

Preparing for a Great Day of Back-Up Care in a Center

Welcome to the **Bright Horizons® Back-Up Care Advantage Program®**. We know new places can feel unfamiliar to a child and our goal is to make you and your family feel at home. All of the centers in our program are designed to be warm, inviting places where families feel welcome and special, and where children find opportunities for discovery and play. Whether you use a center once or many times, the staff ensures individualized care, dependable communication, and solid partnerships between parents and teachers.

Following are some helpful guidelines for your visit. Please note that each center will have its own policies and procedures that may supplement or supersede these guidelines. When possible, we recommend that you call the center in advance of care. If time permits, we also encourage you to visit the center with your child(ren) before your day of care.

Before Your Visit to the Center

- **Complete All Registration Materials.** Required information typically includes immunization records, emergency contact numbers, medication, and allergy information. These items must be completed and submitted to the center before care may be used. If you have not received this paperwork, please contact the center directly to request a copy.
- **Confirm Driving Directions.** Reduce stress by plotting your route. Arrive early to allow adequate time to communicate with center staff, and ensure that all required paperwork is completed.
- **Prepare Ahead.** To help the staff better understand your child's preferences and schedule, review information with the center on or before the day of care.

The Day of Your Visit

To start your child's day off right, consider his individual needs, her personality, and what will make your child feel most comfortable in a new environment.

Infants

- **Provide Information.** Make sure teachers and caregivers know your baby's schedule, routines for eating, sleeping, changing, and play, as well as how you comfort your child.

- **Bring Necessary Items.** Include anything your infant might need including a change of clothes, comfort items such as a favorite blanket or stuffed animal, diapers, wipes, as well as enough formula, milk, and/or baby food for the day.
- **Label Everything.** Include your child's full name on bottles, cups, toys, and any other items you bring from home.

Toddlers, Preschoolers, and School-Age Children

- **Check With the Center About Food Policies.** Confirm whether snacks and lunch are provided or if you should send snacks and lunch for your child. Please note that due to state licensing regulations, policies for heating/refrigerating food vary by center and some centers may not be able to refrigerate or heat lunches. Centers may also be nut-free or nut-safe and may not allow any food items that contain nuts (or other food items that may cause an allergic reaction).
- **Dress Safely.** For safety reasons, most centers discourage drawstrings and dangling jewelry, particularly for younger children.
- **Provide a Change of Clothes.** They may be needed if a spill occurs.
- **Label All Items Brought From Home.** Please include your child's full name.

Upon Arrival

A visit to a child care center is a new experience for many children. Some will adapt quickly to it; some will take a “wait and see” approach; and still others will take longer to adjust, especially when they realize mom or dad is not going to be staying.

To help your child settle in, the arrival experience is very important. And there are many things you can do to help your child feel comfortable.

- **Allow Time for Transition.** Plan to leave plenty of time for introductions and to have a conversation with the center staff regarding your child’s care for the day, particularly on your first visit.
- **Discuss Your Child’s Individual Style.** Specific information about preferences will help teachers provide the best balance of quiet and active time.
- **Get Your Child Settled.** Help him or her get interested and involved in a favorite activity that is set up in the classroom.
- **Partner With the Center Staff.** Work with teachers to help your child feel welcome in the center and excited about joining in the day’s activities.
- **Fill Out the Daily Information Sheet.** This sheet is required at many centers; it includes where you will be during the day, a phone number where you can be reached, as well as important information about current medications, allergies, or food restrictions.

Communication During the Day

Center staff members care about the well-being of both you and your child; they strive to ensure open communication about your child’s day in back-up care, and they welcome your phone calls to check in. A few tips:

- **Write Down the Center Phone Number.** You can also set up a time for your child’s teacher to call you.
- **Consider a Visit.** If you think your child would enjoy the opportunity to say hello, you’re welcome to stop by.
- **Keep in Mind Security Procedures.** To ensure the safety and security of all children, the entrance to most centers is secured and parents will be required to ring a doorbell and wait for a staff member to provide access.

Departure

- **Authorize a Pick-Up Person.** Children will be released only to a parent, guardian, or other adult (18 years or older) who has been previously authorized in writing.
- **Bring Identification.** A photo ID is required.
- **Allow Sufficient Time.** Make sure to speak with the center staff about your child’s day and pack up their belongings.

Evaluation

Following your experience in back-up care, you will receive a brief survey by email from the *Back-Up Care Advantage Program*® team. Your comments and suggestions will enable us to continually revise and improve the quality of services available to you. Thanks in advance for your cooperation!