



March 2022



A NOTE FROM BETTER BEGINNINGS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR KELLI HILBURN



Spring is coming and I'm very excited for what that season brings us. No, not the pollen and allergies. I'm talking about warmer days, blooming flowers with bright colors and the sound of chirping birds.

This yearly rebirth is old hat for us adults. However, some children in your care may discover the change that comes with spring for the first time. They may need help to see it, so point out the beauty of a new flower or the leaves growing on a bare tree and leave room for questions. They will have lots of questions.

Books about the changing seasons are another tool you can use to start the conversation. This is a great opportunity to expand their horizons and for them to learn more about the world around them. The more they know, the more likely they are to care for the plants and animals that make this world home alongside us.

Spring is a great time for **science** and exploration so keep reading for resources you can share with your client-families to encourage at-home learning.

Arkansas Children's Week is scheduled for April 2-8, 2022. Get signed up for the workshop today. You'll find the link to sign up and more information about this year's theme later in the Buzz.

Check out the new Better Beginnings [website](#) for even more science resources!

Kelli Hilburn

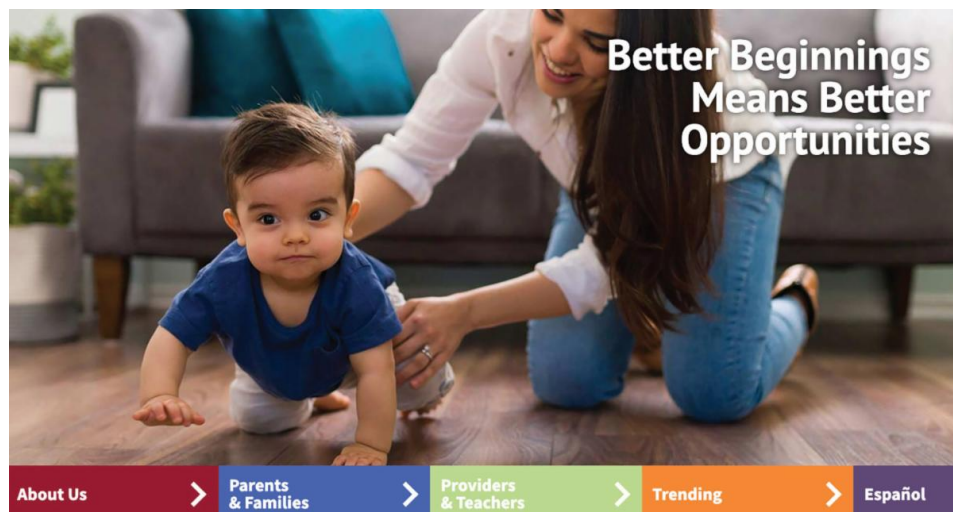
Kelli Hilburn

BETTER BEGINNINGS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR
DIVISION OF CHILD CARE AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



3...2...1... BLAST OFF!

The new Better Beginnings website is here!



Have you seen the redesigned Better Beginnings [website](#)? If not, check it out now! The updated design makes finding all the things you need - star tool kits, curriculum and more - easier to find!

Watch this video for a tour of the website.

SCIENCE RESOURCES



Help your client-families continue the learning at home by sharing these science [resources](#) from our [Family Resource Library](#).

Play, Explore, Learn Outdoors



Playing with your children outdoors is not only fun, it's beneficial for both children and parents. Check out these simple ways to interact with your children while outside and see how many additional ways you can think of to help your child learn from the great outdoors.

- Have a picnic! Eat lunch or dinner or a snack in your backyard or in the park.
- Collect leaves, acorns, pebbles or pine cones. Compare the items in your collection. Do they all look alike? What differences do you see?
- Look for different types of trees near your home. Find out the name of each tree.
- Blow dandelion "yuffs".
- Plant some seeds and watch them grow.
- Take a flower walk.

Look for different colors and shapes.

- Lie on your back in the grass and watch the clouds. Use a pencil and paper to sketch the cloud shapes that you see. What do these shapes remind you of?
- On a rainy day, press your nose to the window and watch the rain. Take a walk during a gentle rain. Splash in puddles.



- Hang wind chimes or a wind sock where you can hear and see it from a window. Listen to the sounds the wind makes. Try to re-create the sounds using household items.
- Fly a kite.
- Wiggle your toes in the sand, dirt or mud.
- Draw in the sand or dirt with sticks.
- Collect rocks. Make up a game to play with pebbles and rocks.
- Sit quietly on the ground and watch ants. (Be sure these are not fire ants!) Sprinkle bread crumbs on the ground and watch what happens.
- Watch the birds. How many different birds do you see in your yard?
- Hang a bird feeder or put out a bird bath. Keep a list of the birds that visit.
- Run barefoot through the grass.
- Closely observe a small area of grass (about one square foot). Describe what you see.



Click here to visit our Resource Library. You'll find activities and tips to help you prepare your child for life.
[ARBetterBeginnings.com • 1-501-682-8590](#)

Sticks and Stones Creativity



There is a world of natural resources outdoors. Playing with these elements - from the woods, park or your own backyard - helps children develop a love of nature. When children appreciate the beauty of nature, they become caretakers of it.

We can't always take off to the woods to appreciate Mother Nature. Teach your children to look for beauty. She won't mind if you bring home a few small pieces.

- Sort out the different elements and talk about what they are.
- What are their names?
 - What are they made of?
 - Where did they come from?
 - Do they grow on trees?
 - Do they come from the water, a creek or forest?
 - Do they need water? Light? Soil? Darkness?

Parents may have to do a little research, but that's a bonus activity to share.

Go outside and play!



Don't forget to Get Muddy with Your Buddy! Here's how.

See our outdoor resource pages for more fun activities for discovering nature.

Click here to visit our Resource Library. You'll find activities and tips to help you prepare your child for life.
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WOODLAND Mini Garden

It all begins with a discovery adventure.

Gathering nature's little treasures is an important part of this activity. Make a family adventure of exploring the forest, local park or your own yard. You may be surprised at nature's treasures lying right on the ground.

Adult supervision is essential. Talk to your child about safety collecting treasures before your adventure begins.

Making Your Woodland Mini Garden

1. Select a container that is deep enough to plant your Nature plant. These can rest on top of the soil.
2. Cover the bottom of the container with about an inch of pebbles or gravel. This is for drainage. Most plants don't like to sit in water.
3. Cover the pebbles with soil. Fill container to about one half inch from the top edge.
4. Make a hole in the soil and place your Nature plant.
5. Fill the hole with soil and pat the soil down gently.
6. Place your treasures to fill the surface of the bowl. Fill in blank spots with pebbles or interesting stones you collected.
7. Pour about one half cup of water around the Nature plant. Repeat watering once per week.

Note about watering: Most can go without water for a very long time. If your moss is dry, hold it under running water for a moment and shake off excess water before placing in your garden. Give it water about once a month. Lichen needs no watering.

Nature's Little Treasures:

- Moss
- Lichen
- Interesting stones
- Sea shells
- Acorns
- Pine cones
- Small branches or woody stems
- Small plants (ground cover, grass or weeds will do)

Materials:

- Plastic bowl or other container
- Pebbles or gravel
- Soil (potting soil or yard dirt)
- Paper or stick, chopstick or bread knife
- Measuring cup or large spoon for scooping soil and pebbles

Remember, everyone wash your hands after collecting treasures and after creating your garden.

Visit the science section of our Family Resource Library for more outdoor discovery activities.



See the next page for photos and fun facts about moss and lichen.

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Play, Explore, Learn
Outdoors

Sticks & Stones
Creativity

Woodland Mini Garden

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT



Arkansas Children's Week 2022

Arkansas Children's Week 2022 is **April 2 - 8!**

This year's theme is Humor and Happiness. These big ideas can guide you as you celebrate your children and their families:

- Smiling and laughing together are essential for well-being.
- Children learn habits like positivity, warmth and gratitude from important adults in their lives.
- We can cultivate humor and happiness in the spaces we share.



Arkansas Children's Week 2022

Planning Toolkit

Humor and Happiness

This year's workshop is self-paced and online. It will be available March 20 - April 16, 2022. Click [here](#) to register.

Find ways you can celebrate Arkansas Children's Week in this year's toolkit on the Arkansas State University Childhood Service's [website](#).

ARPA FUNDING AVAILABLE



Apply Today for Well-Deserved Funds

The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) is accepting applications for grants funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). All licensed child care providers licensed on or before March 11, 2021 are eligible for a grant, no matter their Better Beginnings status.

There is enough funding available for all providers in Arkansas so apply today for these much deserved funds!

The funding can be used in a variety of ways including center improvements, staff bonuses and operational costs.

The due dates for the grant applications are as follows:

- Operational & Quality Improvement: April 30, 2022
- Expansion: April 30, 2022
- Supply Building: April 15, 2022

Apply for all the grants you're eligible for so you can continue to provide high quality early learning and care to your community. A link to the portal was sent to the email on file with Licensing.

Find more information on the DCCECE [website](#).

Contact Paige Cox at Paige.Cox@dhs.arkansas.gov or 501-320-8940 with any questions you have concerning these grants.

American Rescue Plan Proposal

Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

STABILIZATION - 286M*

*90% of funding must go to existing facilities and up to 10% can be used for new programs

Subgrant Payments - \$258M**

**Facility must have been open on or before March 11, 2021 to qualify.

Quality Improvement

Funding to assist facilities in obtaining a higher level of quality. Eligible subgrant amounts were determined based on a cost analysis of the amount necessary to move up one level in quality.

Operational

Funding to assist facilities in paying operational expenses incurred during the pandemic.

Child Care Expansion of Existing Business

Funding to address out of school time and infant/toddler early childhood education gaps across the state of Arkansas. Existing facilities will be awarded a subgrant amount based on the type and amount of increased capacity. Funding will cover minor renovations of existing classrooms, classroom start-up, or partnerships with local businesses to support essential workers by expanding or opening an on-site campus.

Supply Building - \$25M

Funding contracted out through public/private partnerships to create new child care centers across Arkansas for the essential workforce including care for non-traditional hours.

SUPPLEMENTAL DISCRETIONARY - 178M

Essential Worker Child Care - \$130M

Funding to continue assisting Arkansas's Essential Workforce in paying for child care services. Essential Worker Child Care will be extended through September 2024 or until funding has been exhausted.

TEACH Scholarship Program - \$40M

Funding to cover scholarships for early childhood teachers to obtain a degree or credential in the field. Funding will be disseminated out by the Arkansas Early Childhood Association using the national TEACH model.

ADMINISTRATIVE - \$11M***

***Administrative budget is \$3M from Stabilization and \$8M from Supplemental Discretionary Funds

Personnel - \$4M

Funding to cover 22 personnel to assist with the implementation of Stabilization and Supplemental Discretionary Funds.

IT Upgrades and Other - \$7M

Funding to cover IT upgrades for internally and externally facing systems.



MEET THE TEAM



ShaLonda Beene - Administrative Specialist



Describe your job in one sentence:

I assist the Better Beginnings team by completing any secretarial duties unique to each team member that helps to keep all of our jobs organized and running as smoothly as possible.

Favorite children's book:

Miss Tizzy by Libba Moore Gray

Favorite toy as a child:

I had two Cabbage Patch dolls - a girl toddler and a boy infant.

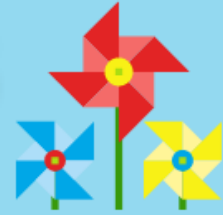
When you were a child, what job did you want as an adult?

My dream job was to be a tornado chaser. A tornado alley tour is still on my bucket list.

Which of these education topics to do you enjoy most and why? Math, Science, or Literacy?

I enjoy science the most because it's mysteriously ever changing. There are constant new discoveries.

BETTER BEGINNINGS STAR APPROVALS



Better Beginnings is focused on making **quality child care more accessible to families of young children across Arkansas**. More high-quality access means more kids are better prepared for kindergarten.

The follow programs are now **3-star** Better Beginnings Providers:

- Friendship Pediatric Services, Bryant
- The Little Eagles Nest, Huntsville

The following programs are now **2-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- Steudlein Learning Center, West Memphis
- Burks Daycare & Learning Center, Brinkley
- Little Blessings Preschool & Childcare, Van Buren
- Springdale Early Learning Academy West, Springdale
- Little Martians Learning Center, Bentonville
- Just like Home Daycare Center, Jonesboro
- Trucks and Tiaras Learning Center, Rogers
- Marmaduke Early Childhood Center, Marmaduke
- Linda's Kids, Pea Ridge
- All My Children, Proctor
- Heaven's Angles, North Little Rock
- Kidz Zone Learning, Little Rock
- Kids Academy, Magnolia

The following programs are now **1-star** Better Beginnings providers:

- Little Zion Day Care & Learning Academy, West Memphis
- Kiddie Town Learning Center, Little Rock
- The House of Harmony, Little Rock
- Russellville ARVAC Head Start, Russellville
- From Caterpillars to Butterflies, Fayetteville
- The Goddard School, Fayetteville
- Shug's Funtime Learning, Conway
- Columbia Christian, Magnolia
- Lake Nixon Outdoor, Little Rock
- Toodle Tots Daycare, Benton
- Park Magnet, Hot Springs
- Primrose Path Daycare, Waldron
- Ferncliff, Little Rock

If you are a Better Beginnings provider and are interested in moving up in star ratings, click [here](#).

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR ACHIEVEMENT!



Nine Family Child Care Homes Receive National Accreditation

Congratulations to the following nine family child care home providers who received national accreditation from the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)!

- Bentonville - Mary Line
- Booneville - Rita Neve
- Evening Shade - Lorene Cahall
- Farmington - Carolyn Carney
- Fayetteville - Susan Meek
- Garfield - Michelle Mendoza
- Huntsville - Krista Houston
- Siloam Springs - Linda Adams
- Prairie Grove - Lisa Woods

These providers completed approximately 120 hours of professional development and an extensive review, including an observation and council approval. Their hard work to increase quality child care in Arkansas is greatly appreciated.

Learn more about the accreditation on the [NAFCC](#) website.

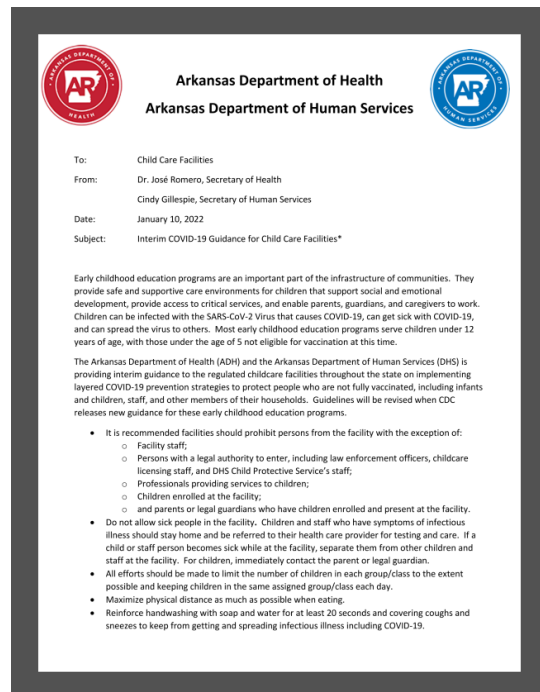
PANDEMIC GUIDELINES



As COVID-19 circumstances may change daily, Arkansas DHS and the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will **monitor and adjust these guidelines as needed.**

Find **COVID Advice and Resources** in the footer of our website. [Click here](#) to download the PDF or screenshot the document and save to your phone for quick access!

Child care providers are encouraged to call the Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Child Care Licensing at 501-320-6071 for answers to child care related COVID questions.



ARKANSAS DHS PANDEMIC GUIDELINES FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

WHAT IS BETTER BEGINNINGS?



Better Beginnings means better opportunities. Investing in quality child care for all Arkansas children creates better opportunities for our children, families, workforce and communities.

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)



Better Beginnings is Arkansas's tiered quality rating improvement system for child care, early education and school-age programs that have gone above and beyond the state minimum requirements. Better Beginnings is administered by the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.



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