



PARENT HANDBOOK

The Bell Center Phone – **879-3417**
The Bell Center Fax – 584-4559

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The Bell Center is dedicated to maximizing the potential of children from birth to three years of age who are at risk for developmental delay.

Dear Families,

We know that effective communication is the cornerstone of our partnership with you to help maximize your child's potential during these most critical early years of development. Here at The Bell Center, we believe that parents and professionals share the responsibility on this journey. This handbook is intended to provide you with a starting point for locating the information that may be helpful to you as crucial members of your child's team. You will find an overview of The Bell Center's programs and support services, explanation of program policies, important dates, and contact information for the staff members who can answer the questions you might have concerning your children.

For more than 35 years, The Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs has provided therapeutic services for children at risk for developmental delay and their families using a transdisciplinary approach. These programs have provided dramatic results for more than 1,000 families in central Alabama since its inception. We are grateful for the opportunity to include your family in that number as we work together with your child *"Right From The Start."*

Sincerely,

Kameron Carden

Program Director

Programs

Bright Beginnings

Infants come to The Bell Center for an hour at a time and receive services in a one-on-one format with members of the professional staff. Because it is critical for parents to become active partners in their children's learning, parents and other family members are encouraged to stay during the session to receive training so that they are able to continue essential therapies at home.

A separate, high risk infant therapy room is available to infants whose premature birth and/or medical conditions put them at increased risk to illness. While parents are encouraged to sit in on the session for training purposes, other family members are requested to stay in a nearby waiting area to reduce needless exposure to the medically fragile child.

Little Leaps

Children with special needs grow and flourish in group settings, learning from their peers, just as their typical counterparts do. For that reason, as an infant grows toward toddlerhood, the child is transitioned into the group format he or she will likely experience in later preschool and elementary school years. In Little Leaps, small groups of four children meet for one hour and receive early intervention services in a one-on-one setting with members of the professional staff.

All About Me

Toddlers in All About Me groups come to The Bell Center for a two-hour class. Each toddler is assigned a specific volunteer who provides one-on-one direction as the toddler works on his or her individual goals. Led by a professional team which includes an early childhood special education teacher, a speech/language pathologist, an occupational therapist, and physical therapist, All About Me groups have circle time with stories and songs, snack time to concentrate on feeding and language skills, group art projects and time for work on individual gross and fine motor skills. In addition to the professional team, a nutritionist is available on a consultative basis. Children's Dance Foundation and Hand in Paw are also included in this program.

Explore Every Day

Toddlers in Explore Every Day participate in center-based activities that are designed to promote independence in a structured therapeutic environment. A team of therapists lead children and their typically developing "friends" through preschool routines and activities. Activities are modified accordingly to provide opportunities for children to work on individual therapeutic goals while becoming more independent in a preschool environment.

Munch Bunch

The Munch Bunch is a peer group that is led by a team of therapists focusing on self-feeding skills. The class utilizes the Sequential Oral Sensory approach to build sensory and oral motor skills to broaden a child's acceptance of foods and develop chewing skills to manage a variety of table foods. This approach believes in supporting the child's needs while challenging each child's skill set. Through food play and peer modeling, each child will develop his or her own intrinsic motivation to eat. Skills across all developmental areas are addressed within the context of a mealtime. Family support is given through individual problem solving with the team, practice meals at home, and educational handouts.

My Friends

This program is designed for children with sensory, social and communication challenges. The small My Friends group also includes peer models. Some but not all children who participate in the program have a diagnosis of autism. A Bell Center team including an early childhood special education teacher, speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist and physical therapist work with the children to address their early intervention needs. The class meets for 2 hours, four days a week and through adapted typical preschool activities, children are challenged to successfully participate in classroom routines, interact with peers and tolerate various sensory experiences. The team uses a variety of developmentally appropriate practices to target the children's therapy goals and also collaborates with other professionals in the community that are helping families address their child's challenges. Parents have the opportunity to observe their child's class and the team of professionals meets with the family regularly to update and provide support.

Kindermusik

The core belief of the Kindermusik approach is that all children are musical and that the parent is the child's most important teacher. Every class offers a delightful mix of songs and activities, while each lesson is also thoughtfully designed to nurture specific learning and developmental goals. Kindermusik meets once a week for one hour, and parents accompany their child to this class led by a Bell Center staff member who is also a certified Kindermusik instructor. A team of Bell Center therapists also participate in the class, ensuring that children target their therapy goals throughout each activity.

Listen and Learn

This program is designed for children who are deaf/hard of hearing and utilizing a listening and spoken language approach. A Bell Center transdisciplinary team, led by the speech-language pathologist and early childhood special education teacher, provide a listening and language-rich environment while also supporting gross motor, fine motor, and sensory development with the occupational therapist and physical therapist. Direct support for the class is provided by a Certified Auditory-Verbal Educator. Classes are thoughtfully designed with an emphasis on language experiences such as craft activities, sensory explorations, and snack times. Listen and Learn also incorporates a weekly creative movement class led by a certified music therapist.

Peer Models

Peer Models are an important part of the programs at The Bell Center. The latest early intervention research shows that when children with special needs and typically developing children are integrated in preschool settings, both benefit from the learning experience. Peer Models serve as social language role models, as peer helpers and also have the opportunity to grow and learn from the preschool experience provided by our highly qualified teachers and therapists. Program times and age requirements vary from school year to school year.



Staff Listing

Executive Director	Jeannie Colquett
Founding Director	Betty Bell
Program Director	Kameron Carden
Marketing & Development Director	Stacey Morales
Early Childhood Special Education Teachers	Cindy Florence Sarah Swindle Sara Mizerany
Physical Therapists	Mary Beth Moses Holley Steele Leigh Ellen Cowart
Speech-Language Pathologists	Annie Krepps Jane Lamb Noelle Nicholson
Occupational Therapists	Mary Laura Day Caroline Davidson Lori Williamson
Nutritionist	Harriet Cloud
Classroom Assistants	Emily Zimmerman
Child Assistant s	Laura Stacy Angela Moore Taylor Rowe
Marketing & Development Coordinators	Macy Dye Lindsey Renfro
Program Services Coordinator	Janie Smith
Bookkeeper	Janet Wilson
Certified Pediatric Nurse	Libby Kellen
Administrative Assistant	Lucy Gunn



Team List – 2019-2020

Team A

Sarah Swindle, Early Childhood Special Education Teacher
Annie Krepps, Speech-Language Pathologist
Lori Williamson, Occupational Therapist
Holley Steele, Physical Therapist

Team B

Sara Mizerany, Early Childhood Special Education Teacher
Noelle Nicholson, Speech-Language Pathologist
Mary Laura Day, Occupational Therapist
Mary Beth Moses, Physical Therapist

Team C

Cindy Florence, Early Childhood Special Education Teacher
Jane Lamb, Speech-Language Pathologist
Caroline Davidson, Occupational Therapist
Leigh Ellen Cowart, Physical Therapist



General Family Policies

Absentee/Illness Policy

- Always call if your child will be absent.
- If more than 4 consecutive absences without a phone call, The Bell Center reserves the right to fill your spot from our waiting list.
- If you are absent for 50% or more of your sessions in one month, the team may ask you to meet with the Program Director.

Late Policy

- Call if you will be late.
- If you are 15 minutes tardy for 50% of your sessions in one month, you may be asked to meet with the Program Director.
- For drop off classes, if parents are 10 minutes late to pick up their child for 50% of classes in one month, the parent may be asked to meet with the Program Director.

If a solution cannot be reached through meeting with the Program Director, The Bell Center reserves the right to fill your spot from our waiting list.

Illnesses

- A child should not be brought to The Bell Center if a contagious illness, productive cough, questionable rash, and/or fever is present or has been present within the past 24 hours.
- The child should be fever-free without any use of fever-reducing medications (Tylenol or Motrin) for at least 24 hours BEFORE returning to The Bell Center. The Bell Center staff may use their discretion as to whether a child may remain for the duration of therapy due to illness or symptoms.
- If you are not sure if your child should stay home, you may call The Bell Center and consult the team or nurse as needed. The team may consult the nurse if there is a question of symptoms or contagious illness.
- In the event that your child will be absent from the program, please notify the Program Director as soon as possible. Due to the fragile health of other children at The Bell Center, parents are asked not to bring their child, siblings or parents/relatives that are ill or contagious.

Community Partners

The Bell Center is fortunate to have The Dance Foundation, Music Therapy Milestones and Hand in Paw partnering with us to provide therapeutic early intervention services. The toddler programs curriculum includes participation in activities designed by professionals from these organizations supervised by Bell Center teachers and therapists. Partnering organizations collaborate with The Bell Center staff to ensure experiences are



developmentally appropriate and target each child's individual therapy goals. Our community partners enhance our programs and reinforce the growth and learning of every child.

Confidentiality

Families have varying opinions on the need for confidentiality regarding their child's special need or diagnosis. The Bell Center encourages families to be sensitive and understanding of all families enrolled in the program, The Bell Center staff and the program as a whole.

Blogging, personal websites and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have become very popular ways for people to communicate with family and friends. However, our staff and some families have expressed concern over the confidentiality issues these websites can call into question. Therefore, if you do blog or maintain a personal social media page, we ask respectfully that you not include any information or pictures of any Bell Center children (other than your own) or any Bell Center staff.

Equipment

The Bell Center has numerous pieces of equipment that is available for families to borrow. When a therapist recommends a piece of equipment, families are required to sign an Equipment Agreement Form and provide a deposit for the equipment before taking it home. Arrangements for borrowing equipment are made through a child's professional team.

Gift Giving Policy

Families who wish to exchange gifts with each other are asked to conduct these exchanges off premises in order to avoid potential hurt feelings of families not included.

From time to time, families express an interest in giving a gift in appreciation of The Bell Center staff. Presently bringing lunch for the entire staff is common. However, if a family would like another alternative, donating to either The Bell Center Scholarship Fund or The Bell Center Wish List Fund are two other options to offer families. Families may donate to The Bell Center Scholarship Fund in appreciation of The Bell Center staff. This fund enables families that would otherwise be unable to attend The Bell Center due to financial challenges to receive financial assistance for tuition. The Bell Center Wish List fund allows families to donate to a general fund that provides the opportunity for different disciplines to purchase therapeutic equipment and materials that benefit the entire program. The administrative assistant will handle these types of gifts.

Holidays and Birthdays

The Bell Center believes that every family has its own individual way to celebrate holidays and that holidays are best celebrated within the family unit. For this reason, we do not celebrate specific holidays at The Bell Center but share the joy of the holiday season with our families at our annual holiday party held in December.

We do celebrate birthdays at The Bell Center. Families are asked to discuss with their team what kind of celebration would be appropriate and fit into the classroom schedule.



Latex-free and Nut-free Environment

Many children who receive services at The Bell Center have significant allergies which, when triggered, can lead to extreme allergic reactions. Latex and nuts are the two most significant allergens that can potentially harm our children.

Before bringing any food or other items into the building, please check with a member of that staff so we can be certain that nothing contains latex or nut products.

Evaluations and Charts

At The Bell Center, all children are evaluated using the Hawaii Early Learning Profile and followed by physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, special education teachers, and a nutritionist; these therapists set initial goals for each child that are updated on an as needed basis.

Charts stating individual goals are created for each child so that children can work on all areas of development during each session. Parents receive a copy of these goals to work on at home, and an additional copy is given for parents to share with any other service providers. A copy of a child's evaluation is emailed directly to the family pediatrician and child's state early intervention provider.

Suggestions and Concerns

The Bell Center is a family focused program, and we want to meet the needs of you and your family. If you have a suggestion or a concern, we want to know. Please discuss your thoughts with the Program Director or Program Assistant. We will make every effort to address any issues brought to our attention and welcome your input.

Weather Policy

The executive director of The Bell Center has authority to close the programs in the event of inclement weather. If the decision is made to close The Bell Center, local media outlets including WBRC Fox 6 will be notified. Families should refer to the news for this information.

During severe weather indicated by a tornado siren, Bell Center Staff will direct families and children to the building's safe places.



Ways You Can Help!

The Bell Center is a completely privately funded organization. We receive no state or federal funds, nor are we a United Way agency. Knowing this, there are lots of ways our families and friends can help The Bell Center as noted below. If you have any questions about any of this information or want to join in, please contact Jeannie Colquett, jcolquett@thebellcenter.org, or Stacey Morales, smorales@thebellcenter.org or call 879-3417.

Junior Board

The Bell Center Junior Board is a group of young professional volunteers formed with the sole purpose of fundraising for The Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs, creating community awareness and providing volunteer support of The Bell Center.

Bell Center Youth Alliance

The Bell Center Youth Alliance (BCYA) offers a unique opportunity for high school students to enjoy a hands-on learning experience at our established nonprofit. Intellectual, energetic, community service-oriented students from the greater Birmingham area schools are carefully selected to join the BCYA, bringing with them fresh perspectives and new ideas. The BCYA members are invaluable to The Bell Center as they offer their time, energy, and enthusiasm by supporting our mission through fundraising events, special projects, and spreading the word about the services we provide for families. The BCYA collaborates with the Marketing and Development Coordinator, Lindsey Renfro (lrenfro@thebellcenter.org).

Donations to The Bell Center

Should you have occasion to receive donations that would benefit The Bell Center please refer these contacts to our Marketing & Development Director, Stacey Morales (smorales@thebellcenter.org). She will ensure that appropriate and professional contact is made on behalf of The Bell Center.

BellRunner Program/Mercedes Marathon Weekend

Each February, thousands of runners and walkers take to the streets of Birmingham for the Mercedes Marathon, Half Marathon, Marathon Relay and the Superhero 5k which benefits The Bell Center.

The Bell Center benefits from this event not only in increased community awareness but also in dollars raised by BellRunners, a group of runners and walkers who participate in the MMW in honor of a child receiving therapy at The Bell Center. In return for the social opportunities and expert training that the runners/walkers receive, they agree to raise at least \$100 for every mile that they run which goes directly to The Bell Center.

Since the BellRunners program began, more than \$3.4 million has been donated to The Bell Center, a significant portion of the daily operating costs of The Bell Center.

Registration as a BellRunner covers the cost of the participant's entry fee for their race, a running shirt, invitation to fun social events along the way and many weekend perks.



Poinsettia Sale

The Poinsettia Sale is a quick and easy fundraiser that continues to grow. Everybody loves poinsettias during the holidays, and many offices and churches use them for decorating during the season. Simply pre-sell poinsettias to your family, friends and neighbors using the Poinsettia Sale form. The 8-inch pot poinsettias come in a choice of colors red, pink, white and marble and are \$20 each. Please have checks made payable to The Bell Center and turn in the money and order form before October 31st. The poinsettias will be delivered the first Monday in December. You can pick up the poinsettias you ordered at that time and make arrangements to deliver them to your buyers. If you have any questions, please contact Lindsey Renfro (lrenfro@thebellcenter.org) at 879-3417.

Tailgate Challenge

The Bell Center Tailgate Challenge is an annual event prior to the beginning of the college football season. Bell Center supporters come together to host tailgating tents for their favorite teams and provide tastes of tailgating food for eventgoers to sample. It's all about fun, food, and definitely team spirit! Bragging rights for a year go to the Best Tasting Food, Most Team Spirit, People's Choice and Best All-Around Tailgating Tent. You can join the fun and further the cause by planning to join a tailgating tent, form your own tent, or just bring your family and friends to the event.

United Way Designation

There is an easy way for you, your family and friends to help support our important mission. Each year many of us are asked at our workplaces to make a contribution to the United Way. Did you know that you can designate that your United Way donations come to The Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs?

The Service Guild and The Bell Center are not United Way agencies, and we do not have any agreement or obligation to the United Way. However, you may still make a donation to The Bell Center through the United Way Pledge Campaign by writing the following information down on your United Way pledge card:

Designated to: The Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs
Tax ID #: 63-1244330

The United Way will send your donation to The Bell Center for Early Intervention Programs for an administrative cost of 14.9%. Please remember us if you or your spouse's employer participates in the United Way Pledge Campaign. Your donation will be used to further the goals of The Bell Center. This is an easy way for you to make a big difference for the children.



Financial Information for Families

Fees

All families must pay three fees each year at The Bell Center – application or registration fee, evaluation fee and supply fee.

- Initial application fee (for new students due at the time of their enrollment) is \$25.
- Registration fee (for returning students due at registration in August) is \$50.
- The fee for both new evaluations is \$175 and re-evaluations is \$150.
- The annual supply fee is \$75 and is due September 15. If a child enters the program between January 1 and March 31, the supply fee for the current year is \$37.50. If a child enters the program April 1 or after, there is no supply fee until the following September when \$75 is due.

Tuition

Monthly payments are due at the beginning of each month and are considered late after the 10th of each month.

Summer tuition should be paid in full by June 15. Or families can choose to pay half by June 15 and the remaining half by July 15.

Past Due Accounts

Statements will be mailed to families around the 25th of each month if there is a balance on the account. The Bell Center reserves the right to discontinue services to a child whose account has a balance over 60 days due; parents will be notified by letter if this is the case. Balances over 90 days may be subject to collection services.

Also, arrangements must be made to have all balances paid in full upon graduation from The Bell Center; children whose families have a remaining balance by graduation will not be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony.

Voluntary withdrawal from the program does not excuse a child's family from tuition incurred; as such, families must make payment arrangements before leaving the program, and any balances over 90 days may be subject to collection services.

Family Fundraising

The Bell Center does not receive any federal or state funding and relies on fundraising efforts each year to cover the majority of our operation expenses. For this reason, families are expected to participate in the 5, 5 & 5k program which requires their help in selling five poinsettias during the Poinsettia Sale and selling five tickets to the A-Maize-ing Deal and recruiting a 5k BellRunner.

The 5, 5 & 5k program is just the basic vehicle for families to participate in Bell Center fundraising; there are many other ways our families can and do get involved including participation at some level in other special events, individual and corporate solicitations.



Successful fundraising is key to The Bell Center's ability to hold tuition costs as low as possible.

Financial Assistance

Only a small amount, approximately 12-15% of our costs is passed on to our families in the form of tuition and fees. The Bell Center does have a limited amount of scholarship funds available each year for families with significant financial hardships. Please see Jeannie Colquett, Executive Director, to apply for this assistance.

Families who receive financial assistance during the regular program year will receive financial assistance for summer tuition at the same percentage rate; for instance, if a family receives 50% tuition assistance, they will receive the same percentage off summer programs.



**The Bell Center Calendar
2019-2020 School Year**

Mon – Fri, August 19-23	Staff Planning/Training
Saturday, August 24	Tailgate Challenge 11:00 am – 2:00 pm at 29 th Court South, Homewood
Tuesday, August 27	Fall Parent Day Meeting 12:00 pm
	Fall Parent Night Meeting 6:00 pm – Childcare provided
Tues – Fri, August 27-30	Staff Planning/Training
Thursday, August 29	First day for Bright Beginnings & Little Leaps
Monday, September 2	Bell Center Closed – Labor Day
Tuesday, September 3	All Toddler Programs Begin
Tues – Fri, September 3-6	Volunteer Training Week, AAM programs 30 min later start time
Friday, September 6	The Bell Center Night at the Birmingham Zoo
Monday, September 9	Staffing Day
Wednesday, September 25	All Programs Closed noon – 3:00 pm, Share Day at The Bell Center
October 1	Poinsettia Sale Begins
Monday, October 7	Staffing Day
Mon – Fri, October 7-12	Sikes Sock Sale
Monday, October 14	Bell Center Closed – Columbus Day
Thursday, October 31	Poinsettia orders & money due
Monday, November 4	Staffing Day
Monday, November 11	Bell Center Closed, Veterans Day
Mon – Fri, November 25-29	All Programs and Administrative Offices Closed, Thanksgiving
Monday, December 2	Poinsettia Pick-Up Day
	Family Conferences (EED, AAM, L&L, MyF and MB)
Tuesday, December 3	Transition Meeting 6:00 pm
Saturday, December 14	Breakfast with Santa 8:00 am -10:00 am at Tavern at The Summit
Friday, December 20	Bell Center Holiday Party (10:00 am -12:00 pm); All Programs Closed
December 23- January 3	Bell Center Programs Closed
Monday, January 6	Staffing Day
Tuesday, January 7	All Programs Resume
Tues – Fri, January 7-10	Volunteer Training Week, AAM programs 30 min later start time
Monday, January 20	Bell Center Closed – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Monday, February 3	Staffing Day
Fri – Sun, February 14-16	Mercedes Marathon Weekend
Monday, February 17	Bell Center Closed – President's Day
Monday, March 2	Staffing Day
Mon – Fri, March 23-27	Spring Break/All programs closed
Saturday, April 4	Cornhole Classic, Good People Brewing
Monday, April 6	Family Conferences (EED, AAM, L&L, MB and MyF) 8am
Friday, April 10	Inclement Weather Day
Monday, April 13	Summer 2020 Registration/Fall 2020-2021 Registration for Infants
Saturday, April 18	Service Guild Gala 6pm The Club
Monday, April 20	Summer 2020 Registration/Fall 2020-2021 Registration for Toddlers
Wednesday, April 29	All programs closed 12-3pm, Share Day at Hand in Hand
Monday, May 4	Staffing Day
Friday, May 15	Last Day of All About Me
Sunday, May 17	Bell Center Graduation – 2:00 pm
Thursday, May 21	Last Day BB, LL, EED, MyF, MB and L&L
Friday, May 22	Staffing Day
Monday, May 25	Bell Center Closed – Memorial Day
Tues – Fri, May 26-May 29	Bell Center Programs Closed
Mon – Fri, June 1-5	Bell Center Programs Closed – Admin Office Open
Monday, June 8	Summer Staffing Day
June 9 - July 30	Summer Programs Open (Tues, Wed and Thurs only)
Mon – Fri, June 29-July 3	Bell Center Closed