



Bright from the Start Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE, 670 East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

Phone: (404) 657-5562 WWW.DECAL.GA.GOV

Date: 7/10/2024 **VisitType:** Incident Investigation Closure from visit on 05/30/2024

CCLC-53079

First Step Learning Academy

1213 North Liberty Street Waynesboro, GA 30830 Burke County
(706) 535-4251 kpressley@augustaga.gov

Special Investigations Unit Sr. Specialist

Brittany Sawyers

Phone: (229) 317-9647

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Joint with: Stephanie Ellis

Mailing Address

2612 FARMERSBRIDGE RD
Waynesboro, GA 30830

Quality Rated: ★ ★

Compliance Zone Designation			Compliance Zone Designation - A summary measure of a program's 12 month monitoring history, as it pertains to child care health and safety rules. The three compliance zones are good standing, support, and deficient. Good Standing - Program is demonstrating an acceptable level of performance in meeting the rules. Support - Program performance is demonstrating a need for improvement in meeting rules. Deficient - Program is not demonstrating an acceptable level of performance in meeting the rules.
07/10/2024	Incident Investigation Closure	Good Standing	
05/30/2024	Incident Investigation & Follow Up	Good Standing	
03/07/2024	TA Follow Up	NA	

Comments

7/10/2024: The purpose of the visit was to conclude an incident investigation.

Advisement of Potential for Repeated Rule Violations during Pending Investigations

This report shall serve as official notice of potential rule violations. These potential rule violations have been detailed in this report and discussed with you by the consultant. The department shall conduct a thorough investigation to determine if in fact the alleged rule violation(s) should or should not be substantiated. Please be aware that the investigation may take some time to be finalized to ensure fairness and accuracy. During this investigation period, any violations of an identical rule or rules will require the department to treat any and all substantiated rule violations identified in the investigation as repeated rule violation(s).

Further, from time to time the department discovers additional rule violations during the course of an investigation. If there are new rule violation(s), your consultant shall inform you of the violation(s) as soon as possible. However, as stated above, any violations of identical rule(s) will require the department to treat any and all additional rule violations identified in the investigation as repeated rule violations.

All rule violations found in relation to a complaint or incident investigation will be associated with the date the investigation was closed.



Please refer to the website, <http://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/RulesAndRegulations.aspx>, for information regarding October 1, 2018 rule changes about Criminal Records Checks that may affect your facility. In summary,

- New records checks will be required to be completed if a staff member experiences a six month break in service from the child care industry
- New clearance is required at least once every five years
- Any staff member solely responsible for supervising children will be required to have completed a comprehensive background clearance
- All staff members are required to have completed at least a national fingerprint based clearance check
- Any staff member with only the national fingerprint based clearance, must be under constant and direct supervision of a staff member with a satisfactory comprehensive records check clearance
- Facilities are required to use DECAL KOALA for Criminal Records Checks, including to verify portability of an employee

O.C.G.A. Section 42.1.12(i)(2) requires Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning to notify licensed child care programs on accessing and retrieving from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's (GBI) website a list of the names and addresses of all registered sexual offenders. Please see GBI's website located at <http://gbi.georgia.gov> to access the Georgia Sex Offender Registry.

Refutation Process:

You have the right to refute any of the citations noted in this report with which you disagree. To refute a citation(s), do the following:

- 1) Log into DECAL KOALA www.decalkoala.com with the userid for your program
- 2) On the home page scroll down to the Inspection Reports and select 'Refute Citation' for the visit report in dispute
- 3) Select the specific rule number(s) that you are refuting, add the reason for disagreement regarding the rule citation, and upload supporting documentation
- 4) Submit the refutation in DECAL KOALA to Child Care Services (CCS) within 10 business days of the completion date.

Your refutation will be forwarded to the appropriate CCS manager, who will follow up with you about your concerns. If you have any questions about this process, contact our office at 404-657-5562.

Bright from the Start recommends that all licensed child care providers carry liability insurance coverage sufficient to protect its clients. If you do not have this liability insurance, you are required to post a notice with ½ inch letters in a conspicuous location in the program, notify the parent or guardian of each child in care in writing, obtain their signature to acknowledge receipt and maintain this written acknowledgment on file at the program at all times while the child attends the program and for 12 months after the child's last date of attendance. (O.C.G.A. Section 20-1A-4)

I have read and understand the Rules and Regulations for Child Care Learning Centers, 591-1-1. I acknowledge that the items noted in this report have been discussed with me and I have agreed to a Plan of Improvement (POI) as indicated in this report. I understand that correction of these deficiencies, while required, will not necessarily prevent DECAL from taking adverse action against this facility. I understand that if I disagree with any of the deficiencies cited, I have the right to refute them on this report or any other form that I choose to send to Child Care Services.



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Summary Report

Date: 7/10/2024 **VisitType:** Incident Investigation Closure from visit on 05/30/2024 **Arrival:** 10:30 AM **Departure:** 4:00 PM

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The following information is associated with a Incident Investigation Closure:

	Safety
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591-1-1-.11 Discipline(CR)

Not Met

Finding Associated with Complaint

591-1-1-.11(1) requires that disciplinary actions used to correct a child's behavior, guidance techniques and any activities in which the children participate or observe at the Center shall not be detrimental to the physical or mental health of any child. It was determined based on a investigation that on May 21, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., a staff member used inappropriate discipline actions to correct a four-year-old child's behavior, while on the playground. The staff member applied physical force in efforts of making the child stop kicking, pinching, and hitting the staff member. The staff member repeatedly jerked and grabbed the child by their upper limbs, as they forcibly made the child sit down on the ground and near a fence. The staff member yelled in the child's face and made threats towards the child. The staff member spanked the child on their bottom area, as well as slapped the child due to the child's continuous behaviors. Furthermore, the center failed to ensure that non-punitive disciplinary practices were used to redirect the child's behaviors.

Correction Deadline: 7/10/2024

Finding Associated with Complaint

591-1-1-.11(2) requires that Personnel not: physically or sexually abuse a child or engage or permit others to engage in sexually overt conduct in the presence of any child enrolled in the Center; inflict corporal/physical punishment upon a child; shake, jerk, pinch or handle a child roughly; verbally abuse or humiliate a child which includes, but is not limited to, the use of threats, profanity or belittling remarks about a child or his family; isolate a child in a dark room, closet or unsupervised area; use mechanical or physical restraints or devices to discipline children; use medication to discipline or control children's behavior without written medical authorization issued by a licensed professional and given with the parent's written consent; restrict unreasonably a child from going to the bathroom; punish toileting accidents; force-feed a child or withhold feeding a child regularly scheduled meals and/or snacks; force or withhold naps; allow children to discipline or humiliate other children; or confine a child for disciplinary purposes to a swing, highchair, infant carrier, walker or jump seat. It was determined based on a investigation that on May 21, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., a staff member physically abused a four-year-old child, while on the playground. The staff member applied physical force in efforts of making the child stop kicking, pinching, and hitting the staff member. The staff member repeatedly jerked and grabbed the child by their upper limbs, as the they forcibly made the child sit down on the ground and near a fence. The staff member yelled in the child's face and made threats towards the child. The staff member spanked the child on their bottom area, as well as slapped the child due to the child's continuous behaviors. Furthermore, the staff member physically abused the child, and failed to protect the child from willful injury and harm, while at the center. The staff member was arrested and charged with first-degree cruelty to children on May 23, 2024.

Correction Deadline: 7/10/2024

	Staff Records
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591-1-1-.31 Staff(CR) **Not Met**

Finding Associated with Complaint

591-1-1-.31(13) prohibits Center Staff from committing any criminal act, as defined under Georgia law, in the presence of any child enrolled in the Center and requires Center staff to comply with all applicable laws and regulations. It was determined based on an investigation that on May 21, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., a staff member physically abused a four-year-old child, while on the playground in the presence of other children. The staff member applied physical force in efforts to correct the child's behaviors. The staff member was arrested and charged with first-degree cruelty to children on May 23, 2024. Furthermore, the center was not in compliance with applicable laws and regulations to ensure that criminal acts were not committed in the presence of the children.

Correction Deadline: 7/10/2024