

# Back-Up Care Advantage Program®



## Preparing for a Day of Center-Based Back-Up Child Care

Your child is currently scheduled for “integrated” back-up child care, which means that your child’s back-up care will take place within a full-service child care center. To ease the transition to an unfamiliar place, centers offer engaging opportunities for play and discovery. The centers are designed to be warm, inviting places where children and parents feel welcome and special. Whether you use a center once or many times, center staff ensure individualized care, good communication, and solid partnerships between parents and teachers.

Each center will have its own policies and procedures that may supplement or supersede the following guidelines. We recommend that you call the center in advance of the day of care if possible. The center will likely have more information they would like to share with you if this is your first time at this particular center. If time permits, we would encourage you to visit the center with your child(ren) before the date of care.

### Preparing for your visit to the center

- All registration materials 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. Required information typically includes immunization records, emergency contact numbers, medication, and allergy information.
- Confirm driving directions to the center and plan to arrive early to ensure that all required paperwork is completed and to allow adequate time to communicate with center staff.

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

### *Infants*

- The best preparation is to make sure that the teachers and caregivers know your baby’s schedule, routines for eating, sleeping, changing, and play, as well as how you comfort your child.
- Bring any items that your infant might need for the day including a change of clothes, a comfort item such as a favorite blanket or stuffed animal, diapers, wipes, as well as enough formula, milk, and/or baby food for the day.
- Please label all clothing and other items such as bottles, cups, and toys with your child’s full name.

### *Toddlers, Preschoolers, and School-Age Children*

- Check with the center you will be visiting to determine if snacks and lunch are provided or if you should prepare 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 brought to the center. 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).
- For safety reasons, most centers discourage drawstrings and dangling jewelry, particularly for younger children.
- Please be sure to send a change of clothes with your child to the center as they may be needed if a spill occurs.
- Please label all items with your child’s full name.

### **Your child’s experience upon arrival is very important**

A visit to a child care center is a new experience for many children. Some children will take quickly to this change in environment and delight in every new face, every challenging project, and every intriguing toy. Others will assume a child’s version of the “wait and see” attitude. Still others will be distressed and cry, especially when faced with the realization that mom or dad is going off to work. There are many things you can do to help your child feel comfortable when he/she first arrives.

- Review information about your child with staff on or before the day of care to help them better understand your child's preferences and plan the day's schedule.
- Allow sufficient time to transition your child and 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 with the teachers to help them provide the best balance of quiet and active time.
- Help your child get interested and involved in a favorite activity that is set up in the classroom.
- Most importantly, partner with the center staff to help your child feel welcome in the center and excited about joining in the day's activities.
- It is helpful and required at many centers to complete a daily information sheet indicating where you will be during the day, including a phone number where you can be reached as well as any pertinent information about your child with regard to current medications, allergies, or food restrictions.

#### **Call to check in on your child during the day**

- Center staff care about the well-being of both you and your child and strive to ensure open communication about your child's day in back-up care.
- Feel free to call to check in on your child (write down the center phone number), or set up a time for your child's teacher to call you.
- If you are able to visit the center during the day and your child would enjoy the opportunity to visit with you, please stop by.

#### **Security/entry to the center**

- 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 to the center.

#### **Departure**

- Children will be released only to a parent, guardian, or other adult (18 years or older) previously authorized in writing.
- Photo identification is required.
- Please allow sufficient time prior to the center's closing time to speak with the center staff about your child's day and pack up your belongings.

#### **Evaluation**

Following the delivery of back-up services, you will receive a brief survey from the *Back-Up Care Advantage Program*® to complete by e-mail. 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!

**For more information, please call the *Back-Up Care Advantage Program* at 877-BH-CARES.**

