EmBe

Empowering You to Be



CHILDCARE AND PRESCHOOL

Parent Handbook

2026-2027

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WELCOME TO EMBE!

Thank you for choosing EmBe for your childcare needs. EmBe has a rich history caring for children. EmBe began providing preschool and childcare in 1961 – one of the first in the state outside of homes. Since that time, EmBe's award winning childcare programs have become some of the most respected in the region, with programs provided in several locations throughout the area.

This handbook is intended for all Parents/Legal Guardians to understand EmBe's policies. EmBe adheres to all policies set forth by the South Dakota Department of Social Services according to the law; their guide can be found on their website. EmBe expects all Parents/Legal Guardians to read and acknowledge receipt of handbook annually.

MISSION

We uplift the potential in children, women, and families through opportunities that empower all.

VISION

A community where children thrive, women excel, and families succeed.

VALUES

- Curiosity: EmBe sparks creativity, innovation, exploration, and problem solving; we embrace opportunity and celebrate progress.
- Authenticity: EmBe believes in everyone's unique capabilities, power, and presence. We encourage everyone to show up as their true self.
- Leadership: EmBe creates an environment that nurtures ongoing personal, educational, and professional development while encouraging everyone to contribute.
- Connection: EmBe fosters a sense of community, shared perspectives, and a sense of belonging.

EMBE EDUCATION

EmBe Education honors children, families, and teachers by fostering wholistic development focused on character, inherent intelligence, and physical well-being.

LOCATIONS AND PROVIDER NUMBERS

All EmBe locations can be found by visiting embe.org. Please contact any of our locations for provider numbers. Please visit www.embe.org for hours of operation and staff contact information.

HOLIDAYS

EmBe is closed to observe the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Thanksgiving Day
Memorial Day	Friday after Thanksgiving Day

Independence Day	Christmas Day (close at 4:00 pm on December 24 when it falls on a weekday)
Labor Day	

If the holiday falls on a weekend, EmBe's administration will determine the weekday which will be used to observe the holiday. Generally, if the holiday falls on a Saturday, it will be observed on Friday; if it falls on a Sunday it will be observed the following Monday.

OUR TEAM

Our classroom teams are made up of highly qualified teachers. We define highly qualified as years of experience and/or formal education and training in the field. The staff is supported by our EmBe Education team. Our staff members complete an orientation and onboarding process upon joining the EmBe team. EmBe adheres to expectations set forth by the Office of Licensing and Accreditation through the Department of Social Services.

All EmBe staff complete required orientation, background screening, CPR/First Aid, and ongoing professional development in accordance with state licensing requirements and EmBe standards. EmBe regularly reviews program quality, safety, and licensing compliance to ensure high standards of care.

PARENTS/LEGAL GUARDIANS

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

All records provided by families are confidential. We also ask that you respect this confidentiality by not asking staff to discuss your child or other children outside of the center. Additionally, our success in communication depends on the accurate contact information of our families. Please update your contact information as appropriate. All information about families and staff, including life circumstances are kept confidential. No personal information will be released or discussed outside the program.

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

EmBe requires the parents/legal guardians of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of EmBe is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of EmBe, but is the responsibility of every parent/legal guardian or adult who enters the center. Parents/legal guardians are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents/legal guardians who violate the Parent/Legal Guardian Code of Conduct will not be permitted on agency property thereafter. If a parent/legal guardian has an urgent issue that needs to be addressed immediately, please contact the Director of EmBe Education.

- No parent/legal guardian or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language (including gestures) on EmBe property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not.
- At no time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff or children, or that person will be asked to leave the building immediately.
- Threats of any kind will not be tolerated.

- Parents/legal guardians must be responsible for, and in control of their behavior at all times. If a parent/legal guardian exhibits out of control behavior, the parent/legal guardian will be asked to leave the building immediately, an investigation will be conducted, and a temporary or permanent building ban may be implemented.
- All threats will be reported to law enforcement.
- Parents are expected to adhere to and uphold all EmBe policies and procedures; concerns or questions can be directed to Childcare Managers or myvoice@embe.org
- If a staff member experiences any of the behaviors listed above from a parent or guardian, they must report the incident to their manager immediately.

RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS

Parents/Legal Guardians of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at EmBe, as provided by law. However, if a parent/legal guardian appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, staff will encourage the parent/legal guardian to find alternate pick up and/or notify emergency contacts. If the parent/legal guardian insists on removing their child, childcare management will notify law enforcement.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order), EmBe must be given a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto.

In the absence of a court order on file with EmBe, both guardians shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. EmBe cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent/legal guardian by request of the other parent/legal guardian, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent/legal guardian does not want the other parent/legal guardian to have access to their child, EmBe suggests that the parent/legal guardian keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain a child are secondary to the other parent/legal guardian's right to immediate access. EmBe will contact the law enforcement should a conflict arise.

The role of EmBe is to care for children, not to be a party to the conflict between parents/legal guardians or family members.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

VISITORS

EmBe welcomes approved visitors for family visits, guest presentations, partner services, and other program-related activities. All visits must be scheduled in advance, approved by EmBe leadership or the appropriate Manager, and always supervised by an EmBe employee.

Visits with an individual child require signed parent/legal guardian consent. Teachers must notify Childcare Managers of expected visitors, and Managers may approve or deny visits based on program needs, safety, and appropriateness. Visitors must sign in, present a valid photo ID, and wear a visitor pass while in the building. Newly hired staff observing for training may be treated as visitors and may not be counted in ratio or left alone with children.

VOLUNTEER POLICY

EmBe welcomes volunteers in its programs. EmBe takes additional precautions to ensure child safety, appropriate supervision, and compliance with program requirements.

- Volunteers must always remain under the supervision of trained EmBe staff and may never be alone with children.
- All EmBe volunteers must have a completed background check on file before serving.
- Lead teachers are responsible for reviewing emergency procedures and relevant program information with volunteers when they arrive.
- Volunteers serve on a temporary or minimal basis. Volunteers who exceed 120 hours in a 12-month period must complete childcare licensing-mandated trainings, mandatory reporting of child abuse, and CPR training to continue serving in childcare programs.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

EmBe expects parents/legal guardians to use social media responsibly and respectfully when referencing EmBe, its programs, staff, families, or children. Families may not post photos, videos, names, or identifying information of children other than their own without permission from that child's parent/legal guardian.

Families and staff must protect confidential information and avoid sharing private information about other children, families, staff, or program matters online. Questions or concerns should be directed to the appropriate EmBe Manager or leadership team rather than posted on social media. Online behavior that is threatening, harassing, discriminatory, defamatory, or disruptive to the program may be addressed under EmBe's Parent/Legal Guardian Code of Conduct.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

To support healthy child development and hands-on learning, EmBe maintains a no-screen-time policy during classroom learning activities.

- Classrooms may use music, sound machines, and other audio resources as appropriate.
- Preschool classrooms may use approved technology minimally as an educational tool.
- Personal technology devices are not permitted during program hours.
- Devices used without staff permission will be collected and returned to a parent/guardian at pick-up.
- EmBe will provide any technology needed for program activities.
- Children may request to use a program phone to contact a parent/guardian when needed.

BABYSITTING POLICY

Babysitting arrangements fall outside the scope of EmBe's supervision, insurance coverage, and licensing regulations. As such, any private babysitting is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or the responsibility of EmBe.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

ALLERGIES

The health and safety of all children is a top priority at EmBe. Parents/guardians must inform EmBe of any allergy at enrollment or as soon as it is identified and provide all required medical documentation and medications, including an Allergy Care Plan and prescribed emergency medication, as applicable.

To help prevent allergic reactions:

- Allergy information and care plans will be shared with appropriate staff.
- Emergency medications, such as EpiPens®, must be provided by the parent/guardian and kept current.
- Staff are trained to recognize and respond to allergic reactions.
- Emergency services and parents/guardians will be contacted immediately if emergency medication is administered.
- Allergy care plans and medications will be taken on field trips.

EmBe strives to provide a **Nut Safe** environment to reduce the risk of exposure to peanuts and tree nuts.

- Snacks provided by EmBe are peanut and tree nut free.
- Children may not bring food containing peanuts or tree nuts to the program.
- Food sharing is not permitted except during approved special events.
- Celebration treats must be store-bought, peanut and tree nut free, and include an ingredient label.

While EmBe takes reasonable precautions to reduce exposure to allergens, we cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment. Please contact your manager with any allergy-related questions or to obtain required forms.

POTTY TRAINING POLICY

EmBe recognizes that potty training is an important developmental milestone that occurs at each child's own pace. Potty training is supported in classrooms with a 1:5 staff-to-child ratio and is most successful when families and staff work together to maintain consistency between home and school. Children may begin potty training when they demonstrate developmental readiness. Staff will provide positive encouragement, support, and age-appropriate assistance while recognizing that accidents are a normal part of the learning process.

- Parents/guardians are responsible for providing extra clothing and communicating their child's progress and needs. Based on developmental readiness, classroom routines, staffing ratios, and health and safety considerations, staff may recommend delaying training in the classroom or continuing the use of pull-ups until the child is ready.
- EmBe will communicate regularly with families to support a positive, and successful potty training

experience.

HANDWASHING

Good hand hygiene helps reduce the spread of illness and keeps our staff and students healthy and safe. Children and staff are required to wash their hands regularly, including before eating and after toileting, diapering, or contact with bodily fluids. EmBe teaches and supervises proper handwashing practices and provides soap, running water, and disposable towels in all required areas. Hand sanitizer may be used when soap and water are not available, but it is not a substitute for handwashing. We encourage all children and staff to practice healthy hygiene habits throughout the day.

SICK CHILDREN

To help maintain a healthy environment, EmBe follows all South Dakota Department of Social Services requirements regarding immunizations, illness, and communicable diseases. Current immunization records must be provided at enrollment and kept up to date. Medical and religious exemption forms are available upon request.

Children should remain home when they are ill, including if they have:

- A fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- A contagious rash or illness
- A bacterial infection that has not been treated with antibiotics for at least 24 hours
- Live head lice

If a child becomes ill while in our care, a parent/guardian will be contacted and expected to arrange prompt pick-up. Children must be symptom-free without the use of medication for at least 24 hours before returning to the program. Students with live head lice must be treated 24 hours before returning to the program. If any live lice are detected, the child will be sent home for repeat treatment.

EmBe reserves the right to determine when a child is too ill to participate safely in program activities. In some cases, a healthcare provider's note may be required before a child can return.

In the event of a communicable disease outbreak, EmBe will follow guidance from the South Dakota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

To ensure the safety of all children, medications may only be administered when a completed Child Medication Permission and Administration Form is on file. All medications must be provided by the parent/guardian, properly labeled, and administered according to the instructions provided.

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing updated medications, authorization forms, and any medical documentation required for their child's care. Emergency medications, such as inhalers and EpiPens, may be authorized for up to one year or until the medication expiration date, whichever occurs first. Parents/guardians must inform EmBe of any medical condition that requires special care or

accommodation, including severe allergies, feeding tubes, PICC lines, chronic health conditions, or other significant medical needs.

EmBe will work with families and healthcare providers to determine whether a child's care needs can be safely met within our program. A current medical care plan and any required physician documentation must be provided and kept up to date.

INJURIES

The safety of children is our highest priority. If a child is injured while participating in an EmBe program, staff will assess the situation, provide appropriate first aid, and seek emergency medical assistance when necessary. Parents/guardians will be notified of any significant injury and immediately informed of all head injuries. Any injury requiring first aid will be communicated to families before pick-up via Brightwheel. All accidents and injuries are documented via Brightwheel and shared with parents/guardians.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES

EmBe is committed to creating the safest possible environment for children, staff, and guests. In the event of an emergency, please refer to the policies and procedures below to determine the appropriate response. Due to the nature of certain emergencies, these policies are internal and will be kept confidential to protect all involved.

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

South Dakota codified law (SDCL) 26-8A-3 states that staff in licensed programs, who have reasonable cause to suspect that any child under the age of 18 years, has been abused or neglected as defined by SDCL 26-8A-2, are considered mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect and are to report that information to one of these three entities:

1. The Department of Social services at 1-877-244-0864
2. The state's attorney's office 605-773-3215
3. The local law enforcement office - Sioux Falls 605-367-7000

Anyone participating in good faith in making a report shall have immunity from any liability, civil or imposed, and shall have the same immunity with respect to participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from such a report.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & WEATHER-RELATED CLOSURES

The safety of children and staff is our highest priority. EmBe conducts regular emergency drills, including fire, tornado, and lockdown drills, in accordance with state licensing requirements. Evacuation routes are posted throughout each center, and staff are trained on emergency procedures.

In the event of an emergency, children will be moved to a safe location and families will be notified through Brightwheel as soon as possible. Due to the sensitive nature of emergency response plans, detailed procedures are available upon request.

WEATHER RELATED CLOSURES AND DELAYS

Occasionally, severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances may require EmBe to delay opening, close early, or close for the day. Families will be notified as early as possible through Brightwheel, EmBe's website, social media channels, and local media announcements.

Because closures can occur unexpectedly, we encourage families to have a backup childcare plan in place. Tuition rates remain unchanged during weather-related closures.

If an emergency such as a power outage or building issue requires an unexpected closure during the day, families will be contacted to arrange pick-up. If we are unable to reach a parent or guardian, emergency contacts will be notified.

OUTDOOR WEATHER GUIDELINES

To keep children safe and comfortable:

- Outdoor time may be limited or moved indoors during periods of extreme heat or severe weather.
- When heat index values become unsafe, outdoor activities may be shortened or canceled.
- During severe weather events, children and staff will move to designated shelter areas until conditions are safe.
- EmBe reserves the right to adjust weather and emergency procedures based on the unique needs of each location and situation.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

TUITION AND FEES

All details regarding weekly tuition, registration, and fees may be found online at EmBe.org or by reaching out to our front desk. Tuition rates will generally adjust at the beginning of the school year in August.

Tuition is collected each week for care provided that week. Parents/legal guardians must provide a payment method upon registration for a program. Payment methods include ACH transactions, debit or credit card. A $35.00 processing fee will be assessed on all payments declined (checking account and credit card declines). Enrollment may be suspended if charges accumulate after a second week. When the parent/legal guardian reaches an appropriate payment plan, childcare may be resumed providing there is space available. EmBe will make every effort to accommodate families with financial difficulties or unforeseen circumstances that may affect their ability to pay; please see scholarship information below.

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

EmBe accepts Child Care Assistance through the State of South Dakota for all who qualify. Scholarship guidelines can be viewed by visiting EmBe.org and selecting “resources.” If your income falls outside the

guidelines, you are invited to continue with the application process to explain any additional circumstances. After the application is submitted, it will go to finance for review. An EmBe team member will contact you within five business days to update you on the status of your application. Please contact childcare@embe.org with any questions or for assistance with an application.

ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

EmBe's childcare centers are licensed by the South Dakota Department of Social Services for children ranging in age from four weeks through age 5. Children are accepted without regard to race, color, national and/or ethnic origin or religion.

Parents/legal guardians wishing to enroll a child in a program must complete the online registration form and pay the registration fee on Brightwheel. Any court related documents addressing parental rights, such as custody and visitation rights, regarding a child enrolled in a program must be presented to the administrators. All such documents are confidential.

The following forms must be completed at the time of admission and kept current throughout enrollment in accordance with the State of South Dakota Children's Records Requirements:

- Child's name and date of birth
- Parent/Legal Guardian name and telephone number
- Emergency Contact name and telephone number (separate from Parent/Legal Guardian)
- Parental permission for emergency medical treatment
- The names of individuals authorized to pick up child
- Health information, including allergies or special needs
- Current Immunization Record or Religious or Medical Exemption
- Permission for Field Trips & Photo Release or Exemption
- Enrollment & Tuition Agreement
- Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Application for Free & Reduced Meals
- The EmBe Promise and Parent Agreement Form
- A non-refundable registration fee of $150 is required at the time of registration

All parents/legal guardians are invited to tour EmBe buildings prior to enrollment, however if they are unable to tour in advance they may tour on the first day. If there is space available, EmBe will notify parents/legal guardians to confirm a start date. If there is not space available, a parent/legal guardian has the option to join the waitlist. EmBe reviews the waitlist monthly to ensure accurate records. On the first day of enrollment, parents/legal guardians are asked to arrive 30 minutes early to review any outstanding paperwork requests or account questions, learn how to check children in/out and gain access to the building, and settle their child into their class for the day.

ATTENDANCE

Parents are required to pay their weekly fee, whether or not the child attends. Families that remove their children from care for any length of time must pay the full-time rate to maintain their child's spot. If the

minimum weekly fee is not received, no guarantee of that spot can be given. Please contact the Childcare Manager for any special circumstances that may affect attendance or ability to pay. Families who receive Child Care Assistance through the State of South Dakota must meet the relevant attendance requirements as established by the program, please reach out to our Senior Customer Service & Billing Representative at childcare@embe.org if you have questions.

TERMINATION & WITHDRAWAL FROM CARE

If your family plans to withdraw from a program or change enrollment schedules, we ask that you submit a two-week written notice online at: https://embesf.formstack.com/forms/childcare_sac_forms
Providing advance notice helps children, families, and teachers prepare for the transition and allows us time to fill the available enrollment space. Families who do not provide a two-week notice will be responsible for tuition charges during the notice period, regardless of attendance. While our goal is to partner with families to support every child's success, there may be circumstances in which EmBe determines that continued enrollment is not appropriate. Examples may include:

- Non-payment of tuition or fees.
- Ongoing safety concerns related to a child's behavior.
- Support needs that exceed the services or staffing available within the program.
- Repeated failure to follow program policies.
- Lack of communication or partnership regarding a child's care and support needs.
- Failure to provide required enrollment documentation, including immunization records and health forms.
- Situations where the program is no longer able to meet the needs of the child or family.
- Circumstances in which a productive and trusting partnership can no longer be maintained.

Whenever possible, EmBe will communicate concerns and work collaboratively with families before a decision is made. Families are asked to take all personal belongings home on their child's final day of attendance. If enrollment ends unexpectedly, belongings may be picked up from the center within 30 days. Any unclaimed items remaining after 30 days may be donated or discarded.

CHILDCARE PROGRAMS

EmBe is committed to caring for children at each stage of their development, and to providing the appropriate environment for those stages. The following is a summary of stages identified by EmBe. Program options vary by location; please consult directly with your Childcare Manager to confirm options. Each classroom follows a daily schedule and developmentally appropriate curriculum designed to support children's growth and learning.

INFANTS (0-12 MONTHS)

From birth to 12 months, children build a foundation for learning through trusting relationships with caregivers and exploration of their surroundings. Infants develop early communication skills through sounds, gestures, facial expressions, and interactions. They strengthen physical skills such as reaching, grasping, sitting, crawling, and

early movement while learning about their environment through their senses, curiosity, and play.

- Children at this age will follow individual schedules.
- Older infants will start solid foods.

YOUNG TODDLERS (18-24 MONTHS)

Between 18 and 24 months, children grow in independence as they explore, make choices, and begin expressing their wants, needs, and emotions. They expand their language skills by understanding and using more words, engaging in simple conversations, and following familiar directions. Children develop problem-solving skills, early social skills, and coordination through active play and hands-on experiences.

- Children begin to streamline mealtimes and nap times.
- Some children will begin potty training.

OLDER TODDLERS (24-36 MONTHS)

From 24 to 36 months, children continue developing confidence, communication, and self-help skills. They begin using more complex language, engaging in pretend play, building relationships with peers, and practicing managing emotions. Children explore early literacy, math, and science concepts through play while strengthening independence, creativity, and curiosity about the world around them.

- Mealtimes and nap times will be consistent.
- Children will begin potty training.

PRESCHOOL (36 –48 MONTHS)

Between 36 and 48 months, children expand their social, emotional, language, and thinking skills through hands-on learning experiences. They develop stronger communication skills, engage in imaginative and cooperative play, build early literacy and math concepts, and explore science, creativity, and problem-solving. Children also practice self-regulation, independence, following routines, and building positive relationships with peers and adults.

- Children in preschool will continue to have a daily rest time.
- Children must be completely potty trained to attend preschool classrooms; exceptions may be granted with Manager approval.
- Children will begin preschool and should bring a backpack along with their school supplies.

KINDERCOLLEGE (45-60 MONTHS)

From 45 to 60 months, children continue building the skills needed for a successful transition to kindergarten. They strengthen their ability to collaborate, manage emotions, communicate ideas, and participate in group learning. Children deepen early reading, writing, math, and critical-thinking skills through meaningful play and exploration while developing confidence, creativity, persistence, and independence as lifelong learners.

- Children attending Kindercollege will have a shorter rest time.
- Children attending Kindercollege should be eligible and planning to attend Kindergarten the following school year.

PRIMARY CARE MODEL & GROUPING PRACTICES

EmBe utilizes a primary care model for children ages 0-2 and a grouping model for children ages 3-5 to

support consistent care, supervision, and positive relationships.

PRIMARY CARE MODEL (0-2YO):
Each infant and toddler is assigned to a primary caregiver who is primarily responsible for the child's daily care routines, including diapering, feeding, napping, comforting, and other caregiving activities. The primary caregiver builds a responsive relationship with the child and family, monitors development, plans individualized learning experiences, and communicates regularly with families. While all staff are responsible for the safety and supervision of every child, the primary caregiver provides consistency and continuity of care and serves as the family's primary point of contact. Each room changes providers based on their discretion.

GROUPING MODEL (3-5YO):
Children ages 3-5 are assigned to a designated provider group. The assigned provider is responsible for accounting for and supervising the children in their group during transitions, attendance checks, emergency procedures, and other daily routines. While children may participate in activities within the larger classroom community, designated groups help ensure consistent supervision, accountability, and smooth transitions throughout the day.

Through these practices, EmBe promotes secure relationships, individualized support, and a safe, engaging environment where all children can learn and thrive.

CLASSROOM TRANSITIONS

Our goal at EmBe is to ensure that children receive appropriate educational guidance as they grow in our care. There are several things we take into consideration when transitioning children from one class to another. The primary factor in determining the timing of transitions is child readiness. We integrate CDC Developmental Milestones, internal assessments, SD Early Learner Guidelines, and teacher expertise to determine readiness. Other factors may play a role in a child's readiness to transition, including available space, age, and special needs/accommodations at the request of parents/legal guardians.

At each transition, parents/legal guardians will be invited for a brief conference with the classroom teachers. This conference is designed to review the child's progress, as well as give parents/legal guardians an opportunity to learn about their upcoming classroom. We honor parents/legal guardians as first educators, and therefore all decisions to transition will be made in collaboration with parents/legal guardians. Should a teacher or parent/legal guardian be concerned about the rate of transition, please refer to our additional resources for outside collaboration.

EmBe will notify parents/legal guardians of any change in tuition rate associated with the transition of their child prior to the transition.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE POLICY

To help us provide a safe, well-staffed, and high-quality experience for all children, we ask families to arrive by 9:00 a.m. whenever possible and no later than 9:30 a.m. each day. Consistent arrival times help us plan staffing, maintain classroom routines, and minimize disruptions to learning and activities.
We understand that appointments, family commitments, and work schedules may occasionally require a later arrival. If your child will arrive after 9:30 a.m., please notify the center at least 24 hours in advance whenever possible so we can plan accordingly. Families with a regular schedule that requires arrival after 9:30 a.m. should connect with their Childcare Manager to discuss arrangements that meet their needs while supporting classroom operations.

DROP OFF & PICK UP PROCEDURE

For your child's safety, please ensure a staff member acknowledges your child's arrival before you leave the classroom. Children should never be left unattended in a classroom, on the playground, or in a vehicle.

When dropping off multiple children, we recommend taking older siblings to their classrooms first before dropping off infants or toddlers. School-age children must be accompanied into the building and signed in by a parent or authorized adult.

Children will only be released to parents, legal guardians, or other authorized individuals listed in the child's Brightwheel profile. To ensure the safety of all children:

- Authorized pick-up individuals must be listed in Brightwheel.
- Staff may request photo identification at any time.
- Individuals unknown to staff should be prepared to present a valid government-issued photo ID.
- Authorized pick-up individuals must check in at the front desk before proceeding further into the building.

To avoid delays, please keep your child's Brightwheel profile updated with current emergency contacts and authorized pick-up information.

For the safety of children, EmBe will do everything we can to distract anyone who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol until law enforcement arrives.

Our centers close at **6:00 p.m.** Families are expected to pick up their child prior to closing. Late pick-ups may result in a late fee of $10 for the first five (5) minutes late, and $1.00 for each additional minute. This fee is per child and will be added to the next weekly billing.

If a child remains at the center after closing and we have not received communication from the family:

- Staff will attempt to contact parents or guardians using the information provided in Brightwheel.

- If parents or guardians cannot be reached, emergency contacts and authorized pick-up individuals will be contacted.
- These efforts will continue until 7:00 p.m.
- If no authorized adult can be reached by 7:00 p.m., local law enforcement will be contacted, and next steps will be followed according to their guidance and any applicable child welfare procedures.

We appreciate your partnership in following these procedures, which help us ensure the safety, security, and well-being of every child in our care.

ACTIVE SUPERVISION

The safety and well-being of children is our highest priority. At EmBe, we take active supervision seriously and expect staff to maintain awareness of children at all times. Active supervision means more than simply watching children. Our staff are expected to be engaged, attentive, and actively involved in children's learning, play, and interactions throughout the day.

Staff continuously monitor children's activities, environments, and social interactions to help prevent injuries, support positive relationships, and address concerns before they escalate. This includes observing unsafe behaviors, helping children navigate conflicts, and providing guidance when needed.

To support a safe environment:

- Children are actively supervised during all classroom activities, transitions, outdoor play, field trips, rest time, and meals.
- Staff work together through ongoing communication and collaboration to ensure quality care.
- Personal cell phone use is prohibited while supervising children, except in emergencies.
- Staff remain responsible for supervision at all times, including during children's rest periods.

Through active supervision, we create a safe, engaging, and nurturing environment where children can learn, grow, and thrive.

NAME TO FACE COUNTS

EmBe utilizes name-to-face counting procedures throughout the day to ensure children are accurately accounted for during classroom activities, transitions, outdoor play, field trips, and emergencies.

FIELD TRIPS

At EmBe, we believe children learn best through hands-on experiences. Throughout the year, our Preschool and School-Age programs may participate in field trips and special enrichment activities designed to support learning, exploration, and fun. Families will receive advance notice of all field trips, including the date, time, location, and any required permission forms. A signed consent form (via Brightwheel enrollment form) is required for participation, and some locations may require additional waivers. If a family chooses

not to have their child participate, we will make reasonable efforts to provide an alternative care arrangement when possible.

Safety is our top priority during all off-site activities. Staff members:

- Conduct regular attendance checks and headcounts throughout the trip.
- Provide active supervision at all times.
- Carry emergency contact information, medications, and a first aid kit.
- Follow established transportation and safety procedures.
- Ensure the center has current trip information and staff contact details.

Our goal is to provide safe, engaging experiences that allow children to learn, grow, and create lasting memories.

CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

All items brought to the center must be clearly labeled with the child's name. Each class will give parents/legal guardians a list of recommended care items to be brought from home in the welcome packet.

CHILDREN'S PERSONAL BELONGINGS

We strongly discourage personal belongings (i.e. toys, electronics, jewelry) from home. EmBe is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen property. EmBe will not oversee personal valuables. The only exception is for show and tell days or specific care items that are approved on an individual basis. Children participate in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Families should provide weather-appropriate clothing, including coats, hats, boots, sunscreen, and other seasonal items.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Communication is one of the most important tools in providing a quality childcare experience for families. Effective communication with families helps build trust and is essential for parents to understand the growth and development of their children. We are honored to care for children each day, and all staff are expected to adhere to the communication policies set forth by program leadership.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND POSITIVE GUIDANCE

At EmBe Education, we are committed to creating a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment for all children. We believe children are most successful when families and educators work together through open communication, consistency, and positive relationships.

We encourage all children to:

- Take care of yourself
- Take care of each other
- Take care of our school

OUR APPROACH TO GUIDANCE

EmBe uses positive, developmentally appropriate strategies to support children's social, emotional, and behavioral growth. Teachers model expectations, teach problem-solving skills, redirect behavior, and help children learn appropriate ways to express themselves. When additional support is needed, staff partner with families and leadership to develop strategies that help children succeed while maintaining a safe learning environment for all children.

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PROCESS

Most behaviors are addressed through classroom guidance, redirection, and coaching. When a child's behavior presents a significant safety concern, additional support may be required.

Examples of significant behaviors may include:

- Physical harm to self or to others
- Threats of harm
- Unsafe behavior
- Leaving a supervised area

IN THESE SITUATIONS:

- Staff will take immediate steps to ensure safety.
- Families will be notified and involved in determining next steps.
- Repeated serious incidents may result in parent meetings, individualized support plans, or further review of a child's enrollment status.
- The length and nature of any temporary break from care will be determined based on the severity and frequency of behavior and in partnership with the family.

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

We believe families are a child's first and most important teachers. When concerns arise, our goal is to work together to identify solutions and provide consistent support both at home and in the classroom.

When needed, EmBe may recommend additional community resources, including:

- Birth to Three
- Pediatricians
- Occupational Therapists
- Play Therapists
- Behavioral or developmental consultation services

All referrals and support services are voluntary and confidential. Our team will work closely with families to share information, provide guidance, and support each child's success.

NUTRITION

Mealtimes are an important part of each child's day and support healthy growth, learning, social skills, and independence. Staff are responsible for providing a positive, calm, and welcoming mealtime environment.

MEAL REQUIREMENTS

Children who are present during scheduled meal times must be offered meals that meet CACFP requirements:

- **Breakfast:** Grain, fruit/vegetable, and milk
- **Lunch:** Meat/meat alternate, vegetable, fruit, grain, and milk
- **Snack:** Any two CACFP-approved components

All meals and snacks are provided at no cost to families.

MENUS

- Monthly menus are posted for families and staff.
- Follow the posted menu unless an approved substitution is necessary.

INFANT FEEDING

- Infants are fed according to their individual feeding schedules and developmental needs.

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: How to File a Complaint, 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.

OUTSIDE FOOD POLICY

EmBe provides nutritious meals and snacks for all enrolled children, including iron-fortified infant formulas for babies. Families who would like their child to receive EmBe's provided formula must complete the required Infant Formula Request Form.

Parents and legal guardians of infants may choose to provide breast milk, formula, or infant foods of their preference. All items must be clearly labeled and stored according to program procedures and food safety guidelines.

To support the safety of all children, EmBe accommodates documented food allergies and operates as a peanut-safe facility. Because of the risk of allergen exposure, families are strongly discouraged from bringing food from home.

If a child has a special dietary need that requires food from home, the parent or legal guardian must request approval from the Childcare Manager, in consultation with the Food Service Compliance Manager.

Any food approved for home-to-school use must:

- Be peanut and tree nut safe.
- Be clearly labeled with the child's name.
- Be ready to serve and able to be consumed without reheating or additional preparation by staff.
- Provide an appropriately balanced meal that meets the child's nutritional needs.
    - EmBe reserves the right to determine whether a meal brought from home is appropriate and nutritionally adequate. If a meal is determined to be inappropriate, incomplete, or unsafe to serve, EmBe will provide a substitute meal.

For birthdays, holidays, class parties, and other celebrations, families may choose to provide a special treat for the class. Any food brought into the program must:

- Be sufficient for all participating children.
- Comply with EmBe's allergy and food safety policies.
- Be clearly labeled and include ingredient information when applicable.

ALLERGY & MEAL MODIFICATIONS

For the safety of the child, parents/legal guardians are required to provide a signed copy of the Meal Modification Request Form, detailing any food allergies at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be completely filled out by the child’s physician and parent/legal guardian, and must be reviewed annually or when there is a change to the allergy. In addition to this form, parents/legal guardians must provide a copy of any additional physician’s orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child’s allergy condition. This form can be obtained by request from the Childcare Manager or Food Service & Compliance Manager.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein.

EmBe makes every effort to reduce the risk to exposure of allergens within our facilities, however, we are

considered a nut safe environment. Any child that may require medical care, including the use of an Epi-Pen, as a result of a nut or any other allergy must have the allergy documented by a physician and parents/legal guardians provide an allergy care plan. Please reach out to a Manager for any allergy related questions or forms.

EmBe reserves the right to make changes to this handbook at any time and for any reason. In the event of a change, every effort will be made to promptly provide updated information to families.

We are grateful for the trust you place in us and value the partnership we share in supporting your child's growth, learning, and well-being. Together, we create a community where children feel safe, confident, and inspired to explore the world around them. Please remember that open communication is always encouraged, and we welcome your questions, ideas, and feedback at any time. Thank you for being an essential part of our community—we look forward to a wonderful year of learning, discovery, and connection with you and your family.



September 2026