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 **www.giglwhitefish.com**

 **863.1304 \* 1125 7th St. East, Whitefish, MT 59937**

**~PARENT HANDBOOK~**

Mission Statement: Our mission is to love and nurture children.

Core Values: Our goal is to provide a nurturing environment for children that is safe, warm, clean, and loving. We endeavor to assist you in helping your child grow and thrive in every way: emotionally, physically, socially, cognitively, and spiritually.

Why Do We Stand Out?

* A Christian atmosphere that promotes the love of Jesus and is supported by Whitefish Church of the Nazarene
* Low teacher-child ratios
* A staff that is well trained, qualified, and loves teaching children
* A safe environment in a state licensed facility
* A convenient location near Muldown Elementary School, Whitefish Christian Academy, and Whitefish High School
* A fenced state of the art playground area with a separate area for infants and toddlers
* USDA approved food program that offers nutritious, well-balanced meals and snacks with an emphasis on whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables
* Annual service projects that help children learn to love and serve others
* Themed curriculum – monthly themes are posted on the entryway bulletin board

**WELCOME!**

We have an open-door policy; parents are invited to stop in at any time! Please take time to get to know our staff, particularly your child’s teacher. Our teachers ensure that your child feels safe and secure, that they learn and grow, and that their day is filled with encouragement, love and laughter. Parental involvement and feedback is desired; our goal is to serve your child and family in the best way possible, and your suggestions are always welcome. We want you to be involved and active in your child’s school. Please let us know what we can do for you. You can also always feel free to visit our website (giglwhitefish.com) to learn more about us or refer to the state website (dphhs.mt.gov) for any childcare licensing questions.

****Every child is a beautiful blessing from God, and we greatly treasure the opportunity to love each little one placed in our care. We feel privileged and honored that you have chosen Growing in God’s Love as your child’s home away from home. Thank you for sharing them with us, and welcome to our “family!”

**GROWING IN GOD’S LOVE POLICIES & INFORMATION:**

**ATTENDANCE / DAILY HEALTH CHECKS**

Each classroom takes daily attendance and a health check is conducted for each child. The attendance form will be used in the event of an emergency (such as a fire drill) to take role. The form will also be used on field trips and as needed during daily outside times. Each classroom teacher is responsible for ensuring that each child in attendance is accounted for on the form. Throughout the child care day, all care-giving staff are responsible for making sure that children are accounted for by repeatedly counting children and ensuring they are on the attendance record.

**BEHAVIOR CORRECTION**

We do not use corporal punishment. Redirection, positive reinforcement, and time-out may be used.

**Violent / Out-of-Control Behavior Protocol:**

GIGL will do whatever is necessary to provide a safe and loving environment for our children and staff. We have the right to remove from our program anyone considered to be a threat to our children or staff. If a child becomes physically violent and/or exploding into random tantrums or other hurtful or uncontrollable behaviors, the following protocol will be observed:

1) WARNING: At the discretion of the teacher and/or director, the parent will be called to pick up their child immediately, and the child will be removed from care for the rest of the day or a longer period of time as determined by the GIGL Director or Assistant Director.

2) REMOVAL: After the child returns to GIGL, if the difficult, challenging, unmanageable or violent behavior recurs, the child will be removed from the GIGL program (see Lack of Fit Policy).

3) REINSTATEMENT: If, after a minimum period of six months, the child's parents feel that the challenging behaviors have abated and that their child would now be able to have a successful experience, they may apply for reinstatement of GIGL enrollment. An appeal in writing for such is to be directed to the GIGL Board of Directors. At the discretion of the GIGL Board, the process may or may not move forward to meeting with the parents to discuss possible reenrollment. Please be aware that the final decision regarding the child's return to GIGL rests entirely with the GIGL Board. If the child is reinstated, they will be on a probation period of 2 months. At the end of the two months behavior will be reviewed by the child's teacher, GIGL Director, Assistant Director, and the GIGL Board. At this time, a decision will be made as to whether or not the child will remain at GIGL.

**Lack of Fit Policy:**

We make every effort to work through any and all challenges we encounter with children in our care and their parents. However, on rare occasions we find that placement at GIGL is not in the best interest of the child or other children/staff in our center. In those circumstances, we reserve the right to notify parents that their child must be removed from our program due to lack of fit. This lack of fit is to be determined in a 3-step process.

**Step 1**- *As stated in the Violent / Out-of-Control Behavior Protocol*- on the first offense a warning will be given, the parent(s) will be notified to come and pick up their child immediately, and the child will be removed from care for the rest of the day or a longer period of time as determined by the GIGL Director and/or Assistant Director.

**Step 2**- After ONE warning and temporary removal from care, if the behavior continues, a meeting with the Director and/or Assistant Director, the child’s teacher, and the child’s parent(s) will be required to form a Behavioral Action Plan.

**Action Plan**- A behavior plan must include, but is not limited to, these requirements.

1. Observation Checklist- the child’s teacher will record, for no less than 1 week, the child’s behavior at school.
2. Negative/Positive Reinforcement- form of reward/consequence system, agreed upon by the parent, teacher, and GIGL director to reinforce good behavior.
3. Goals- specific change of behavior goals must be put into place as a desired product of the Action Plan.
4. Time Period- a specific time period to implement the Action Plan, no less than ONE WEEK and no longer than ONE MONTH, at the end of which, if changed behavior is not achieved, removal from GIGL care will be required.

**Step 3**- If the Action Plan time period has passed, and the behavioral goals put in place from the Action Plan have not been achieved and the difficult, challenging, unmanageable or violent behavior recurs, the child will be removed from the GIGL program.

**BIRTHDAYS / HOLIDAYS**

We celebrate most holidays with games, arts and crafts and various activities. We also celebrate each child and staff member’s birthday. Parent-provided birthday treats are welcome; please provide a treat for each child in the building that day. Parents are welcome to bring a treat for each child at GIGL in celebration of their child's birthday. Healthy treats are encouraged. If you bring cupcakes or other sweets, they should be miniature-sized ONLY. GIGL has mini muffin tins which may be checked out overnight for this purpose -- please coordinate with our food program director if you would like to arrange to check them out.

**CHRISTIAN VALUES**

Our program is non-denominational, but we are housed by and are an extension ministry of the Whitefish Church of the Nazarene. Our goal is to provide a Christ-centered atmosphere where children can explore God’s world, experience his love, and grow to reach their full potential in life. Christian values and character are encouraged. The Bible and its teachings are included in our daily curriculum in the form of a story or verse, as well as possibly in our activities and songs. We try to incorporate the teaching of Christian values throughout the day and we say a prayer before each meal.

**CLOUSURES**

We are open every Monday-Friday, September-May and Monday-Thursday, June-August with the exception of the following:

*-Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving & the day after. (If one of the previously listed holidays falls on your contracted day, you will be charged full price tuition for that day.)*

*-We also close for 3 breaks every year. Spring Break (end of March, coincides with WSD Spring Break) Summer Break (first week of July) and Christmas Break (Christmas Eve-New Year’s Day; unless the holiday falls on a weekend, in which case we will extend the break additional days.)*

*You will be charged half-rate tuition for these 3 closures.*

*-Inclement weather or other unprecedented emergency closure coincides with that of Whitefish public schools. School closure is published on the Whitefish Schools website by 6:00 a.m. In the event that we must close due to weather on a day when Whitefish public schools are not in session, (for example during Christmas break), each parent/guardian will be notified via Brightwheel of our decision to close.*

**COMMUNICATION**

Upon enrollment, we require each family to join Brightwheel to help keep communication at its best. Both the teachers and director send messages and daily reports to help keep up with important information (paperwork, deadlines, newsletters, etc.) Student specific sign-up information will be provided to each family upon enrollment.

**CONTRACTED DAYS**

Tuition is paid for all weekly contracted days, regardless of holidays, illness, snow days, or vacations (with exception being our 3, week long closures throughout the year. These breaks are only charged half rate tuition.) **There are no refunds, credits, or day exchanges.** If possible, please give advance notice of upcoming absences due to vacations or family plans. If your child will be unexpectedly absent or late on a contracted day (for example, due to illness or sudden plans,) it is important to notify us as soon as possible.

**COVID-19 POLICY**

This section is intended to follow current Montana childcare guidance as periodically updated by ECSB and/or public health officials. It also draws from the best practices published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This is an evolving situation. Growing in God’s Love will endeavor to continue to stay apprised of best practices and update its policies and procedures in accordance with current recommendations. As circumstances change, Growing in God’s Love will review this document periodically and update with new information.

GIGL may need to implement short-term building closure procedures if/when an infected person has been on site [during their infectious period](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/isolation.html) and has had close contact with others. If this happens, we will work with local public health officials to determine next steps. One option is an initial short-term school closure, to allow time for local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation and help the school determine appropriate next steps, including whether such a closure needs to be extended to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19.

In the event that local health officials do not recommend building or classroom closures, thoroughly cleaning the areas where the infected person spent significant time would be considered, thus extending the closure.

* Local health officials’ recommendations whether to close GIGL and the duration such closures should be made on a case-by-case basis using the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and taking into account local case-counts, and the degree of ongoing transmission in the community.

During any/all closures within a two-week time frame, tuition will be charged as normal. Any closures beyond 2 weeks will be evaluated on a week-to-week basis and determination of payment will be communicated with you at that time.

In the case of COVID-19 closures, Growing in God’s Love will NOT follow the schedule/guidelines practiced by Whitefish School District.

**CUSTODY ISSUES**

Please note that if there is a custody issue, we are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent with legal custody. We need a certified copy of the most recent court order on file if this is an area of concern for you. Please advise us if there are any legal concerns such as restraining orders in effect and bring us copies of necessary paperwork to keep on file.

**DOOR CODES**

At GIGL, your child’s safety and security are our highest priority. To ensure this, we have a security and lock system installed on all our main entrances. GIGL doors remained locked throughout the day, only allowing access to those with a code. To make easy entrance into our facility for parents, each parent will be issued a 4-digit code to our front entrance. Codes are not to be shared with anyone, if an approved pickup person is picking up your child, it is asked that they ring the doorbell to access entry.

**DROP OFF / PICK UP**

**DAILY SIGN IN / OUT POLICY:**

Every child must be signed in and out by a parent or other authorized individual as stated on the registration paperwork. ID may be required. If a parent has multiple children, each individual child must be signed in and out daily using Brightwheel on the iPad in the entryway. Attendance records will be kept on file. They can be made available to authorized service agencies such as QAD-Licensing, CACFP, and others.

Children enrolled in the Preschool & Young Preschool classes are expected to be in attendance no later than 8:30 a.m. during the school year in order to be present for the beginning of class. Children enrolled in the Little Lambs, Little Lions, or Little Learners classes are requested to be in attendance no later than 9:00 a.m. unless special arrangements are made. All parents are asked to refrain from picking up children during naptime hours (12:30-2:30 p.m.)

**FEES**

* $75 non-refundable registration and supplies fee per child (annual renewal)
* $20 per child late pick-up fee begins at 5:00 p.m.; increases to $30 per child at 5:05 p.m.
* Insufficient funds - $50 per incidence

**FILES**

GIGL will keep all student files on record for up to 3 years after the students is withdrawn from the GIGL program. After 3 years, files will be discarded.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**

In the event of an emergency, the child’s physician and a parent will be called.

If a child is injured, a form will be filled out documenting the incident. It is to be signed by a parent and kept on file. Parents will not be called for minor injuries such as scraped knees or slight bumps and bruises unless specifically requested by parent in advance.

If your child becomes ill, you will be contacted immediately. We ask that you arrive to pick them up within 20 minutes. In the event you cannot be reached, one of your emergency contacts will be called. According to Montana State Policy, you are REQUIRED to come and pick up your child immediately if they have had vomiting, diarrhea or a fever of 101ºF and above.

Parents will be notified when their child has been exposed to illness. We must report all communicable diseases to the health department. Any child with strep throat, scarlet fever, impetigo, bacterial conjunctivitis, or bacterial skin infection must be treated with antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to GIGL.

Children must be free of fever (without the use of fever-reducing drugs) as well as free of vomiting and/or diarrhea for 24 hours prior to returning to GIGL. Any child with rash, scabies, jaundice, breathing difficulty/wheezing, stiff neck, seizure, poor oral intake, or severe cough must be seen and cleared by a health provider before returning to the center.

If head lice or nits are found on a child, they will be sent home for treatment. Once treatment has been administered at home, the child is allowed to return to GIGL. However, GIGL has a strict no lice OR nit policy and upon arrival, his/her head will be discreetly checked. If any lice OR nits are found the child will not be allowed to return to the center for that day. Another treatment/combing must be done until ALL lice and/or nits are completely gone. \*Please see our "No Nit" policy for further details.

Your child should be prepared to go outside each day that temperatures permit. We do not have extra staff available to supervise children inside when their class is playing outside. *If they are too sick to play outside, they must not come to GIGL.*

Infant and toddler toys are sanitized daily. Preschool toys are sanitized weekly.

There is no smoking allowed on the premises or in the parking lot. Evacuation plans and fire extinguishers are posted. Fire drills are practiced monthly. Fire marshal and building inspections are conducted annually.

GIGL employees are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. All suspected cases of abuse or neglect will be reported to Child Protective Services within 24 hours, as required by law.

**HOURS**

Full day: 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Half day: 7:30 a.m. – Noon.

Children enrolled in the Preschool and Young Preschool Classes are expected to be in attendance no later than 8:30 a.m. during the school year in order to be present for the beginning of class. Children enrolled in Little Lambs, Lions, and Learners are requested to be in attendance no later than 9:00 a.m. unless special arrangements are made. All parents are asked to refrain from picking up children during naptime hours (12:30-2:30 p.m.)

**IMMUNIZATIONS**

GIGL is in compliance with all Montana state standards and our local public health department to insure our children are all properly vaccinated. Our goal is to minimize the risk of disease in our facility-because of this, we require that all immunizations be on record and up to date. **GIGL does not participate in any immunization exemptions.**

**INFANTS**

**Feeding/Schedule:**

* Please update your child’s feeding schedule as new foods are introduced.
* GIGL provides formula and baby food. If preferred, you are welcome to bring breast milk or other formula/food.

**Breastfeeding:**

Our program supports breast feeding mothers. Mothers have the option to come and feed their infant or GIGL can supplement with breast milk in bottles. All bottles must be thawed and labeled with child's name. Bottles will be kept in infant room refrigerator and will be warmed in a bottle warmer to no warmer than 120 degrees Fahrenheit. GIGL requests that breastfed babies with bottles have at least one bottle of milk in the on-site freezer in case of an emergency. Please label all breast milk containers with your child's name and the date it was frozen.

If breastfeeding without a bottle, GIGL has provided a space for you to nurse your infant in our infant room. This room provides a rocking chair, changing table, and sink for your convenience.

**Swaddling:**

Swaddling will be used at GIGL *only* by parent directive for a child three months of age or less, *and* with a physician's note.

**ITEMS NOT TO BRING**

Please do not bring toys or food from home. If toys from home are brought, they will be taken to the office for the parent to pick up at the end of the day. GIGL is not responsible for any damage done to these unauthorized items.

**ITEMS TO BRING UPON ENROLLMENT**

Please bring:

* + Diapers / Pull-ups / Wipes (if needed)
	+ A complete change of clothes to be left at GIGL, **labeled** with child’s name or initials
	+ Blanket and stuffed animal or other comfort item for napping
	+ Classroom-only indoor slip-on shoes or slippers (“crocs” etc.), **labeled** with initials or name
	+ Personal water bottle - **labeled** with child’s name

**All children must have appropriate outside clothing as needed:**  warm coat, snow pants, boots, gloves/mittens, and hat for winter weather, light jacket, and hat for summer. **The children play outside every day unless weather does not permit; please make sure they are prepared! Keep in mind that the weather can change throughout the day!**

**ITEMS TO TAKE HOME**

Please check your folder daily for papers, artwork, notes, and other information. Please take your child's quiet time blanket / stuffed animal, etc., home frequently for washing, and be sure it returns with your child on their next school day!

**LATE PICKUP**

Late pickup begins at 5:00pm. First offense, a warning will be issued. Second offense, a late fee will be charged to your account (see FEES section). If late pickup continues, a meeting with Director, Assistant Director and President of the GIGL Board will be required.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Students are allowed up to one leave of absence per calendar year, for not less than three and not more than eight weeks. Guaranteed re-enrollment is secured by payment of one-half tuition during the leave of absence.

**MEALS / SNACKS**

GIGL participates in the Montana Child and Adult Care Food Program and receives some monetary assistance to serve healthy meals. We are required to meet certain dietary standards, and GIGL provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack daily. The use of whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and home-cooked meals are emphasized. Two weeks of menus are posted at all times. Occasional substitutions of equivalent food items may be made. Milk is served with breakfast and lunch for children ages one and older; we do not serve juice due to the high sugar content. At the age of one all children will be placed on the regular GIGL menu unless there is a verified medical dietary exception, or parents choose to provide alternate food by specific arrangement with the Food Program Director. Children requiring a special diet must have the appropriate form on file, and arrangements must be made with the Food Program Director to accommodate their needs. Any food brought to GIGL from home for special dietary purposes must be labeled with the child’s name and date.

**MEDICATIONS**

At Growing in God's Love, we believe that children should be given medication in our facility, only when needed, and only with parental consent and in lieu of parents due to work schedule that doesn't allow them to administer medication.

**Medication Administration Policy:**

1. This medication policy is in place to ensure that medication is administered properly, in a safe manner, and is intended to decrease the spread of communicable diseases.
2. At Growing in God's Love, over the counter and prescription medications will only be given with written parental consent, and a health care providers written recommendation of dosage and only to the specific child medicine was intended for. A medication administration log will be kept for each medicine administered to ensure proper dosage and specific instructions per medication are adhered to.

 a. Prescription medications are to be kept in original container, labeled properly, require a Medication Administration form with signed parental consent and written consent from prescribing physician. Once medication duration is completed or expired, medication will be given to parents to be disposed of.

 b. Over the counter medication will be provided by parents. This includes all oral, topical, and inhaled medications. Parents must complete an Over the Counter Medication form that is signed and dated in order for our staff to administer any OTC medications. OTC medications must be in original container with child's name clearly printed on it.

 c. All medication forms will be kept in child's file. Each medication will require a separate form and signature with detailed information regarding dosage and clear instructions. Only staff that are trained in administering medications will give medication and will have access to child's file and personal health history within the file.

 d. Medications will be stored in a room temperature cabinet unless otherwise specified in the prescription from physician. Medications will be given in the room where the medicine is stored.

1. The policy is for all children, parents, guardians, and staff.
2. Parents will be notified if child responds with any type of reaction to medication administered. A copy of this policy will be in our parent handbook and can be accessed at any time in the Director's office upon request.
3. The Growing in God's Love board will evaluate and review our Medication policy annually.

**MINIMUM DAYS**

We require a minimum enrollment of at least 2 half days a week.

**NAME TAGS**

We desire for you, the parents and/or guardians, to be able to easily identify any of our GIGL staff. Because of this, all staff are equipped with name tags so, not only will you have help remembering names, but also so any new or unfamiliar employees can be easily identified as GIGL staff to parents, guardians, or other friends and family who may be dropping off or picking up children.

**NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY**

Growing in God’s Love Childcare and Preschool participates in the U. S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP.)

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, and American Sign Language) should contact the responsible State or local Agency that administers the program or USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online, at www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-programdiscrimination-complaint-form.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant’s name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by: mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; email: program.intake@usda.gov. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**POTTY TRAINING**

At Growing in God’s Love, it is a requirement that all students enrolling or moving into the Young Preschool or Preschool classes are fully potty trained. Please see our "Potty Training Policy" for further details.

**SHOES**

All classroom carpeted areas are SHOE-FREE zones; *this applies to parents, too!* Indoor-only shoes/slippers are to be worn by children and staff inside the classroom areas.

Also, each child needs to wear or bring **SNEAKERS AND SOCKS** for outside play each school day. (Other than when snow boots will be worn.) If a student arrives wearing sandals, etc., they will need to change before playing in the wood chips outside. In addition, all children must absolutelybe able to tie their own shoes if they are not wearing Velcro or slip-on sneakers.

**TRANSITION PLAN**

 As your child grows and matures, teachers, along with the Director, will assess when the best time for your child to move to the next classroom will be. Our decision to move your child into the next class will be based on where they are developmentally, as well as what is best for each classroom and teacher/availability in each room. You can expect a phone call or conversation with the Director and/or your child’s teacher and a “Moving on Up” form sent home explaining when your child will move to the next class and who their new teacher will be. We typically move children in September, January and/or June.

**TUITION**

Your child’s tuition enables us to provide top-quality care and low child-teacher ratios. The first two weeks’ tuition (non-refundable), are due upon registration along with the registration fee. Thereafter tuition will be paid through the Brightwheel program via automatic withdrawal. Students that qualify for Best Beginnings childcare scholarships are welcomed.

Rates

*Birth-12 months $61/full day $40/half day*

*1 year: $57/full day $36/half day*

*2-7 years: $53/full day $32/half day*

*Before/After-School Care: $14/a.m. $14/p.m.*

Full day includes breakfast, lunch, and snack

Half day includes breakfast and lunch

Before School Care includes breakfast

After School Care includes snack

**The children of families with outstanding balances covering more than three days cannot be accepted for care until all tuition and fees are paid in full – no exceptions.**

**WITHDRAWAL**

A two-week (paid) notice is required.

**Exit Checklist & Interview**

Upon withdrawal from our facility, each family will be required to complete an exit checklist and interview. This will be made available to you by the GIGL Director/Assistant Director.

GROWING IN GOD'S LOVE

Parent Handbook – June 2023 Edition