



MLC PARENT HANDBOOK

September 2021 – August 2022

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Table of Contents

About Morningstar...	2
Center Policies...	3
Program...	7
Enrollment and Attendance Policies...	10
Teacher Expectations...	13
Appendix...	14

About Morningstar

Our Program

Morningstar opened in September 2007 and is a 501(c)3 non-profit and a state-licensed childcare facility. In planning our learning blocks, we use the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines and benchmarks. A high-quality, birth-through-five curriculum will be adopted and implemented during this academic year. We provide a safe, nurturing, engaging, and age-appropriate environment with a focus on the joy of learning.

Our Staff

Our staff consists of an Executive Director, Center Director, Executive Teacher, Lead Teachers, and Teacher Assistants. The Executive Director is under the guidance of the Morningstar Learning Center Board of Directors.

For questions pertaining to tuition assistance, community partnerships, the Board of Directors, events, and engagement opportunities, contact the Executive Director.

For questions pertaining to curriculum, program development, enrollment, billing, and employment opportunities, contact the Center Director.

For questions pertaining to curriculum, licensing, and the facility, contact the Executive Teacher.

For questions specifically relating to your child, please contact your child's Lead Teacher. If you feel your concern has not been taken care of, please contact the Executive Teacher.

Center Policies

Open Door Policy

Parents are welcome to arrange times to assist in the classroom with crafts, reading aloud to the children, joining in or leading an activity, having lunch, or other appropriate ways. We encourage parents to inquire about their children's day and remain engaged with Center programming. However, if your child becomes upset about your coming and going or if your visits become a distraction, we will reassess the situation.

Discipline Philosophy

Discipline shall include positive guidance, modeling, redirection, positive reinforcement, offering of alternative choices, and the setting of clear limits that foster the child's ability to become self-disciplined. All teachers will use these appropriate forms of discipline. Physical punishment, including spanking or other forms of corporal punishment, is **strictly prohibited** in all childcare facilities in the State of Montana. Any punishment or discipline which is humiliating, shaming, frightening, or otherwise damaging is strictly prohibited. This type of behavior will not be permitted in the facility by parents or teachers and could be cause for dismissal from the school.

Emergency Medical Procedures

In case of a serious injury, Morningstar staff members will immediately call 911. Two stocked first aid kits are kept on site, and at least one will be taken on all off-site trips. Simple injuries will be handled by staff, who all hold current certification in Adult, Child, and Infant CPR and First Aid. Staff will follow procedures of the American Red Cross or American Heart Association Training.

In case of ingestion or suspicion of ingestion of a poisonous or toxic substance, Morningstar staff members will call the Poison Control Center. A list of medical emergency numbers is posted in all classrooms. Reminder posters of First Aid and CPR are also posted. All injuries will be recorded and reported to parents. Some injuries may require a parent to come to the Center to check the injury. In some cases, an injury may require an ambulance ride to the hospital or a visit to the doctor. A parent may be called on other minor injuries or informed when they pick up their child.

Illness Policy

To prevent the spread of illness and provide a healthy environment for all, a staff member will assess each child's health upon arrival at preschool. Any child showing symptoms of illness will be excluded from Morningstar based on the following state guidelines:

- Children must not have a fever of 100 degrees F or greater without the aid of medication for 24 hours before they return to the preschool. This does not apply to children with immunization related fevers or who are assessed to be teething, who need not be excluded if they are able to participate in normal school activities.
- Children must be free of vomiting and diarrhea for **24 hours** before they return to Morningstar. Vomiting includes *two or more* episodes in the previous 24 hours. Diarrhea is defined as an increased number of stools, increased water in the stool and or decreased form to the stool that cannot be contained by clothing.
- Children with any of the bacterial infections below must be treated with antibiotics for **24 hours** before returning to Morningstar.
 - 1-Strep throat
 - 2-Scarlet fever
 - 3-Impetigo

4-Bacterial conjunctivitis

5-Skin infections such as draining burns, infected wounds or hangnails

- Generalized rashes, including those covering multiple parts of the body must be evaluated by a health care provider to determine their cause before the child can return to Morningstar. The child must have a doctor's note stating they can return.
- Children with Head lice, Hand, Foot and Mouth disease, or any other infestation until resolved, or a doctor's note, may not attend Morningstar.
- Children with chickenpox may not be admitted to Morningstar until their sores dry up, which usually takes five to seven days.
- Children who are jaundiced must be excluded pending health care provider evaluation of the cause and authorization to return to Morningstar.
- Children with symptoms of severe illness, such as uncontrolled coughing, breathing difficulty or wheezing, stiff neck, irritability, poor food or fluid intake or a seizure must be evaluated by a health care provider before they may return to Morningstar.
- A child may be excluded for a discharge from the nose which is not accompanied by a fever at the Center's discretion.
- If a child develops symptoms of illness while at Morningstar and after the parent has left, the staff must do the following:
 1. Isolate the child from the other children.
 2. Contact and inform the parents as soon as possible to request that they pick up the child.
 3. Report communicable diseases to Gallatin Co. Health Dept.
- Morningstar may readmit a child excluded for illness whenever, in its discretion:
 1. the child either shows no symptoms of illness;
 2. the child has been free of fever, vomiting, or diarrhea for 24 hours; or
 3. the child has been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours for bacterial infections

The parent or guardian may also provide the preschool with a signed certification of health from a licensed physician, except the following restrictions must be followed:

- If a child is excluded for shigellosis or salmonella, the child may not be readmitted until the child has no diarrhea or fever, the child's parent or guardian produces documentation that two stools, taken at least 24 hours apart, are negative approval for the child to be readmitted to Morningstar.
- If a child is excluded for Hepatitis A virus infection, the child shall remain excluded until either one week after onset of illness or jaundice, if the symptoms are mild, or until immune globulin has been administered to appropriate children and staff in Morningstar as directed by the local health authority.

The parents or guardian must pick up their child or send an emergency contact within 2 hours of being notified of an illness.

Immunizations

The Montana State Health Department requires that all preschool children be up to date on required immunizations before enrollment. In accordance with state requirements, before a child may attend Morningstar, we must be provided with the appropriate documentation that the child has been immunized as required for the child's age group against measles, rubella, mumps, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, varicella, hepatitis B, pneumococcal, and Haemophilus influenza type B.

Age at Entry	Number of Doses – Vaccine Type	
By 5 months of age	2 doses of polio vaccine 2 doses of Hib vaccine 2 doses of PCV vaccine	2 doses of DTP vaccine 2 doses of Hep B vaccine
By 7 months of age	2 doses of polio vaccine *2 or 3 doses of Hib vaccine 3 doses of PCV vaccine	3 doses of DTP vaccine 2 doses of Hep B vaccine
By 16 months of age	2 doses of polio vaccine 1 dose of varicella vaccine *3 or 4 doses of Hib vaccine *4 doses of PCV vaccine	3 doses of DTP vaccine 1 dose of MMR vaccine 2 doses of Hep B vaccine
By 19 months of age	1 dose of varicella vaccine 4 doses of DTP vaccine *3 or 4 doses of Hib vaccine *4 doses of PCV vaccine	3 doses of polio vaccine 1 dose of MMR vaccine 3 doses of Hep B vaccine
By 6 years of age	3 doses of polio vaccine, 1 given after the 4 th birthday 4 doses of DTP vaccine, one given after the 4 th birthday 2 doses of varicella vaccine 3 doses of Hep B vaccine	

* varies depending on vaccine type used or the ACIP catch-up schedule

A child seeking to attend Morningstar is not required to have any immunizations which are medically contraindicated. A written and signed statement from a physician that an immunization is medically contraindicated will exempt a child from the applicable immunization requirements for this rule.

Medication Policy

Morningstar staff may administer medication, prescription or non-prescription, to a child at the Center if they have completed the Medication Administration in Childcare course and have written authorization from the parents including the child's name, date or dates for which the authorization is applicable, dosage instructions, and the signature of the child's parent or guardian. The State of Montana Medication Authorization Form must be completed prior to a teacher administering any medications. The medication must be kept in the original container labeled by a pharmacist or, for nonprescription medication, kept in the original container labeled with the date, child's first and last name, specific legible instructions for administration and storage, and the name of the health care provider, parent, or guardian who made the recommendation.

Safe Infant Sleep

Morningstar Learning Center follows the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to provide a safe sleep environment for infants and reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Our protocol addresses infant sleep position, sleep environment, supervision during sleep, and staff training. Please inquire if you wish to read our full infant sleep protocol, which is also posted in the Infant Room.

School Closures

In the event of inclement weather forcing Big Sky School District to close schools, our daycare will also be closed. If we have an unforeseen incident affecting our ability to run our programs, we will close the Center. Families will be notified as soon as possible.

Abuse and Neglect

As a Montana State Licensed Childcare Provider, it is mandatory for our staff to report child abuse and or neglect.

Fire Drills

Morningstar Learning Center will conduct eight fire drills and two disaster drills per year. A fire drill procedure is posted throughout the building by the escape route and our evacuation plan will be followed each time until no danger exists.

Sunscreen Policy

Families supply Morningstar with sunscreen for their children (**labeled and non-spray**). In the summer months, families are expected to apply sunscreen to their children BEFORE coming to school. MLC will re-apply sunscreen throughout the day.

If a child does not have sunscreen, we will apply center sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher to the child per the sunscreen consent agreement.

Program

Hours of Operation

Morningstar is open Monday through Friday with the exception of posted holidays and training days.

- Early Arrival: 7:30am-8:30am
- Daily Program: 8:30am-5:30pm

Adjusting to a New Learning Center

Your child's transition to Morningstar Learning Center is going to be a big event in his or her life, and it should be handled with consideration and care. Please schedule a time with the Center Director to come in and show your child their new classroom and cubby before their first day. It is not unusual for a child to become emotional when separating from a family member or loved one, especially in a new environment with new faces. Be encouraging as you drop your child off as your body language, eyes, and smile communicate a lot.

We recommend creating and sticking to a routine each day you drop off your child. Each classroom has a set routine for check-in each day; please check with your child's Lead Teacher if you are unsure of the routine for his or her classroom. We also recommend enrolling your child at least two days per week and maintaining consistently scheduled enrollment (ie the same days every week) throughout the academic year.

Classroom Placement

The general age for classroom placement is as follows:

Infants: 6 months-23 months

Toddler 2s and 3s: 24 months-3 years

Pre-Kindergarten: 4 years - 5 years

Morningstar Learning Center understands that age is not a reliable factor in determining a child's readiness to move to the next classroom. We have identified a few developmental milestones to consider when determining a child's placement.

Infants - toddlers: When children are at the cusp between these classrooms, teachers consider the following:

- gross motor skills (walking, running, throwing),
- fine motor skills (holding a writing utensil), and
- language acquisition (includes receptive and expressive language. For example: can speak more than 50 words, can sometimes follow 2-step directions).

Toddlers – Pre-K: When children are at the cusp between these classrooms, teachers consider the following:

- can sit at attention for 5-10 minutes (for example: during group projects),
- potty trained,
- fine motor skills (can trace), and
- language acquisition (can verbalize wants and needs, can consistently follow 2-3 step directions).

If a child shows some signs of readiness, the staff has created times during the day for students to experience the next classroom. Your child will stay in the next classroom until the activity has been completed and then return to his/her current classroom. Students may stay in this transition between class time for a few weeks or a few months until teachers feel they are able to

transition fully. If you have questions/comments or concerns about your child's placement, please contact your child's Lead Teacher and the Executive Teacher.

Daily Routines

- Drop off/check in – Please check your child in using brightwheel.
- Clothing – **Please label all clothing, backpacks, and other items with your child's name.** Send your child each day dressed for outside, active play. Sandals, dress-up shoes, and flip flops are inappropriate for these types of activities. Children's clothing should be uncomplicated so that they can easily use the bathroom. Teachers will always encourage children to dress themselves. If a child requires assistance, the teacher will describe how the teacher is helping the child. This will give the child the opportunity to learn these skills so that he/she will eventually be able to perform the task(s) independently.
- Meals – Teachers will encourage children before, during, & after meals to:
 - Wash hands (before and after meal).
 - Engage in appropriate conversation.
 - Learn appropriate table manners.
 - Clean up after themselves.
 - Use the bathroom after each meal.
- Hand washing – Teachers will assist children in washing their hands before and after meals, after using the bathroom, and after playing outside.
- Nap and Rest time – Morningstar does have a scheduled nap time for the younger children and a scheduled rest time for the older children. If a child needs to sleep at a non-scheduled time, our teachers, at their discretion, will provide an appropriate place in which a child can get some needed rest.
- Cleaning of facility/sanitation – A clean environment is essential. Teachers clean and sanitize the center on a daily basis.
- Pick up/check out – Please check your child out using brightwheel no later than 5:30 to avoid a late pick-up fee. Pick-up is a good time to speak with a teacher about your child's day. If a teacher does not recognize the parent, under no circumstance will they allow a child to leave with this person. The teacher will check the person's identification and check the child's registration form to be sure the person is on the approved pick-up list provided by the parent. **If someone who is not on the approved list will be picking up your child, we require written notice and instructions. The staff will also check their identification when picking up your child.**
- Prior to your start date, you will receive classroom information including sample daily schedules, packing lists, expectations, teacher introductions, etc.

Nutrition

Morningstar Learning Center has always been a strong supporter of proper nutrition in the classroom and healthy eating behaviors. We also follow the State of Montana Child Care Center licensing requirements for nutrition. Each day, all students are required to bring a morning snack, a lunch, and an afternoon snack that adheres to the following state guidelines:

- Snacks must include two of the following food components: fruit, vegetable or 100% fruit or vegetable juice; bread or bread alternative; milk or dairy; or meat/meat alternative.
- Lunch must include one serving of meat or meat alternative, two vegetables or fruits, one serving of bread or bread alternative and one serving of milk or dairy.

Please follow these guidelines when packing your child's lunch and snacks.

Morningstar will monitor whether your child is getting the adequate servings in each snack and lunch. Failure to provide your child with adequate food will result in discussions regarding the nutrition of your child. If Morningstar has to continue providing your child with proper food to meet these state-mandated rules after a discussion with the family has taken place, a charge may be applied to your account. We also require each child to provide their own water bottle and lunch box with an ice pack with their name labeled on each item. Each student is given a spot to keep their water bottles and encouraged to refill their water bottle as the day progresses.

Communication

In an effort to continue to teach our students and community members about environmental responsibility, we are trying to reduce paper use in the school. Throughout this school year, parent communications will transition to being entirely through brightwheel with the exception of legally required printed documentation, notices posted at the school, and other occasions where printing is deemed necessary.

The best way to reach us is via email. Please ensure you thoroughly read all emails and brightwheel notifications you receive from MLC staff. Take the time to read notices and announcements at pick up and drop off.

Please notify the Lead and Executive Teacher via brightwheel as soon as you can when your child is not going to be at school or you are going to be late and include the reason.

Birthdays

Morningstar Learning Center honors children's birthdays with a special classroom celebration. We invite you to bring birthday snacks to celebrate the big day if you desire. Please check with the Lead Teacher prior to bringing snacks in.

Potty Training

All preschool students are required to be potty trained. If a child has a potty accident, we will change them into dry clothes. Please provide your child with spare clothing. If a child does not have appropriate spare clothing, we will provide additional clothing. We ask that you please wash and return any clothing that belongs to Morningstar Learning Center.

Many families will decide to potty train their child while they are enrolled at Morningstar Learning Center. Our staff is prepared to assist in this training. Please contact your child's Lead Teacher if you are ready to start this process.

Transportation and Trips

Morningstar Learning Center does not directly provide transportation. Transportation options may include charter services and/or parent volunteers. You will be notified in advance if we plan to do any special field trips. You will be provided with a permission slip explaining the event, which is to be completed and returned prior to the date of the trip.

Enrollment and Attendance Policies

Enrollment Forms

All enrollment forms must be turned in prior to your child starting at Morningstar. We will provide you with the enrollment packet, which includes records of immunization, policy form, medical release, medication form, the emergency contact form, and other forms required by the Center and Montana state licensing.

Tuition and Fees

See Appendix 1 for this year's tuition rates. The following fees and schedule will be enforced:

- Upon initial enrollment, a \$100.00 non-refundable administrative fee is charged.
- Each quarter, a \$50.00 materials fee is charged.
- Morningstar will bill on the 20th of the month for the upcoming month.
- Tuition is due on the 1st of the month.
- A late fee of \$100 will be applied to accounts unpaid by the 1st. The fee will increase to \$200 on the 15th of the month.

Morningstar reserves the right to terminate services for families that have not paid tuition by the end of the month of enrollment. Services may resume once tuition and late fees have been paid in full. Any days missed as a result of this termination will not be discounted.

Tuition Assistance Program

In July 2021, Morningstar implemented a new, need-based Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to provide financial aid to local families who qualify. The Financial Aid Committee engaged a third-party audit/compliance financial aid company, Mission Enrollment, to review and process financial aid applications. Doing so ensured that families' financial information stayed anonymous to school staff. Mission Enrollment is a nationally recognized company of financial aid assessment experts. They reviewed all applications and supported us in determining awards in a fair and equitable way.

Families who apply and qualify for tuition assistance receive written notice, and the discount is automatically applied to monthly invoices beginning July 2021. Families who apply and do not qualify for tuition assistance also receive written notice. Decisions may be appealed by written notice to the Executive Director AND by submitting a letter explaining the financial situation with supporting documentation to SSS.

Applications will be due March 31st each year for awards beginning in the Fall Quarter. Families who wish to enroll new students may apply any time and are encouraged to do so as soon as possible with the goal of having an award determined prior to the start of enrollment. These families will have to reapply in March to be on-cycle with all enrolled families.

The application for TAP is hosted by SSS and can be accessed at <https://sssandtadsfa.force.com/familyportal>. To reach their customer service, call 800-344-8328.

TAP discounts follow these guidelines:

- The discount is applied to children's monthly tuition and is based on the rate for the days enrolled by the enrollment deadline. It is not applicable to drop-in days.
- The discount does not apply to any other school-related expenses or fees.
- This award is non-binding and is subject to the availability of funds.

The Financial Aid Committee holds all information in support of these applications in strict confidence. Awards are confidential agreements between the recipient family and Morningstar. Morningstar does not share families' financial information, and families granted a TAP award are expected to keep all details pertaining to tuition adjustments confidential. We reserve the right to amend any grant in the event of a breach of this confidentiality.

Schedule

There are four quarters in each year:

- Fall Quarter (September-November)
- Winter Quarter (December-February)
- Spring Quarter (March-May)
- Summer Quarter (June-August)

We have two enrollment options:

- Quarterly enrollment: Enrollment requests are due the 1st of the month prior to a new quarter and will be confirmed by the 15th.
- Academic year enrollment: Enrollment requests are due by August 1st for Fall, Winter, and Spring and will be confirmed by the 15th. Summer enrollment requests are due May 1st and will be confirmed by the 15th.

For the consistency and success of the children and to maximize our ability to serve the community, we strongly recommend

- selecting 2 days per week as a minimum enrollment, and
- consistent scheduling for the quarter (for example, choosing the same 3 days - M, W, F - for the entire quarter's enrollment).

Schedule Changes

Any requests to change a schedule after the due date must be submitted to the Center Director for approval, and a \$20 per day change fee will be applied.

A schedule change means exchanging one day for another. Any additional days will be charged the drop-in rate.

Absence Policy

Families that send MLC a written 30-day notice for absences will only be charged 50% of their tuition. Absences that occur without notice or with less than 30-day notice will be charged 100% of their tuition.

If a family requests to exchange enrollment days instead of being absent, the schedule change fee will apply.

Sick Day Credit Policy

MLC will credit half of the daily tuition rate for absences relating to illness for a maximum of two days per quarter.

Late Pick-Up and Early Drop-Off

A child dropped off before 8:30am who is not signed up for Early Open and/or picked up after 5:30pm will be charged \$1 per minute.

Wait List

Priorities for Morningstar's enrollment wait list are as follows:

1. children of employees
2. children with currently enrolled siblings
3. newly enrolled children of full-time residents
4. all newly enrolled children

Dismissal from Morningstar Learning Center

Morningstar Learning Center reserves the right to dismiss a child from our care for non-payment of tuition, inappropriate parent behavior at the Center, parent's unwillingness to cooperate with the teachers when dealing with Child Behavior Problem Solving tactics, non-communication about important changes in the child's life, and other issues that threaten MLC's ability to provide a safe, nurturing, educational environment for all children, including violations of the policies and procedures laid out in this handbook. Communication and cooperation are vital to your child's success!

Once a child turns seven years old, we will be unable to continue that child's enrollment per Montana state license requirements.

Trial Enrollment

We understand that all new students have a transition period to adjust to their new classroom and environment, and we will do our best to support all students to be successful at Morningstar Learning Center. However, all new students are subject to a two-month trial period during which staff will monitor the integration of the new student to our Center.

As with all students, any challenges relating to the student's enrollment - including but not limited to behavioral disruptions, aggression towards self or others, developmental challenges the Center is not equipped to support, or any issue that jeopardizes Morningstar's ability to provide a safe, nurturing educational environment for all students and staff – will be discussed with the family with the intention of resolving these issues via an action plan based on best practices that is agreed to by both staff and family. If the issues are unable to be resolved, Morningstar reserves the right to discontinue services for that child.

Teacher Expectations

Phone Use / Social Visits

Teachers are instructed to limit cell phone use to work-related usage during work hours. If you need to speak with a teacher regarding your child, please contact them using brightwheel. To speak with staff regarding non-work-related issues, please contact them outside of Center hours. Please remember our teachers need to be attentive to the children at all times, and we ask that socializing with teachers be kept to a minimum during parent visits.

Parent / Teacher Relationships

While at Morningstar, parent/teacher relationships must remain professional.

Babysitting

Morningstar Learning Center is an academic environment. It is **NOT** a babysitting service. Teachers are NOT permitted to make babysitting arrangements during business hours. Their focus needs to be on the children and their job at hand.

Substitute Teachers

Parents who wish to become involved as substitute teachers may contact the Center Director to inquire about openings, requirements, and pay.

Appendix 1: 2021-2022 Rates

Morningstar Learning Center 2021-2022 Rate Sheet

Daily Rates

Preschool (4-6 years)	Toddlers (2-4 years)	Infants (6-24 months)	Infants (6-24 months)
8:30am-5:30pm	8:30am-5:30pm	8:30am-5:30pm	8:30am-1:00pm or 1:00pm-5:30pm
\$59	\$61	\$70	\$59

Enrollment schedules must be received according to the schedule below to avoid incurring additional fees.

A 10% sibling discount will be offered to enrolled students.

Quarterly Enrollment Schedules

Fall Due August 1st For	Winter Due November 1st For	Spring Due February 1st For	Summer Due May 1st For
September October November	December January February	March April May	June July August

Additional Options and Fees

Option	Fee
Drop-In	\$11
Early Drop-Off	\$10

These options are only available to currently enrolled students and are based on availability.

The fee is in addition to the daily rate.

A 24-hour notice and confirmation are required for these options.

Tuition Assistance does not apply to any additional options or fees.

To apply for Morningstar's Tuition Assistance Program, please visit
<https://sssandtadsfa.force.com/familyportal>.

The Tuition Assistance Program is sponsored by the **Big Sky Resort Area District Tax**, the Spanish Peaks Community Foundation, and other generous donors.