A conscious start, *rooted in care*

CURRICULUM & FAMILY EXPERIENCE GUIDE

Ages 6 weeks to 5 years

FAITH. WONDER. NOURISHMENT. BELONGING.

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Bismillah Daycare

Washington, DC · Foundational program framework

A parent-facing vision and staff implementation guide. Final policies, menus, schedules, staffing, and accommodations remain subject to current DC licensing requirements, family agreements, and each child's individual needs.

Every child should be known, nourished, and invited to flourish

Bismillah Daycare is designed to give children a beautiful beginning: secure relationships, joyful discovery, clean halal food, daily movement, and an age-appropriate Islamic rhythm that makes faith feel close, gentle, and lived.

> "Conscious" means adults notice the whole child. We protect wonder, respond to cues, prepare the environment with purpose, and treat care routines as part of the curriculum.

What families can expect

- A small-group home setting with responsive care
- Play-based learning across all developmental domains
- Quran, dua, adab, and salah modeled with tenderness
- Greens and vegetables every day; no junk-food culture
- Indoor and outdoor active play, weather permitting
- Clear communication about growth, meals, rest, and joy

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Program posture. Islamic identity is explicit and joyful. Every enrolled child is treated with dignity, patience, and fairness. Families receive a transparent explanation of faith practices before enrollment and partner with the program on appropriate participation and accommodations.

Seven pillars hold the whole day together



These pillars are not separate subjects. They are the adult choices, routines, and experiences through which children build trust, knowledge, character, health, and belonging.

Rahmah · Compassion
Warm attachment, gentle voices, comfort, empathy, and repair.

Amanah · Trust
Safe supervision, dependable routines, honest communication, and care for every child.

Ihsan · Excellence
Beautiful materials, thoughtful teaching, clean spaces, and doing ordinary things well.

Ilm · Learning
Curiosity, language, inquiry, early literacy, mathematics, science, art, and reflection.

Shukr · Gratitude
Wonder at creation, appreciation for food and people, and respectful use of resources.

Adl · Fairness
Belonging, consistent limits, anti-bias practice, access, and respect for individual needs.

Khidmah · Service
Helping, sharing, caring for living things, and contributing to the group.

The adult promise

Educators slow down enough to see what behavior communicates, offer connection before correction, and choose developmentally appropriate expectations. Learning is strengths-based, play-based, joyful, and responsive to the child's culture, language, ability, temperament, and family context.[1]

Nine domains create a complete foundation

The curriculum uses the nine areas named in the 2019 District of Columbia Early Learning Standards and connects them to everyday play, care, faith, and family life.[2]

Approaches to learning

Curiosity, persistence, flexibility, attention, imagination.

Communication & language

Listening, speaking, gestures, home languages, Arabic vocabulary.

Literacy

Books, storytelling, rhyme, sound awareness, marks, print meaning.

Mathematics

Number sense, patterns, shape, measurement, comparison, spatial thinking.

Science & engineering

Observation, prediction, nature, cause and effect, building, testing.

Social studies

Self, family, community helpers, place, fairness, time, traditions.

The arts

Visual art, nasheed and rhythm, movement, dramatic play, design.

Social-emotional development

Attachment, identity, emotion, empathy, friendship, self-regulation.

Physical development, health & safety

Gross/fine motor skills, nutrition, hygiene, rest, body awareness.

Alignment, not a checklist. Head Start describes developmental indicators as observable progressions, not a test or a way to declare that a child has failed.[3] Bismillah Daycare uses standards to plan and notice growth, never to rush, rank, or label children.

Infants and young toddlers learn through relationship

Infants · 6 weeks–12 months

Primary goals: secure attachment, sensory exploration, communication, motor growth, and predictable care.

- Responsive feeding and sleep based on individual written plans
- Face-to-face language, songs, peekaboo, board books, and narration
- Daily supervised tummy time and unrestricted floor movement
- Safe grasping, reaching, rolling, sitting, crawling, and cruising invitations
- Hear gentle Quran recitation and familiar phrases such as Bismillah and Alhamdulillah
- Observe prayer naturally without an expectation to imitate
- Explore water, texture, light, sound, and nature with close supervision
- Build trust through consistent caregivers and cue-based soothing

Young toddlers · 12–24 months

Primary goals: mobility, early words, autonomy, imitation, and co-regulation.

- Name people, actions, foods, feelings, and familiar objects
- Practice carrying, filling, stacking, scribbling, climbing, and dancing
- Choose between two appropriate options and join simple cleanup
- Explore counting words, matching, rhythm, and cause and effect
- Join brief dua and Quran listening moments
- Imitate one or two salah movements for seconds at a time
- Practice salam, gentle hands, turn-taking, and care for materials
- Receive quick redirection, comfort, and simple language for feelings

Responsive care comes first. Feeding, diapering, sleep, distress, and developmental needs are never postponed for a group lesson or religious routine.

Toddlers through pre-K grow toward joyful independence

Older toddlers · 24–36 months

- Use expanding phrases and retell a familiar event.
- Sort, match, count small sets, and notice patterns.
- Join sensory science, process art, pretend play, and simple jobs.
- Practice wudu motions, prayer positions, short duas, and kindness words.
- Build toilet-learning and self-help skills without shame.
- Move vigorously daily and rest according to need.

Preschool · 3–4 years

- Ask questions, plan play, sustain attention, and solve peer problems with support.
- Hear and play with sounds; recognize own name and meaningful print.
- Count with one-to-one correspondence; compare, measure, classify, and build.
- Observe living things, weather, materials, motion, and change.
- Join a brief, unhurried salah sequence when prayer time falls in care.
- Repeat selected ayat and short surahs with meaning-centered conversation.

Pre-K · 4–5 years

- Tell detailed stories, ask for information, and use drawing/writing to communicate.
- Recognize rhymes and many letter-sound relationships without worksheets dominating the day.
- Count, compose small quantities, extend patterns, measure, map, and reason aloud.
- Design, test, revise, and explain during building and science inquiry.
- Follow the prayer sequence with increasing independence and learn key words gradually.
- Serve the classroom, care for younger peers, repair harm, and reflect on choices.

Progressions are individualized. A child may show skills across more than one band. Goals adapt for disability, dual-language development, temperament, and family priorities.

Islamic learning begins with love, belonging, and example



The aim in early childhood is not perfect performance. It is familiarity, affection, confidence, and the feeling that worship is a natural part of a loving day.

Daily strands

- **Allah's creation:** notice beauty, order, living things, water, sky, and our bodies.
- **Quran:** listen, echo, recite gently, and connect a short message to life.
- **Salah:** recognize prayer time, prepare, line up, and imitate movements.
- **Dua & dhikr:** use short authentic phrases in real routines.
- **Adab:** salam, kindness, truthfulness, gratitude, cleanliness, patience, and care.
- **Arabic:** meaningful words, sounds, names, and simple phrases through play.

Non-negotiable teaching tone

- No shame, threats, comparison, fear-based language, or forced recitation.
- Invitation and modeling before correction.
- Short, sensory, movement-rich experiences.
- Questions are welcomed; uncertainty is answered honestly.
- Pronunciation and religious content are checked by a qualified teacher/advisor.
- Family practice and home language are honored.

> We want children to associate Islam with mercy, beauty, cleanliness, gratitude, community, and a secure relationship with caring adults.

Prayer and Quran progress gently by stage

Watch & feel
INFANTS

- Hear recitation in a calm voice.
- Observe caregivers preparing and praying.
- Experience quiet, warmth, and rhythm.

Imitate & name
1–2 YEARS

- Say salam and Bismillah.
- Copy standing, bowing, and sujud briefly.
- Name prayer rug, Quran, water, hands.

Sequence & repeat
2–3 YEARS

- Try wudu motions with help.
- Follow a short movement sequence.
- Echo a short dua or ayah.

Understand & participate
3–5 YEARS

- Know the five prayer names in sequence.
- Join Dhuhr and Asr practice when they occur during care.
- Learn Al-Fatihah and selected short surahs gradually.
- Talk about simple meanings and lived character.

Five prayers, honored at their actual times

Prayer	Daycare practice	Family connection
Fajr	Usually before arrival; acknowledged in morning conversation.	Optional home routine card.
Dhuhr	Protected group practice when its local time enters.	Share current vocabulary/dua.
Asr	Practiced together if its local time enters before pickup/ closing.	Child may demonstrate a movement.
Maghrib	Usually after care.	Home reminder through family rhythm.
Isha	After care.	Bedtime Quran/dua suggestion.

Operational rule: Use a verified Washington, DC prayer timetable each day; do not substitute a fixed classroom clock time. Maintain supervision ratios. Do not wake sleeping children or interrupt urgent infant care; awake children are invited into a calm, brief practice.

The day opens at 6:00 AM and settles before learning begins

The schedule is predictable enough to build security and flexible enough to respond to infants, weather, child interest, and the daily prayer timetable.

Time	Experience	Purpose
6:00–7:15	Open; staggered arrivals; infant care; calm indoor invitations	Connection, family handoff, soft start
7:15–8:00	Breakfast + daily greens smoothie; conversation	Nourishment, language, self-help
8:00–9:00	Arrival window continues; indoor choice centers; individual care	Belonging, observation, mixed-age play
9:00–9:20	Morning gathering: salam, Quran/dua, movement, plan for the day	Community, faith, communication
9:20–10:10	Small-group inquiry + open centers	Literacy, math, science, art, executive function
10:10–10:30	Morning snack; toileting/diapering	Care, independence, conversation
10:30–11:30	Outdoor play and nature inquiry, weather permitting	Gross motor skill, risk competence, wonder
11:30–1:15	Lunch, cleanup, Dhuhr at its local time, stories, rest transition	Food, worship, calm, connection
12:30–2:30	Rest/nap; quiet choices for non-sleepers; responsive infant rhythm	Restoration and individual need
2:30–3:00	Wake, care routines, afternoon snack	Gentle transition and nourishment
3:00–4:00	Outdoor/indoor active play; Asr when its local time enters; pickup	Movement, reflection, family handoff

Drop-off policy. The regular parent drop-off window is 6:00–9:00 AM. A parent arriving after 9:00 AM must notify the program in advance so supervision, meals, rest, and learning plans can be adjusted.

If licensed operating hours extend beyond 4:00 PM, continue with calm choice play, a care routine, outdoor time when appropriate, and pickup communication. Publish the exact closing time in the parent handbook and enrollment agreement.

Infants receive a responsive rhythm within the group day

Individual plan

- Written feeding instructions, formula/ breastmilk handling, allergies, medications, and emergency contacts
- Individual sleep pattern and safe-sleep procedures
- Preferred soothing, home language, cues, and developmental priorities
- Daily family exchange about sleep, intake, diapers, mood, and milestones

Every awake cycle

1. Connect and observe cues.
2. Feed or diaper as needed.
3. Offer floor movement and tummy time.
4. Share language, song, Quran listening, or a book.
5. Explore one safe sensory invitation.
6. Follow tired cues into safe sleep.

Transitions are curriculum

Arrival
Greet by name, receive one family update, help child choose a first activity.

Meals
Wash, say Bismillah, serve calmly, converse, notice hunger/fullness, say Alhamdulillah.

Cleanup
Use picture cues, songs, matching, carrying, sorting, and helpful classroom jobs.

Wudu
Model sequence, water care, body vocabulary, and respect. Adapt for age and need.

Rest
Dim lights, soften sound, read, reassure, and respect individual sleep needs.

Pickup
Share one concrete moment of learning or joy, plus essential care information.

Late arrival transition. When advance notice is given, prepare a quiet entry point so the arriving child can join without disrupting prayer, meals, small-group work, or rest.

Children learn by doing meaningful things



Materials are open-ended, beautiful, reachable, and rotated with purpose. The adult observes first, then adds language, a question, a tool, or a small challenge.

Books & storytelling

Warm reading corner; family stories; fiction and nonfiction; Quran respectfully placed for adult-guided use.

Blocks & building

Unit blocks, loose parts, people, vehicles, plans, photographs, and measurement tools.

Discovery & nature

Leaves, stones, water, magnets, light, magnifiers, living plants, observation journals.

Art & making

Paint, clay, collage, fiber, drawing, construction, and process-focused display.

Dramatic play

Home, market, clinic, kitchen, masjid/ community scenes, dress-up, and real-life tools.

Math & manipulatives

Sorting, counting, puzzles, patterns, shape, spatial reasoning, and fine-motor work.

Quiet & regulation

Soft seating, feelings visuals, sensory tools, breathing prompts, and protected privacy.

Outdoor classroom

Climbing, wheeled play, digging, gardening, water, chalk, observation, and seasonal study.

Daily plans include at least two movement opportunities and 2–3 outdoor active-play occasions when weather permits; infants receive supervised tummy time while awake.[4] Indoor movement replaces, rather than cancels, active play during unsafe weather.

Themes 1–6 begin with identity, care, and creation

Use each theme for roughly four weeks, moving faster or slower with the children. Every unit includes a question, a faith connection, books and vocabulary, math/science investigation, art, movement, service, and family voice.

01

Belonging & Bismillah

Questions: Who am I? Who cares for me? How do we begin well? **Experiences:** name songs, family photos, classroom agreements, self-portraits, greetings, gratitude.

02

My body, senses & feelings

Questions: How does my body help me? What do feelings tell us? **Experiences:** senses lab, body tracing, emotion stories, hygiene, movement, calming.

03

Families & caring communities

Questions: How are families alike and different? How do people help? **Experiences:** family interviews, community map, helper dramatic play, service basket.

04

Water, cleanliness & change

Questions: What can water do? How do we care for our bodies and world? **Experiences:** pouring, floating, washing, wudu sequence, conservation, weather.

05

Seeds, gardens & food

Questions: What do living things need? Where does food come from? **Experiences:** plant, measure, compost, taste greens, draw roots, thank growers.

06

Animals & mercy

Questions: How do animals live? What does gentle care look like? **Experiences:** habitats, tracks, classification, animal movement, responsible care.

Themes 7–12 build wonder, expression, and service

07

Sky, light, time & prayer

Questions: How do light and shadow change? How do people mark time? **Experiences:** shadow tracing, moon phases, daily sequence, prayer-name order, sun safety.

08

Builders, shapes & balance

Questions: What makes a structure strong? **Experiences:** arches, towers, homes, masjid architecture, maps, shape hunts, test-and-revise.

09

Words, stories & Quran

Questions: How do words carry meaning? **Experiences:** oral storytelling, rhyme, sound play, meaningful Arabic words, bookmaking, respectful listening.

10

Helping hands & sadaqah

Questions: What can children contribute? **Experiences:** classroom jobs, kindness plan, counting donations, care notes, neighborhood helpers.

11

Healthy bodies & strong movement

Questions: What helps bodies grow? **Experiences:** food rainbow, heartbeats, obstacle courses, rest science, cooking, hygiene.

12

Reflection, gratitude & growth

Questions: How have we changed? What are we grateful for? **Experiences:** portfolios, memory books, family celebration, garden harvest, next-step goals.

Islamic-calendar overlay. Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Hajj, Eid al-Adha, and other family observances move through the solar year. Place them into the active inquiry when their verified dates approach. Keep experiences age-appropriate: stories, generosity, sensory exploration, family traditions, moon observation, and celebration - never fasting expectations for young children.

One weekly question can connect every domain

Example within “Seeds, gardens & food”: **What helps a seed wake up?**

Area	Invitation	What to notice
Faith & character	Wonder at growth; gratitude for rain and growers	Care, questions, stewardship
Language & literacy	Read a seed story; sequence picture cards; dictate predictions	Vocabulary, retell, print meaning
Math	Count seeds; compare size; measure sprouts	One-to-one, comparison, numeral use
Science	Test light/water conditions in clear cups	Prediction, observation, change
Art	Press, draw, collage, and paint plant forms	Representation, fine-motor control
Movement	Curl like a seed; stretch toward light; garden obstacle path	Balance, coordination, body control
Nutrition	Wash and taste spinach, peas, cucumber, herbs	Language, willingness, sensory response
Family voice	Invite a family recipe or plant-growing story	Identity, connection, home language

The five-step teaching cycle

1 · Notice
Observe interests, needs, words, strategies.

2 · Plan
Select one meaningful goal and experience.

3 · Invite
Prepare materials; offer choice and language.

4 · Document
Capture a note, quote, photo, or work sample.

5 · Reflect
Decide what to repeat, extend, or change.

Keep whole-group lessons brief. Protect long stretches of child-led play. Worksheets are occasional tools, not the curriculum.

Growth is documented, shared, and supported without comparison

Observation rhythm

- **First 30 days:** family interview, routines, strengths, interests, communication, motor and social baseline.
- **Weekly:** brief anecdotal notes across children and domains.
- **Monthly:** select work samples/photos and write one learning interpretation.
- **Quarterly:** family conference or progress conversation with next steps.
- **Ongoing:** adjust environment and teaching from evidence.

What never becomes a score

- Willingness to pray or recite
- Temperament, affection, or quietness
- Home language or accent
- Disability-related differences
- Food preferences or appetite
- Speed of toilet learning

Inclusion in action

Access

Adapt materials, seating, communication, sensory load, movement, and pacing so children can participate meaningfully.

Co-regulation

Connect, name the feeling, protect safety, offer a small choice, and practice repair. Food, water, rest, toileting, and outdoor play are never withheld as punishment.[5]

Home language

Invite key words, songs, stories, and family voice in the language the child knows best.

Shared concern

Describe observable patterns, listen to the family, document support tried, and coordinate referral only through appropriate, consent-based processes.

Communication standard. Families receive essential daily care information and one concrete learning or joy note whenever possible. Concerns are shared privately, promptly, and respectfully - never at the doorway in front of children.

Food is care made visible



Meals are designed to help children feel steady, satisfied, and curious about real food. Clean halal ingredients, greens every day, abundant vegetables, fruit, legumes, whole grains, and simple proteins make nourishment part of the conscious start.

100% halal meat

Purchase from verified halal sources; keep labels and invoices; store and prepare to prevent cross-contact.

Plants lead the plate

Offer dark greens and another vegetable daily, plus varied whole fruit.

Whole-food rhythm

Use oats, quinoa, brown rice, barley, whole-grain bread/pita, beans, lentils, eggs, yogurt, chicken, and beef.

No junk-food culture

No candy, soda, sweet drinks, routine fried foods, or food rewards. Minimize highly processed foods and added sugar.

Responsive feeding

Adults decide what, when, and where. Children decide whether and how much to eat from what is offered. Never pressure or force.

Water all day

Make water readily available indoors and outdoors; milk is served as required at meals.

> A child may need many calm exposures before accepting a new food. We keep offering without bargaining, hiding shame, or calling a child “picky.”

The menu follows Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) structure: age-appropriate portions, two distinct fruit/vegetable components at lunch, at least one whole grain-rich item daily, and lower-sugar choices.[6]

Monday and Tuesday build color, greens, and steady energy

For children 12 months and older. Serve age-appropriate unflavored milk at breakfast and lunch. Smoothies contain no juice or added sugar; standardize recipes and document creditable amounts before counting them toward CACFP components.

Monday · Green beginnings

Breakfast	Spinach scrambled eggs; whole-grain toast; blueberry-banana-spinach yogurt smoothie.
Morning snack	Ripe pear pieces + plain yogurt.
Lunch	Lemon-herb halal chicken; brown rice; roasted broccoli and carrots; orange segments.
Afternoon snack	Tahini-free chickpea spread; soft whole-grain pita; peeled cucumber prepared for age.

Contains: egg, milk, wheat. **Prep:** Roast a tray of chicken/vegetables and cook rice in one batch; blend six small smoothies just before breakfast.

Tuesday · Bright roots and grains

Breakfast	Zucchini egg muffins; warm quinoa-oat porridge; strawberry-kale milk smoothie.
Morning snack	Soft cinnamon apples + natural cheese.
Lunch	Mild halal beef kofta crumbles; quinoa; steamed green beans and roasted red pepper; soft peach slices.
Afternoon snack	Mashed avocado on soft whole-grain toast fingers.

Contains: egg, milk, wheat. **Prep:** Bake egg muffins and kofta on sheet pans; cook extra quinoa for breakfast and lunch; omit whole skewers and hard raw pieces.

Daily smoothie guide. Use a small portion sized to the child, one fruit + one mild green + plain yogurt or age-appropriate milk + water/ice as needed. Keep it spoonable or cup-thick, not a meal replacement. For an allergy substitution, follow the child's written plan and confirm CACFP crediting.

Wednesday and Thursday keep preparation simple and batch-friendly

Wednesday · Legume power

Breakfast	Tomato-spinach omelet strips; whole-grain pita; mango-spinach plain-yogurt smoothie.
Morning snack	Banana + sunflower-seed butter spread thinly on soft oat toast.
Lunch	Red lentil and mashed-chickpea stew; brown-basmati rice blend; finely chopped collard greens; ripe pear.
Afternoon snack	Plain yogurt + mashed or quartered soft berries, prepared for age.

Contains: egg, milk, wheat; check sunflower product for cross-contact. **Prep:** Make one pot of stew; mash beans for younger children; freeze extra portions in dated containers.

Thursday · Garden tray

Breakfast	Broccoli egg and brown-rice bowl; pineapple-kale-yogurt smoothie.
Morning snack	Unsweetened applesauce + low-sugar whole-grain oat mini muffin.
Lunch	Sheet-pan halal chicken meatballs; quinoa-whole-wheat couscous blend; soft zucchini and peas; melon.
Afternoon snack	Roasted sweet-potato wedges + cottage cheese.

Contains: egg, milk, wheat. **Prep:** Use one sheet pan for meatballs and vegetables; use Wednesday’s cooked grains if food-safety storage rules are met.

Flavor profile. Use gentle herbs and spices - garlic, parsley, dill, cinnamon, cumin, turmeric, lemon - with low sodium. Offer sauce on the side when a child is learning a flavor.

Friday closes the week with comfort, vegetables, and gratitude

Friday · Warmth and community

Breakfast	Mild shakshuka-style egg with finely chopped tomato and spinach; whole-grain toast; berry-beet-spinach milk smoothie.
Morning snack	Soft kiwi and banana + natural cheese.
Lunch	Halal beef and mashed-chickpea vegetable stew over barley-brown rice; soft cauliflower and spinach; unsweetened soft peaches.
Afternoon snack	White-bean herb spread; soft whole-grain pita; steamed carrot batons.

Contains: egg, milk, wheat. **Prep:** Brown beef, then finish the stew in one pot. Reserve a low-sodium child portion before adjusting adult seasoning.

One-person kitchen system · up to six children

Friday

Draft menu; check allergy plans; order verified halal meat and produce.

Sunday

Wash produce; cook one grain; make bean spread; label containers.

Daily opening

Start one batch item; portion smoothie ingredients; record temperatures.

After service

Record menu/amounts, cool safely, date leftovers, sanitize.

Smart batch staples

- Cooked brown rice or quinoa
- Roasted mixed vegetables
- Plain lentil/chickpea base
- Sheet-pan chicken or meatballs
- Washed smoothie greens
- Unsweetened applesauce/soft fruit

Easy substitutions

- Egg → white-bean mash or approved tofu scramble
- Dairy → documented approved substitute
- Wheat → quinoa, brown rice, certified alternative
- Sesame → tahini-free bean spread
- Meat → lentils/beans in creditable amount
- Texture → mash, shred, soften, or finely chop

Age-appropriate portions protect nutrition and autonomy

The quantities below are CACFP minimums for children ages 1–5; prepare enough for seconds without pressuring children to clean their plates. Verify current program guidance and each packaged product's crediting before implementation.[7]

Meal/component	Ages 1–2	Ages 3–5
Breakfast milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Breakfast fruit/vegetable	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
Breakfast grain	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq
Lunch milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Lunch meat/meat alternate	1 oz eq	1 1/2 oz eq
Lunch vegetable	1/8 cup	1/4 cup
Lunch fruit or second vegetable	1/8 cup	1/4 cup
Lunch grain	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq
Snack: choose 2 components	Milk 1/2 cup · meat alternate 1/2 oz eq · vegetable 1/2 cup · fruit 1/2 cup · grain 1/2 oz eq	

Milk by age

Age 1: unflavored whole milk. Ages 2–5: unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, unless an approved medical accommodation applies.

Whole grain daily

At least one grain serving across the day is whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count.

Smoothie caution

Measure each ingredient. A blended drink does not automatically credit as all components. Keep a standardized recipe and menu record.

Child cues

Offer the minimum serving, allow more when available, and respect hunger and fullness cues. Never force-feed.

"Oz eq" means ounce equivalent. Egg or other meat alternate may replace the breakfast grain up to three times weekly under CACFP; this menu generally includes a separate whole grain alongside egg.

Infants follow individualized feeding, not the preschool menu

Birth–5 months

Serve breastmilk and/or iron-fortified infant formula according to the child's written plan and hunger cues. Hold infants for bottle feeding; never prop bottles. The family and program document handling, labeling, storage, and feeding instructions.

About 6–11 months, when developmentally ready

Continue breastmilk/formula and introduce appropriate textures of iron-rich foods, vegetables, fruit, and creditable grains in coordination with the family. "Six months" is a guide, not an automatic readiness date. Introduce foods one at a time according to the child's written plan and current health guidance.

Safe infant practices

- No smoothies as a substitute for breastmilk/formula
- No honey before 12 months
- No juice for infants
- No infant cereal in bottles
- No whole nuts, spoonfuls of nut butter, or hard pieces
- Seat upright and supervise actively

Developmental texture ladder

- Smooth puree or naturally soft mash
- Mashed food with soft lumps
- Very soft, appropriately sized pieces
- Shredded or finely chopped family foods
- Progress only with demonstrated readiness and family agreement

Documentation. Use the current CACFP infant meal pattern and the child's health-care instructions. Breastmilk/formula amounts and solid-food components differ by age and readiness.[8]

Every plate begins with an individual safety plan

Allergen control

The nine major U.S. food allergens are milk, egg, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soy, and sesame. The sample menu commonly uses milk, egg, and wheat; some substitutions may introduce soy or sesame.

Before enrollment

Obtain written allergy/intolerance information, symptoms, emergency actions, medication orders, and approved substitutions. Distinguish allergy from preference while respecting both.

Before every service

Check labels every time; use separate utensils and surfaces; prevent hand-to-food cross-contact; identify each child's plate; keep emergency medication accessible as authorized.

During meals

Seat and actively supervise. Children eat while upright. Do not allow walking, playing, or reclining with food.

After a reaction

Follow the child's emergency plan immediately, activate emergency response as directed, notify family, document, and review controls.

Choking prevention

- Quarter grapes and small round tomatoes lengthwise.
- Cook hard vegetables and fruit until soft; grate or finely chop when needed.
- Shred meats; remove every bone.
- Mash whole beans for younger toddlers.
- Never serve whole nuts, popcorn, hard candy, gum, or thick spoonfuls of nut butter.
- Modify texture to the individual child, not age alone.

CDC lists uncut grapes/tomatoes, hard raw produce, whole nuts, thick nut/seed butter, large meat/cheese pieces, hot dogs/sausages, popcorn, and similar foods as choking hazards for young children.[9]

Medical and religious accommodations. Follow current OSSE/CACFP documentation rules. Medical disability substitutions may carry specific provider responsibilities; nonmedical preferences may affect reimbursability.[10]

Parents are partners in the conscious start

Before the first day

- Family story, goals, home language, comfort routines
- Feeding, sleep, allergy, medical, and development plans
- Faith practices and desired participation
- Authorized pickup and communication preferences
- Transition visits when possible

Ongoing rhythm

- Daily care and learning exchange
- Weekly menu and theme preview
- Monthly portfolio glimpse
- Quarterly growth conversation
- Immediate private communication for safety or concern

Home-school bridges

One dua
Share the phrase, simple meaning, and routine where it is used.

One question
Send the inquiry question so families can notice it at home.

One food
Name the week's featured green, grain, or legume and invite a family recipe.

One book
Share the title or story theme, with options in home languages when available.

One act of care
Invite a small service action suitable for a young child.

One celebration
Tell families what their child tried, discovered, or contributed.

> Family partnership is reciprocal: the program offers expertise in child development; the family brings irreplaceable knowledge of the child.

A focused 30-day launch turns values into consistent practice

Week 1

Make the essentials visible

Post the daily rhythm and drop-off rule; create current prayer-time procedure; assemble child emergency/allergy plans; define halal purchasing and food-label records.

Week 2

Prepare the environment

Set up seven core learning zones, a calm corner, accessible water, child-sized care tools, prayer materials, a protected Quran location, and outdoor/indoor movement plans.

Week 3

Pilot one inquiry and the menu

Run “Belonging & Bismillah,” test recipes for six portions, standardize smoothies, verify CACFP crediting, and adjust timing from real observations.

Week 4

Document and refine

Review one note per child, family feedback, meal acceptance, allergy controls, prayer transitions, outdoor minutes, rest quality, and workload. Keep what is calm and effective.

Weekly planning page

Inquiry question

_____

Target domain/goal

_____

Faith/character connection

_____

Books & words

_____

Indoor invitation

_____

Outdoor investigation

_____

Meal/food exploration

_____

Family voice

_____

Premium care is consistency families can feel

Known
Every child is greeted by name, observed with care, and understood in family context.

Safe
Supervision, hygiene, allergy controls, safe sleep, food safety, and emergency readiness come before convenience.

Nourished
Whole foods, vegetables and greens daily, verified halal meat, water, calm meals, and responsive portions.

Engaged
Long play periods, strong materials, purposeful conversation, outdoor discovery, and minimal passive screen use.

Grounded
Quran, dua, salah, gratitude, and adab appear naturally in the day without pressure or shame.

Growing
Observation guides teaching; families see progress; adults reflect and improve.

Monthly director review

- Are current prayer times posted and followed with appropriate flexibility?
- Did every child receive meaningful outdoor or indoor active play daily?
- Do observations represent every child and all developmental domains over time?
- Were greens/vegetables offered daily and whole grain-rich foods documented?
- Are halal source records, menus, allergy plans, temperatures, and substitutions current?
- Did any routine become rushed, coercive, or adult-centered? What will change?
- What did families teach us this month?

Professional review before adoption. Compare this framework with the daycare's current license, staffing pattern, parent handbook, insurance requirements, OSSE rules, CACFP sponsor guidance, food-handler requirements, and qualified Islamic guidance. Resolve any conflict in favor of current law, safety, and documented family/child needs.

Standards and sources used in this framework

1. **National Association for the Education of Young Children.** “Developmentally Appropriate Practice Position Statement.” Strengths-based, play-based, joyful learning and reciprocal family partnership.
   naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/contents

2. **DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).** “How to Use the Early Learning Standards and Distance Learning Guide.” Whole-child, interrelated development and DC Early Learning Standards alignment.
   DC ELS supplemental resource

3. **Head Start.** “Interactive Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five.” Domains, progressions, indicators, and limits of checklist use.
   headstart.gov interactive ELOF

4. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.** “HIOPS for Physical Activity.” Outdoor active play, movement, and infant tummy-time practices.
   cdc.gov physical-activity standards

5. **OSSE.** “Final Rulemaking for the Licensing of Child Development Facilities.” Positive guidance and prohibited discipline practices.
   DC child development facility rules

6. **OSSE.** “The CACFP Child Meal Pattern.” Age-appropriate meals, vegetables and fruit, whole grains, and lower-sugar options.
   OSSE CACFP meal pattern

7. **USDA Food Buying Guide.** “CACFP Meal Pattern” charts for preschool breakfast, lunch/supper, and snacks; current added-sugar notes.
   USDA lunch/supper chart

   USDA snack chart

Wellness, infant feeding, and safety sources

1. **U.S. Department of Agriculture.** “CACFP Independent Child Care Center Handbook,” including the infant meal pattern and developmental-readiness guidance.
   USDA CACFP handbook

2. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.** “Choking Hazards.” Food shapes, textures, and items to avoid or modify for infants and toddlers.
   cdc.gov choking hazards

3. **OSSE.** “Parents Providing Meal Components - Revised.” Documentation and substitution distinctions in CACFP.
   OSSE meal substitution memo

4. **OSSE.** “Wellness Guidelines for Child Development Facilities.” Culture of wellness, nutrition services, family engagement, social-emotional health, healthy habits, physical activity, and environment.
   OSSE wellness guidelines

5. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.** “HIOPS for Nutrition.” Whole grains, varied vegetables and fruit, lean proteins/legumes, water, and limits on added sugars and fried foods.
   cdc.gov nutrition standards

Bismillah Daycare

A conscious start, rooted in care.