



Columbia Parent Handbook

Learn and Play in a Natural and Creative Way

Welcome to Kids Garden! Kids Garden is committed to providing a highly qualified, clean, safe, captivating, and environmentally friendly learning environment for the families of Charleston and the surrounding areas.

We look forward to joining you in the development of your child and sharing the many wonderful experiences of their childhood. Childhood is a time for growing and experiencing through discovery and exploration. We provide a place where children are free to do just that.

Our Philosophy:

Kids Garden is a drop-in Creative Arts Learning Center. It's a unique space where children ages 12 months (and walking) to 12 years old get to explore, interact and have fun while parents get that much needed time without the kids. Whether it's for a quick trip to the grocery store or a last minute meeting, you can count on Kids Garden with our flexible hours for all of your childcare needs.

Our safe, secure, clean, eco-friendly and captivating learning center is designed to stimulate active minds and exercise growing bodies. From the enrichment classes, reading nook, creative art projects, pretend play centers, group games, circle time activities and amazing indoor wooden play set, kids love their time at Kids Garden!

Parents can feel at ease knowing that Kids Garden activities encourage learning in new areas and provide children with additional social, physical and cognitive development. We strive to make each visit a new and positive experience for your children.

Safety First, Healthy Always:

Every aspect of the space, operation and programming was carefully designed for health and safety, first and foremost. Kids Garden has created the best possible environment for your children:

- No VOC or Lead paint used during the creation of our learning center
- Hypo-allergenic, anti-microbial, mold-resistant, natural cork flooring
- Custom indoor wooden nontoxic play set
- Eco-friendly children's toys including a large selection of natural wood toys
- Non-toxic art supplies and use of recycled items for creative art projects
- Organic snacks and healthy food options (Peanut-free facility)
- Shoe free facility
- Access Security Keypads and Security Monitoring
- Open floor plan allows teachers to see children in all working centers at all times
- Smoke free facility
- Kid-friendly and environmentally-friendly cleaning products
- CPR/First Aid trained staff

Hours of Operation:

Monday - Friday: 8:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Saturday: Open every 2nd Saturday for Parent's Night Out from 4:00 - 9:00 PM

Sunday: Closed for birthday parties and events

Please note: Once the center closes, there is a \$1.00 penalty for every minute you are late. Fees will be collected at that time.

We will be closed to observe the following holidays:

- New Year's Day

- Easter Day
- Independence Day
- Memorial Day
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- Labor Day

Policies & Procedures

Registration:

In order to help us keep safety as our number one priority, we must have every child registered before entering the learning center at Kids Garden. Parents are responsible for reviewing, completing, and signing all State required paperwork for admission and our Kids Garden Client Agreement. We must have these forms signed and on file prior to your child's enrollment in the Center.

The registration process asks for detailed information about any allergies, medical conditions, or dietary restrictions to ensure the safety of your child. We also require an emergency contact phone number and the names of individuals that are authorized to pick up your child. We log all of this information into our software which tracks and keeps detailed records of each child's stay with us.

Upon your first visit, there is a \$40 annual registration fee per family. This fee covers the processing of paperwork for each family.

Patrons of Kids Garden can participate as Members or as drop-in registered guests. The annual Membership fee is \$100. Members receive the best hourly rates, discounts, package deals, and early registration to special events. Sign up for emails for more

information about upcoming seasonal camps, Parent's Night Out, and other special promotions.

Please allow extra time during your first visit to complete all required paperwork and photo identification checks. To save time, you can download a registration form from our [website](#) and bring the completed forms with you on your first visit. Please make sure to include your current email address on all registration paperwork, as any new policy changes and center updates are shared in our monthly newsletter.

Rates:

Drop-In Rates:

1st child: \$18

2nd sibling: \$12

3rd sibling: \$9

Member Rates:

1st child: \$14

2nd sibling: \$10

3rd sibling: \$7

The minimum charge for each stay is the first hour rate.

Toddlers (children under the age of 2) are \$2 additional per hour.

Package Deals for MEMBERS ONLY:

12 Hours: \$162 (\$12.50 an hour)

24 Hours: \$312 (\$12.00 an hour)

48 Hours: \$600 (\$11.50 an hour)

72 Hours: \$864 (\$11.00 an hour)

Arrival and Departure of Your Child

Drop-Off:

- Upon your first visit, informational registration paperwork **MUST** be completed. Your child will be checked in by a Kids Garden staff member.
- After your first visit, we will use your name and profile information to access your family account
- For safety and cleanliness, no shoes are allowed and socks must be worn inside the play space.
- Storage cubbies are provided in our welcome area for coats, shoes, and any other items that require safekeeping. Please put these items in a cubby prior to entering the learning center.
- Once checked in, a Kids Garden staff member will assist your child through the gate. Our software tracks the children's exact check in and check out time by the minute; therefore, we do not round up or down on the time spent within the learning center.
- Upon entering, children will wash hands before playing.

Pick-Up:

- A child will only be released to a custodial parent or guardian, or designated emergency contacts named on the registration form. In situations of custody agreements, Kids Garden will follow court ordered documents. Parents are responsible for providing accurate information in this area. Our secure pick-up policy requires any and all authorized persons to show valid photo identification for child pick-up. Should a family like to add a new authorized adult for the release of children it must be done in person or in writing so that our system may be updated.

- If a different person will be picking up your child, you will need to notify us at the time of drop off and the appropriate “code” word and identifications will be required.
- Telephone authorization to release a child to someone who does not usually pick up the child will be accepted ONLY if prior written authorization has come from the custodial parent or legal guardian.
- During checkout, you will pay for the exact amount of minutes used while enjoying the learning center.
- A staff member will assist your child out of the play space.
- **Late Child Pick-Up:** Please note that once the center closes (after regular operating hours), there is a \$1.00 penalty for every minute you are late. Fees will be collected at that time. Besides being respectful to the children, it is important to the staff as well. They have their schedules and personal lives to live. When parents are late, not only do they have to work overtime, but we have to pay them overtime as well. We want to provide our children and families with happy, warm, and energetic teachers, not tired and unhappy ones.
- Parents must notify Kids Garden if they will be late as early as possible. We cannot allow uncertainty in this area. If Kids Garden has not heard from a parent by the time the center closes, the emergency contact person listed on the Registration form will be contacted for guidance.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Visitor's Policy:

Kids Garden monitors all visitors entering the facility. Any and all visitors entering the center must sign the visitor's log book and leave a valid picture identification at the front desk. Visitors may be asked to return at another time based on activities within the center and capacity of children.

Possessions:

We ask that children leave items in cubbies in the welcome area. For safety and health reasons we DO NOT ALLOW ANY OUTSIDE TOYS OR ELECTRONICS in our learning center. Kids Garden has dedicated extensive research to sourcing the best toys, manipulatives, and products for our eco-friendly center. Our learning center is a time for new discoveries and we encourage children to try new activities, classes, and programs.

For young children, we do allow a soft blanket or small comfort item while spending time at Kids Garden. Please label all items with your child's name. Kids Garden will not be responsible for clothing or other personal belongings brought to the learning center. Lost and found items will be donated if not claimed within 2 weeks.

Children in diapers:

- Children should arrive in a clean and dry diaper.
- For children in diapers, we ask that you supply us with at least 4 extra diapers and wipes for your child so we can change appropriately.
- There will be a \$1 charge for diapers provided by Kids Garden
- Kids Garden supports cloth diapering. We do ask that you supply a wet/dry bag for used diapers.
- We have diaper checks and changes scheduled throughout the day, however our staff is trained to conduct spot checks and pay attention to individual child signs.
- Please advise staff of any children that are potty training. Please also bring extra clothes for your child.

Our Staff:

With the belief that children are strongly influenced by the adults they interact with in their early years, we not only hire highly experienced educators, but also warm, loving, and caring individuals. To support the experience, education, and profession of our

teachers, we ask that families address them as Miss, Mrs., and Mr. We thank you for your reinforcement of this practice.

Kids Garden has an extensive training process. Therefore we do choose to provisionally employ staff while complying with state and licensing regulations. This allows for extra time during our training process for new staff to observe and learn while being in the provisional category. All staff members are CPR and First Aid Certified.

Emergency & Accident Policies:

Our center is equipped with modern safety features for everyone's protection. It is protected with fire detection and emergency exit equipment, security system, child-proof doors/cabinets, and entry/exit access control points to alert staff and control visitors entering or exiting the center.

The following are policies for various emergencies (low probability events, however we are properly prepared):

- **Accident:** In the event of an injury, Kids Garden is equipped with a fully-stocked first-aid kit. Instructions from the poison control center or a physician will be followed when providing first aid procedures or administering emergency medications.
 - a. 911 is called if further action is necessary. Parents will be contacted immediately. If a parent can not make it to the center prior to the transport of a child by the ambulance, a staff member will accompany the child in accordance with state licensing. All children will be transported to the closest Children's Hospital unless emergency officials deem another location more appropriate.

b. Incident/Accident Reports will be completed and signed by the staff member in charge, if any of the following occur:

- An illness, injury or accident that requires a first-aid treatment
- Head injuries
- Out of ordinary event that jeopardizes the safety of children or staff
- Emergency transporting

**All reports will be provided to the parent or guardian, then signed and kept on file.*

- Fire: The staff will evacuate the building with all of the children in line and holding hands as necessary with a teacher at the front and back of the line. Attendance will be taken inside and outside (a safe distance from the building).
- Tornado/Earthquake: The staff will calmly lead children to the back of the learning center away from window glass and away from large objects.
- Safety Hazard: The staff will call the fire department and, if needed, evacuate the building with the children. Attendance will be taken inside and outside (a safe distance from the building).

Staff training is completed on all emergency preparedness and evacuation plans upon orientation and preliminary employment. Furthermore, monthly drills take place to keep everyone up to date on procedures. Colored Emergency Preparedness cards are located at the check-in counter for staff reference and guidance.

**Kids Garden, the center, the staff, and its owner are not responsible for any physician, hospital or medically related bills resulting in a visit from any occurrences, accidents, illnesses or injuries that might have occurred in the learning center.*

Inclement Weather:

For severe weather or emergency evacuation of the building, emergency plans are posted in the check-in area and each room. Kids Garden usually follows Charleston County's schedule for school closings. Closure will be determined at the discretion of the Childcare Director. Parents will be notified as soon as possible of any closing of the center.

Emergency Medical Plan:

In the event of a medical emergency, the staff will:

1. Call 911
2. If CPR or First Aid is necessary, trained staff will administer treatment.
3. Make every attempt to contact the parent.
4. A Kids Garden staff member will remain with your child until the parent arrives in accordance with State Licensing.
5. The parent is responsible for all medical costs for injury or illness. All accidents will be reported to the parents on an accident report requiring the parent's signature. A copy will be stored in your child's file.

Disaster Plan:

In the event of a disaster that required the evacuation of the center, the following steps will be taken:

1. Public Safety (Fire or Police) would be called to assist staff with crowd control.
2. Parents would be called immediately to pick-up their child.
3. In the event of an immediate emergency evacuation, we will walk to a neighboring business location or using EMT's, should that be necessary.

We will remain with your child until they can be picked up. Teachers train on all policies at the orientation when starting employment with Kids Garden. Should medical attention be needed, EMTs will transport to MUSC Children's Hospital.

Sick Children & Illness:

Kids Garden is a creative learning center for well children. Sick children need rest and comfort from their own homes. If children are sick with colds, flu, fever, chicken pox or other contagious illnesses, they are not to be admitted into the learning center. A runny nose with colored discharge and a cough with mucus secretion can spread bacterial and viral infections. Please do not expose our staff or other children to your sick child. Having a sick child is hard enough. Please do not create more sick children within the learning center. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

If your child exhibits a change in mood or behavior after check-in, a health screening may be conducted by our staff to determine if your child is ill. The health screening may include a visual or physical assessment of the child and/or the use of a thermometer to reveal the child's temperature.

If children develop any of the following signs or symptoms parents will be called immediately to pick up their child and must arrive within 30 minutes of the phone call. If the parent or guardian is unable to pick up the child, an authorized person on the child's emergency contact list will be contacted. When a child is ill, they need a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care. **The following conditions are causes for exclusion from the Center:**

- Diarrhea or bloody stools
- Vomiting
- Earache, irritability or confusion

- Breathing trouble, sore throat, swollen glands, continuous coughing
- Pink Eye, eye infections or conjunctivitis
- Severe cough involving whooping or redness in face
- Colored runny nose, draining eyes or ears
- Fever or Elevated temperature - Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100°F or higher taken under the arm, 101°F taken orally (a child needs to be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to Kids Garden; that means the child is fever free without the aid of fever reducing substances.)
- Lice, scabies, other parasitic infestations, rash, untreated infected skin patches or frequent scratching of the body that resemble childhood diseases
- Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after initial antibiotic

For sanitary practices, we have hand sinks throughout the center and ask that all children wash hands before classes, meals or free play.

Medications:

Kids Garden does not administer any regular medication to children in the center during your child's stay. If your child does happen to be on a medication schedule, please plan his/her time at Kids Garden accordingly. Also please notify the staff if your child has any symptoms that might occur so you may be contacted immediately.

We will administer life saving medications such as an EpiPen or Inhaler for children with asthma or allergic reactions. EpiPens and Inhalers must be labeled with the child's name, and before your child is admitted to Kids Garden, a release form must be signed by you and your physician. The medication must be in its original container, clearly indicating the child's name, physician's name, expiration date and the prescribed dosage along with the proper working equipment. We do not accept life saving medication that has expired.

Allergies:

Many children have allergies, and some can be very serious. It is the responsibility of the parent and or guardian to inform our staff of any allergies. Children with seasonal allergies must have a Doctor's statement on file. If the allergies persist to the point of extreme coughing, respiratory distress, or head congestion, the Director will call the parent to pick up their child.

Parents of children with life-threatening allergies to foods or insects should provide the Director and all the child's teachers during the day a note for their file explaining the symptoms and treatment procedures related to the particular allergy.

In order to keep all children in our space healthy and safe, we are a peanut-free facility. Please do not bring peanuts and or peanut products (granola bars, candy, etc. containing peanuts) into Kids Garden.

Naps & Rest:

Kids Garden is a drop-in learning center where children only come for a few hours per visit. We do not offer naps, however if your child seems tired and needs to rest we have soft pillows and quiet areas for him/her to relax. For children staying later for our Parent's Night Out program, they may bring their own sheet and or blanket for quiet time and/or movie time. Children may also bring or wear sleepwear to transition more easily once home.

Snacks & Meals:

All snacks and meals at Kids Garden are balanced and nutritious so that your children can maintain and learn healthy eating habits. Kids Garden offers organic snacks for \$2 at scheduled times throughout the day. Lunch is offered daily for \$8.00 between 12:00 - 1:00 PM, and dinner is served between 6:00 - 7:00 PM on Saturday evenings during

the Parents Night Out program. If your child is here during our meal hours and hungry, we will provide a meal at cost.

Vegetarian options are available. We do ask that you notify us during drop off as we place our orders for meals at least an hour prior to serving. If your child has a food allergy, please let us know!

Clothes & Shoes:

Children should come to Kids Garden wearing clothes that can get dirty or stained. Our creative space offers children lots of different mediums to experiment with including, paints, inks, sand/mud, shaving cream, etc. Aprons may be used but don't always prevent clothes from becoming soiled. It is through these interactions and experiences that children learn about textures, colors, weight, mass, volume, and gravity. Children should wear comfortable play clothes that don't inhibit them from these valuable experiences. Children need to feel free to experience "messy" activities without having to worry about "staying clean".

Behavior & Discipline:

We strive to help children learn how to collaborate and socialize effectively with others and how to be a successful part of our world. Our disciplinary methods involve redirecting, distraction and verbal problem-solving to affirm self-esteem, even when behavior is unacceptable. Nurturing, listening and supportive care are the most effective means of minimizing the need for discipline. Interactions with children are authentic, caring and respectful.

Kids Garden's open floor plan and creative environment was developed to promote positive and productive interactions; therefore, minimizing potential problems. Kids Garden staff are trained to be consistent with all children, as children function best

when there is the safety of consistent rules. When limits are placed, it is for the safety of all children in the center.

Kids Garden Guidelines

- Shoe-free Zone: Socks required to Roam
- No throwing toys
- Use inside voices
- Take turns and share with friends
- Feet and hands to yourself
- Keep food on tables and eating area
- No toys on play set
- Slide down the slide - climb up the rock wall
- Keep ears and eyes open

Disciplinary Actions:

In taking disciplinary action, staff members consider what is most appropriate for a particular situation and the age of children involved. The outcome should be to resolve the conflict as well as empowering the children to gain self-awareness and problem solving skills.

Intervention: Intervention is needed to stop actions that have become disruptive. It is important that children know an adult is stepping in to take control when they have lost control themselves.

Resolution of Conflict: Clarify what happened, how each person is feeling, then question and examine possible solutions with the children. Note: Feelings, both children's and adults, are an important part of life requiring attention and expression. We encourage and support open and direct communication. We believe that both

positive and negative feelings are real and valid and that our center should be a safe place to explore them.

Redirection: When a child is unable to behave appropriately in certain areas, with certain children or toys, the teacher may ask the child to play in a different area until he/she is able to behave appropriately.

Separation from Group: This is sometimes needed when a child cannot regain self-control and/or for the child to relax and not feel influenced by others. The staff acknowledges the child and the child is supervised, then the staff will encourage him/her to join the group - "Let me know when you are ready to try again."

Kids Garden Staff WILL NOT:

- Spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap or otherwise physically punish the children.
- Make fun of, yell at, ignore, frighten, reject, threaten, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse the children.
- Shame or punish the children when bathroom accidents occur.
- Relate discipline to eating, resting, or toileting.
- Leave children alone, unattended, or without supervision. Children shall be within sight of staff if separation from the group is used.
- Allow discipline of children by children.
- Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children's parents or families.

Dismissal Policy:

Kids Garden reserves the right to remove any child from the program without prior notice if it is the opinion of the Director that it is in the best interest of the child, family or center. There are a number of serious offenses which, if committed, will lead to immediate termination of a student's registration/membership such as:

- If a child is a danger to himself, others or Kids Garden property.
- Refusal or inability of the child or family to adhere to the program policies and procedures.

Baby-Sitting:

Any provision of babysitting services by the Kids Garden staff, after business operating hours and off Kids Garden premises, for children registered in the center, is not sponsored by Kids Garden. Our goal is to provide families with excellent quality care, therefore due to the cost of hiring and training staff, we request that you do not ask for babysitting services from our staff.

These services are not included in the liability insurance covering Kids Garden. The arrangement for these services, provision of these services, and the payment for these services is an arrangement exclusively by the child's parent/guardian and the adult who will be providing the babysitting services. The actions of any Kids Garden employee outside the center premises and hours of operation are not the responsibility of the Kids Garden.