

Allston Brighton Area Planning Action Council

Parent Playgroup Handbook 2010

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Welcome to The Allston & Brighton APAC Child and Family Center

OUR MISSION

For over 40 years the Allston & Brighton Area Planning Action Council is a family support center that offers a broad range of services, including full day full year child care, free tax preparation, emergency food pantry, fuel assistance, Mass Health and food stamps applications.

Our approach is inclusive, open and non-judgmental. We welcome families of all types, incomes and backgrounds. Our goal is to strength families and thus strengthen community.



OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

The first five years of a child's life provide crucial opportunities for cognitive and social development. These years are also some of the most challenging and exhausting for parents. Our playgroups are designed to benefit both children and their parents.

Our group leaders create a home away from home for parents and caregivers where they can find support and information while their children play, learn and socialize in a safe, age-appropriate, free-play setting.

Our community partners will participate conducting presentations, informational workshops, and community referrals that will provide parents with opportunities to grow, learn, and connect with important resources.

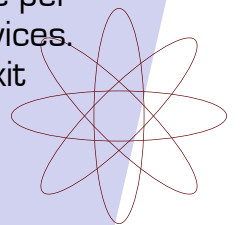
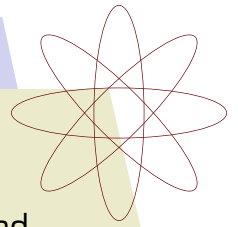
Our playgroup is designed for children between 15 months and 2.9 years of age. When a child is 2.9 years old can apply to our pre-school programs that are located in Allston & Brighton:

**Rivendell Child Care Center
Fidelis Way Child Care Center
Allston Brighton Head Start**

PLAY GROUP GUIDELINES

Although we want to create and maintain a casual and relaxing atmosphere during your time at the playgroup, it is important that participants understand and make best efforts to abide by the following guidelines in order to ensure the safest and most positive experience for everyone.

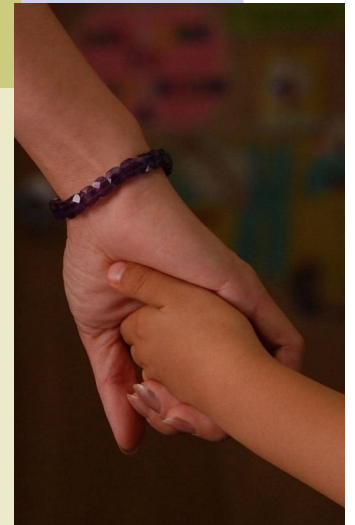
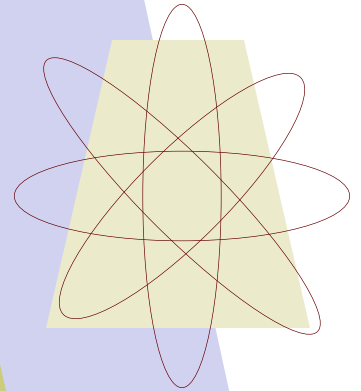
- ◆ All parents will complete the Playgroup Intake Form before a child can be placed in the play group.
- ◆ Parent/Legal Guardian will provide the following documentation: valid photo ID in the State of Massachusetts, child's birth certificate, and proof of address.
- ◆ Children cannot be left at the center without a parent at any time
- ◆ For your child's safety, we ask that you be responsible for the supervision of your own child at all times. You can ask another parent to watch your child if you need to leave the room, but it should be for a few minutes.
- ◆ Children should never be unattended.
- ◆ Do not bring children other than the one registered for the playgroup.
- ◆ Adult family members who would like to visit and participate with you are always welcome.
- ◆ Each registered family will receive a mail slot in the front entrance of the building. Please check it regularly for announcements, information, etc.
- ◆ Parents are asked to bring snacks, milk, feeding devices, and other materials and supplies to feed the children. Parents will feed their own children.
- ◆ Please keep all snacks healthy and refrain from bringing foods that pose a choking hazard (e.g. popcorn, raisins).
- ◆ Avoid bringing highly allergic items (i.e. peanuts), consider that other children can suffer an allergic reaction.
- ◆ Please bring diapers, wipes, disposable towels, and all necessary supplies to change your child if necessary. Parents will change their children's diapers, the center will provide an age appropriate changing table.
- ◆ Cellular phones are for emergency use only during play group hours, you must set your cellular phone in vibrating mode before the play group activities start.
- ◆ A child that is absent due to illness will remain out of the playgroup until he/she has been symptom free for 24 hours (e.g. fever, severe cough, visible rash, skin infection, diarrhea, vomiting etc)
- ◆ Physical acts of aggression between children can cause physical and psychological damage, if a child attacks in any way another participant, the child will leave for the rest of the day. If this behavior is persistent the child will be permanently removed from the playgroup and referred to appropriate services.
- ◆ After completing the play group enrollment parents will complete the Exit Survey Form.



PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

The ideas and skills presented here are a part of a process, and are intended to help you during your time interacting with other parents, their children, and your own child. The most important thing is to relax and enjoy sharing your child's group experience.

- ◆ **Use of First Names:** In keeping with a feeling of warmth and a community atmosphere, all parents and group leaders are addressed on a first name basis by both children and adults.
- ◆ **Getting Involved:** During play group sessions, parents are expected to help the group leader to assist your child in all activities.
- ◆ **Active involvement with your child during play group time is essential** as it provides opportunities to learn from the group leader, from other parents, and by observing your child interact with other children and adults.
- ◆ Parents should gently encourage participation. Children should not be forced to participate in activities. If the child does not want to participate, help the child find another activity and try again another day.
- ◆ **Being a Role Model:** Children learn best when behaviors are modeled for them and expectations are clear. Parents are their children's greatest role models. By modeling participation in group activities, parents provide their children with the opportunity to learn by example and by doing.
- ◆ For example, parents are asked to assist their children with putting away at least three toys the child has played with that morning.



A TYPICAL DAY

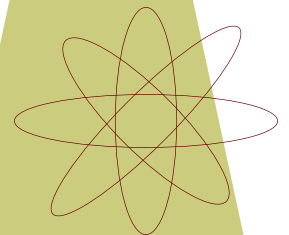
9 AM, Greetings and Announcements. **9:15 AM**, Free play. **10:15 AM**, Snack. **10:45 AM**, Circle and story time. **11:15 AM**, Crafts and development of fine motor skills.

In the playgroup, the group leader greets families each morning and guides them through age appropriate activities including free play, and art project, snack, sharing and taking turns, story time, and group activities

The children are encouraged to explore the Center's play spaces, including areas for:

- ◆ Dramatic play, including dress up, housekeeping, dolls, and toys.
- ◆ Block-building and vehicle play
- ◆ Table toys to develop fine-motor activities
- ◆ Story-time, with children looking at books, as well as being read to by an adult

Children develop social skills, cognitive skills, fine and gross motor skills, and become accustomed to an age-appropriate routine. They also begin to understand and follow basic expectations about being responsible for a shared space and materials. These early experiences lay the foundation for later experiences in preschool and elementary school.



IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

The group leader will involve parents through discussion and exploration of topics concerning parent and child behavior, and models helpful responses to challenging situations during the course of a session. Parents are encouraged to bring up any topic or challenge they are experiencing in this supportive environment.

Experts in the areas of health, nutrition, child development and safety are invited to speak.

The Allston & Brighton Area Planning Action Council will conduct play group activities with our community partners:

- ◆ Children's Hospital
- ◆ Boston Public Health Commission
- ◆ Boston University School of Dental Medicine
- ◆ New England College of Optometry

And other institutions that are involved in our community, if you have any questions please contact the group leader.

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