German measles (rubella)	7 days before and 5 days after onset of rash	6 days after onset of rash
Scabies (itch mite)	While mites and eggs are present	2 days after treatment started
Streptococcal infections, including sore throat & scarlet fever	While organism is present in nasopharynx	24 hours after treatment with antibiotics has started
Upper respiratory infections, including colds, bronchitis & sore throat	3 days before symptoms to 14 days after onset	Until well
Warts & verrucae (warts with raised portions)	As long as warts last	No exclusion period
Vomiting & general sickness	Until clear	Until vomiting has ceased and child feels well
Pinworm (intestinal parasites)	As long as pinworm eggs are present	Once treatment has started

We understand that the above policy may cause problems regarding parent or guardian employment and we are committed to assisting you whenever possible to overcome such concerns. It should be noted, however, that our prime responsibility is to protect the health and safety of all children in our care.

Health Care Plan

Benchmark Family Services is required to submit and update a Health Care plan annually, in accordance with NY State Daycare Center regulations. The plan is written and updated by a Health Care Consultant.

Daily Health Checks

Daily health checks are conducted by classroom staff, who have had training to recognize signs and symptoms of illness, communicable diseases, abuse, and maltreatment. Any children who are found to be sick are then seen by the staff nurse or other medically certified staff members.

Medication Administration

Only the staff nurse and medically certified staff members are authorized to administer medication to children. Medication must be kept at the center, labeled with the child's name, and be within the expiration date.

Staff Training

Staff members receive training through the NY State Medication Administration Training course, which requires recertification every 3 years. Additionally, all staff receive training on procedures to minimize infections. This training includes the use of gloves, information on blood-borne pathogens, the chain of infection, sanitation and infection control, and proper handwashing.

Child Health Policies & Practices

Prior to enrollment in Benchmark Family Services' programs, parents must provide immunization records and a recent (within 6 months) physical exam of their child. Additionally, information regarding any special health conditions, allergies, and sensitivities must be provided to the staff nurse and classroom staff on a need-to-know basis.

If a child displays signs of mild illness, such as runny nose, low-grade temperature, or generally feeling unwell, the parent will be contacted to decide the best course of action. If the child displays signs of a more serious illness, such as coughing, runny nose with colored discharge, or temperature of 101 degrees or higher, the parent or emergency contact will be called to pick up the child.

Please see the Exclusion Criteria for reasons to keep your child home.

First Aid Kit

A first aid kit is located in the health office and contains bandages, gauze, alcohol cleansing pads, vinyl gloves, antiseptic cleaning wipes, dressings, and tape. The first aid kit is ready and stocked at all times, and the Health Care Consultant is responsible for ensuring it is stocked and equipment inside is within the expiration date.

Emergency Health Care

Children requiring emergency treatment will be given first aid by a medically certified staff member and

then transported by ambulance to the nearest medical facility for further evaluation and treatment. A trained staff member will accompany the child and remain with the child until the parent or guardian arrives at the hospital.

The Health Care Consultant will be contacted regarding the incident and staff will document the event and follow up. Additionally, regulations require that the Syracuse branch of the NY State Office of Children and Families (OCFS) be notified.

Sanitation & Infection Control

All members of the staff are trained in proper handwashing techniques and liquid soap and paper towels are available at all times. Staff members model proper hand-washing technique for the children and provide assistance as needed.

Both staff and children wash their hands frequently during the day. Handwashing occurs after bathroom use, after using gloves, after changing a child's diaper, before and after administering medication, before and after administering first aid or medical care, after helping children in the bathroom, any time children enter the building (first thing in the morning, coming back from outside play, etc.), and when children move from one room to another.

Diapering

Staff members are required to wear gloves to diaper children. Disposable diapers and wipes must be supplied by the parent and labeled with the child's name. Cloth diapers cannot be used at the center. All diapers are double-bagged for disposal.

After the child has been cleaned and changed, the staff member cleans the diapering area with disinfectant spray and discards the gloves using proper technique. The staff member then washes his/her hands and helps the child wash his/her hands.

Bodily Fluids

Staff members are trained to use gloves whenever they handle bodily fluids of any kind, including blood, vomit, and urine. Gloves are available in every classroom and in the bathrooms, as well as the health office.

Sanitation of Equipment & Toys

Toys and other equipment are cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis. A disinfectant spray is used to clean tables, chairs, and large toys in the classrooms. Any toy that has been mouthed by a child is set aside and sanitized in the dishwasher.

Observing Children for Signs & Symptoms of Illness

All children react to illness differently and staff must be ever alert to the behaviors children display in the classroom. If a child is acting different than normal, the staff members will watch him/her more closely. They may attempt to contact the parent to find out if anything has happened that may cause a change in the child's behavior.

In the event a child is becoming ill, staff will take the child to the health office and have the staff nurse or a medically certified staff member take the child's temperature. If it is the judgment of that person that the child needs to go home, the parent or emergency contact will be notified.

Mildly Ill Children

Any child who meets the following criteria is defined as mildly ill:

- ✓ Symptoms of a minor childhood illness that does not represent a significant risk of infection to the other children.
- ✓ The child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in the usual activities of the program
- ✓ The care of the mildly ill child does not interfere with the care or supervision of other children.

Moderately Ill Children

A child who meets the following criteria is defined as moderately ill:

- ✓ The child's health status requires a level of care and attention that cannot be accommodated in the center setting without the specialized services of a health professional.
- ✓ The care of the child interferes with the care of other children and the child must be removed from the normal routine of the program and put into a separate designated area, but has been evaluated and approved for inclusion by a healthcare provider.

Please note: The definitions above do not include children who are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Programs must consider each child's case individually and comply with the requirements of the ADA.

Record of Child Illness

A logbook, which is kept in the health office, is used to record information about children's illnesses, injuries, and signs of abuse or maltreatment. A note is also sent home to the parent if the child is injured or becomes ill during the course of the day.

Contacting the Parent / Guardian

If a child becomes ill or is injured at Benchmark Family Services, the parent will be contacted.

When a child is enrolled in the program, the parent is required to furnish emergency contact information for the parents/guardians, as well as emergency contact persons. Emergency contacts will be called if the parent cannot be reached by phone.

If the injury is serious, an ambulance will be called before the parent is contacted.

Biting

Most young children bite at one time or another. Although biting is usually perceived to be an aggressive behavior and is alarming to caregivers and parents, there are many reasons why children bite.

Bite Facts

- ✓ Biting occurs most commonly between the ages of 1 year and 3 years.
- ✓ Biting is a serious behavior, both in the amount of pain it inflicts, and in the intensity of reaction of caregivers and parents. Nothing upsets parents more. Nothing makes caregivers more frustrated.
- ✓ Good supervision is a deterrent for biting. However, bites can happen so quickly, that even if an adult is right there, s/he can't always prevent it.

When a Child is Bitten

When a child is bitten, staff members will intervene immediately and attend to the injured child. The child will be taken to the health office where s/he will be assessed. If necessary, the wound will be cleaned with soap and water to prevent infection. An ice pack may be applied to reduce swelling, and the child will be consoled to ensure they know they did nothing wrong.

Following a bite, an incident report will be completed. A designated staff member will contact the parent to advise them that their child was bitten and assure them that their child is okay. Parents often ask which child did the biting and it is our policy to **not** provide this information because it serves no constructive purpose.

Staff members will also assess the situation to look for clues or patterns that may have triggered the bite incident. Some triggers could be: does the child bite the same child or adult? Could the biter need to eat? Is it close to lunchtime or snack? Is the child tired or overstimulated? Does the child exhibit other behaviors that indicate some needs are not being met?

The child who did the biting will be removed from the group for a short period of time. The child will be told that biting is not allowed and that it hurts and we do not hurt our friends. After a respite from the activity in the classroom, the biter will be directed to an activity that is different than the last one s/he was involved in at the time of the incident. Often, sensory activities, water play, or playdough are good choices for redirection. The biter will also be shadowed by an adult in the group setting until everyone settles down.

Staff will write down information regarding the biting situation, such as what was happening in the room at the time the bite occurred, who was in the room, what time it was, and what happened just before the bite. This information is kept in a file in case another incident occurs.

It is important that staff members focus on the biter's behavior, not the biter. Playing with a biter and re-establishing a good relationship is important. The child needs to feel accepted, not rejected.

The parent of the biter will also be informed about the incident. It is important that the parent and staff members work together to resolve the biting. If the biting continues, the parent will be asked to come in

for a meeting with the director and staff in order to develop a plan of intervention. However, if the biting continues after meeting with the parent, and the child does not seem to understand the consequences of his/her behavior, another conference with the parent will be held. At this time, a decision to remove the child from the program may be made, or it may be suggested that the parents seek professional help or a different environment with fewer children.

There are several reasons for this policy:

- ✓ We need to teach children the correct way to control and express themselves, so they will develop positive self-esteem and independence.
- ✓ We need to protect the other children in our care.

Sometimes, we don't find out why a child bites. Children usually grow out of biting but we need to provide positive role modeling for both the child and parent.