



# Little Valley Daycare LLC

Nature Inspired, Play Based Childcare.

Parent Handbook

Updated 11/5/2022

**Who We Are:** Hello! My name is Kriya Miller, the owner and operator of Little Valley Daycare. My husband Matt and I are the Co-Founders of Human Nature School in Traverse City and have spent the last 12 years as the Co-Executive Directors, designing and running nature connection programs for all ages. I will be the primary care provider, but Matt may make regular appearances to help as needed. Our oldest son, Wilder may help out a bit during the summer or after school and has been volunteering as a helper with the young ones at Human Nature School since he was 9! Our newest family member, Robert, arrived on Father's Day at the dawn of the summer solstice in 2021. And he the one inspiring me to spend more time at home and open a daycare. We look forward to getting to know you and your family and strengthen the weave of community, support, and camaraderie for families in our area. And finally, there's our dog Kuna! She loves people and kids, but we will be keeping her in a separate area during childcare hours. (We will visit her to say hi sometimes, but only while direct, up-close supervision can be offered). We will also often have chicken's scratching about and love to feed the birds to keep them coming around!

**Where We Are:** We are conveniently located just off M-72 on Tager rd, about 15 minutes west of Traverse City along the Leelanau/Benzie County line. Tager rd is a gravel rd that doesn't get much traffic and our driveway heads up a little valley within a valley to our cabin, tucked away within the forest. (\*4-wheel drive will be needed for winter pick up and drop off). We have a fenced in yard for lots of outdoor free play, gardening, bird feeding, snow play, sand play, water play and can take little walks as well throughout our 7-acre property if we need to stretch our legs even more. Inside our cabin we have an open living room/kitchen with lots of games and toys and things to climb and slide on with big, beautiful windows to view the outdoors.

**Our Approach to Childcare:** We offer *Nature Inspired, Play Based Childcare!*

**Mentoring Principals:**

- **Childs Passions:** Nature and the Nature of the Children lead the way. We will lean into child's passions, aka the things kids naturally love to do (Ex: running, jumping, hiding, seeking, singing, dancing, digging holes, catching ants, collecting leaves, building things, water and sand play, throwing things, playing games, make believe, climbing, building forts, the list goes on!)
- **Serve and Return:** Your children are already observing and communicating about sooo much! This is the "serve". Whether it's pointing to the moon and making a sound I can't recognize as a word yet or bringing me a piece of bark they found and trying to show me the tiny snail shell on it or pointing happily to all the milkweed seeds blowing in the wind... My job is to acknowledge what they are showing me with a "return". So I might point at the moon too and help them say moon! Or I might pause long enough to really look at the bark and see the

shell they are showing me. By “returning” what they “serve” I am teaching them that their observations are important and that they matter. We all do this with our own kids without even thinking about it but it’s one of the most important things we can “teach” our kids. In doing this we are teaching them their observations matter and to keep it up!

- **Risk vs Reward:** There is always risk in life. But we will seek to minimize the risk while maximizing the reward. All too often, we minimize the risk while also minimizing the reward. An example of minimizing risk AND reward often sounds like “No” (No climbing, No throwing, No running!!!) Minimizing the risk while maximizing the reward often sounds like “Yes, And” (Yes and throw the rock over here instead of toward other people, Yes and use the foam to play to swords instead of the sticks... etc) We will always aim to keep your kids safe and minimize the risk while maximizing the reward. There will be falls and scrapes and bonks and bumps from time to time. These are all a part of exploring the world and learning to be in bodies. We will do everything in our power however to prevent any serious harm or injury in any way. Your child’s safety, both emotionally and physically is as important to me as the safety of my own children. As is the freedom to explore their own nature:)
- **Titration:** We aim to create a safe and loving space for the children. And from that foundation, they can choose to push their own boundaries in their own time. Often, we see children needing to titrate, or move back and forth between safety and security to new adventures and challenges and back again. By providing both opportunities, they can move back and forth on their own terms. An example of this is setting up a sprinkler that the kids can choose to run into and they can choose when to run back out of. They have the choice of when and how much they push that edge for themselves. If I were to be spraying them with the water, it might be fun for some, but it’s running the risk of losing their choice and their safety in the moment and getting sprayed well beyond what they are comfortable with. We aim to set up activities and opportunities in a way where kids have the most choice. And if/when they get to wet, they can learn to make a different choice for themselves and find empowerment from the experience.
- **Natural Consequences vs Punishment:** If you spill something, that’s okay, you can just help me clean it up! If you get covered in wet mud that you don’t like having on you, that’s okay, we’ll help you get cleaned up and then we can explore how it happened and decide whether or not you want to do it again.

- **Boundaries:** Your body, your choice (includes your personal clothing or gear, what make believe character you are today, you get to be the boss of your body and who you want to play as.) We are here to help give you tools and words to honor your self and your boundaries, in a peaceful way. And we will also practice listening to and respecting the boundaries others. In time, you will not need our help anymore to do this!
- **Taking Turns:** The toys and equipment we play with are not a part of our bodies and selves, even if we love them A LOT. If more than one kid wants to play with a toy at the same time, we will practice taking turns. If kids are unable to take to turns, even with lots of support to do so, we will likely put that toy away for a while and try again later.

### **Nature Inspired, Play Based Learning:**

- **Nature Inspired:** Early childhood is such a potent time to get to know the earth we got to be born in to! That's why many of our books and toys and are nature inspired and much of our time will be spent outside.
- **Academics:** There will be plenty of exposure to words, numbers, colors etc. and the kids will certainly pick up a lot as they play and explore. We will follow the curiosity of the kids and help them dive deeper into their own interests in their own time.
- **Hands on/Building things:** Lots of toys and activities for building things, blocks, puzzles, train tracks, forts, sandboxes, etc. It's such a cool thing to get to create!
- **Arts & Music:** Art supplies and musical instruments are here to play with!
- **Imagination Play:** Kids can play and explore and "be" whoever they want (but they don't get to dictate who other people are:)
- **Screens:** We don't rely on screens as learning tools but we will flip on the family tv for kid appropriate shows or movies for a limited time. This may be in the early morning to support a cozy transition for any sleepy arrivals or before nap time to help shift the energy into a slower rhythm. It really depends on the kids and what is supportive to them at different stages. There will never be more than 2 hrs of screens a day and we will definitely work with families on any favorite shows that can help them kids to feel more comfortable and will avoid any shows that families are not comfortable with:)

## **Flow of the day:**

*General Flow of the Day, may shift based on what's happening in nature and with the nature of the kids:*

**8:00 am- 10:00 am:** Flex arrival time and free play with both quiet and active play options (art, music, books, toys, games, active outdoor play, and/or cozy up to your favorite episode time, depending on the needs of the kids)

**10:00 am- 10:30 am:** Snack and story

**10:30 am-12:00 pm:** Outdoor play (as much as the weather permits:)

**12:00 pm-12:30 pm:** Lunch and story

**12:30 pm -2:00 pm:** Quiet time: (nap time, quiet activities, watch a quiet episode, slowing down & resting up)

**2:00 pm- 4 pm:** Flex pickup time with indoor or outdoor free play.

## **Hours of Operation:**

8 am – 4 pm, Tuesdays -Thursdays

*(Subject to change based on needs/preferences of community)*

## **Enrollment Process:**

1. Check Availability on our website.
2. Fill out Application online.
3. Schedule a 1 hr. visit with your kiddo!
4. Complete enrollment and pay Deposit (\$200) to hold your spot.

(Enrollment is at a first come, first serves basis, based on availability once you complete your visit.)

## **Fees and Payment Policies:**

**Bright wheel:** Payments, schedules, sign in and communications will all happen through one App; Bright wheel. It'll be your one stop place for all things daycare:)

**Deposit: \$200** (refundable)

**Tuition:** \$60 per day.

**Tuition Assistance:** Don't think you can afford childcare? You might be surprised! The State of Michigan provides tuition assistance and tax credits for childcare hours. To learn more visit: [Parents \(michigan.gov\)](https://www.michigan.gov/parents)

**Payments:** You can make payment anytime on bright wheel and will receive an automatic balance reminder and payment link on Fridays each week. Please make your payment by Fridays each week that you receive care. If you are unable to make a payment on time, please communicate and set up a payment plan. If you are become a month behind in payments, we will certainly do what we can to continue to support you, but this could result in losing your place in our program.

**Sick Days:** Please keep your kids home when they are sick. Especially at the onset of sickness when both fatigue and contagions are at their highest. If the onset of a sickness happens at daycare, we will call you for an early pickup and take good care of them in the meantime. If a child has largely recovered and just has a lingering cough or runny nose, that's usually just fine:) If you are not sure whether to keep them home, ask me for my recommendations. Communication is key. I can offer families 2 free sick days each year (per day you are registered. So, if you are registered for 3 days per week, that's 6 free sick days per year, per kid) After that, you will be expected to make your payment, even if you're kid/s can't make it.

**Cancelations/Closing:** If I am sick and unable to provide care, I may need to close for the day. In this instance, you will not be required to make your payments. If there is extreme weather or power outages, I may also need to close for the day, in which case you will not be required to make a payment for that day.

**Unenrolling:** If you can give us 1 months' notice before unenrolling and transitioning to what's next, you will receive your full \$200 deposit back, guaranteed. We appreciate as much notice as you can offer though! You can also request your deposit back even without 1 months' notice if you need to unenroll due to an unforeseen or unfortunate circumstance or a grievance with our program that is prompting you to unenroll. And we will do our best to make a fair and common-sense decision that honors, and respects all involved.

## **Communication:**

Clear and open communication is key to working together to best support your kid/s! Drop off and pick up is great time to touch base about the basics in person but is a tricky time to go deeper! If time and space is needed for additional matters, You can reach me during my office hours. If you have any questions or concerns or requests about how to best support your child, please speak up! I've been working with families for the last 15 years and have never once been upset or offended when someone speaks up about something they are questioning or concerned about. 100% of the time this has led to deeper understanding and trust.

**Office Hours:** As a work from home mom, it is hard for me to have set office hours. I will do my best to respond to emails and texts within 24hrs. If you need to make a voice call, please text ahead of time to set up a time to talk. It is difficult for me to be present for a voice call during the business of the day but I can make time if I know to plan for it.