



Parent Handbook

February 22, 2018

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I. OVERVIEW

Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it. –Proverbs 22:6

- **Welcome**

Welcome to the Golden Path family! Whether you have been with us since Golden Path began, or you are brand new to our program, we are proud to offer your family and your children the very best care in Northern Virginia. Our mission is to help your children learn and grow in a safe, loving, high-quality Christian program.

This handbook was developed to outline the programs and policies at GPA. As a parent, you should familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook as soon as possible. If you have questions that are not answered by the handbook, or need clarification at any time, please let us know.

Together as partners we can “direct your children onto the right path.”

Sincerely,



Lindsey Kilgannon
Executive Director

- **Mission**

The mission of Golden Path Academy is to provide a path of excellence for the whole child and their family, nurturing growth, in a safe, loving, high-quality Christian child development center.

- **Vision**

Golden Path Academy aspires to be a loving community:

- built on a foundation of Christian faith.
- where children experience the highest level of care and quality.
- where there is a commitment to growth and development of the family as a whole.
- that is recognized as a program of excellence in early childhood education.

- **Philosophy**

Golden Path Academy believes that families are the first and most influential teacher in a child's life. We understand the importance of a foundation built on trust. We seek to build relationships, establishing a family-oriented, Christ-centered program for the entire community.

Golden Path Academy Pathways Curriculum is based on best practices and integrates the works of early child development theorists Erick Erickson, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky. We believe that children learn best through their experiences. By providing those experiences in a safe, structured environment using hands-on learning, children will grow to their full potential. Activities are play-based and thematic. Our Christ-centered approach will also allow a child to discover and develop the lifelong values of love and kindness.

Pathways Curriculum utilizes the Virginia alignment project for early learning standards.

- **Statement of Faith**

We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and is reliable for our use today.

We believe that God is one being in three parts; God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God is the creator of all. We all have a purpose, and that purpose is to serve God and to serve one another. Sin (things that we do that go against God & things that we should do but don't) stands in the way of our relationship with God and each other. But even before sin separated us from God, He had a plan to bring us back together: Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth in human form, lived a perfect sinless life, died on the cross, and rose to life again. Jesus offers forgiveness of sin and new life in Heaven with God to all who believe.

Golden Path is a faith-based, Christian program. We are not affiliated with any specific denomination or church. We welcome children and families of all faiths to our program.

- **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Golden Path Academy does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or gender. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all families.

II. ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES AND ASSOCIATED FEES

- **Admissions**

New students are enrolled year round, as space allows. If there is an available space/schedule for your child, payment of the enrollment fee will hold the placement for up to 30 days. Spaces will not be held beyond 30 days without payment of tuition. All state-required paperwork must be completed prior to your child's start at Golden Path Academy.

- **Priority Enrollment**

Priority in the admission process is given in the following order: 1. Siblings of currently enrolled full-time, full-day students, 2. Siblings of currently enrolled half-day or part-time students, 3. Families enrolling through corporate partnerships, 4. All other students.

- **Schedules**

Full-time, full-day students are able to attend Mon-Fri, 6:30a-6:30p.

Part-time, full-day schedules are available (6:30a-6:30p, two or three days per week); these schedules must be fixed (same days every week). Parents may request additional days as needed. If space allows, students can add extra days for an additional fee.

Half-day schedules are available for students ages 16 months and up. If care is needed outside of the half-day hours of operation, the full-day rate will be charged.

- **Schedule Changes**

All permanent schedule changes (from full-time to part-time or half-day, part-time days, etc.) require 14 days written notice. If fewer than 14-days notice is given, the notice period will be adjusted to include 14 days and all charges during that time period will be billed and due, regardless of child's attendance.

- **Waiting List Fee**

When immediate enrollment is not possible, either due to class size or scheduling, parents may place their child on the waiting list. There is a one-time, non-refundable \$50 waiting list fee. This fee will be applied to your child's registration fee if/when a space becomes available.

- **Registration & Activity Fee**

Every child will be charged a registration fee prior to initial enrollment. Annual re-registration fees are also charged. An annual activity fee is charged to all students, beginning when a child moves into the Infant 2 class. These fees cover costs for all in-school shows and special events.

Registration fees and activity fees must be paid prior to your child's start at Golden Path Academy. Registration fees and activity fees are non-refundable.

- **Tuition Fees**

All programs have weekly tuition charges. Additional tuition charges will be billed when school-age students attend GPA on days that LCPS are closed. Weekly tuition fees are due on Monday of the attended week and a grace period is extended until Wednesday at 12:00 pm (noon). Tuition is billed and due regardless of attendance, illness, school closure, holiday, or other change in schedule.

- **Payment Options**

Payment is accepted in the following forms: cash, money order, personal check, scheduled ACH payments, recurring debit card or credit card transactions, or one-time credit or debit card transaction. All debit/credit card transactions are charged an additional flat 2.5% fee for processing costs.

- **Vacation Credit**
Vacation credits are available to children with full-time, full-day schedules. After three months of family enrollment, a child is eligible for two (2) vacation week credits per calendar year (January 1-December 31). The credit is equal to half (1/2) the normal weekly tuition charge. A request for vacation credit must be submitted via email at least 14 days in advance. The tuition account must have a \$0 balance due. The child may not attend GPA while the vacation credit is in use. Vacation credits reset every year on January 1. Credits are only valid in the current calendar year and may not be used in advance or retroactively. Vacation credits may not be used to pay a balance due.
- **Late Payment Fees**
All accounts with a balance of more than \$50 after 12:00pm Wednesday will be billed a \$20 late fee. Accounts that are unpaid for two weeks must be scheduled on a payment plan and enrollment may be terminated if the terms of the payment plan are not upheld.
- **Late Pick Up Fees**
A late pick-up fee of \$20 will be charged for every 15-minute increment after dismissal time. For example, GPA closes at 6:30pm; any child picked up from 6:31-6:45pm will be charged \$20, any child picked up from 6:46-6:59pm will be charged \$40, etc. These fees will be charged the next business day and must be paid with the next tuition payment.
- **Returned Payments**
Payments (check, ACH, credit card, debit card) that are returned to Golden Path Academy for any reason (insufficient funds, closed account, etc.) will incur a \$35 returned payment fee.
- **Program Withdraw**
Withdraw of enrollment at Golden Path Academy requires 14 days written notice. If fewer than 14-days notice is given, the notice period will be adjusted to include 14 days and all charges during that time period will be billed and due, regardless of child's attendance.

III. OPERATING INFORMATION

- **Licensing Standards**

Golden Path is licensed by the Commonwealth of Virginia. We meet or exceed all state requirements.

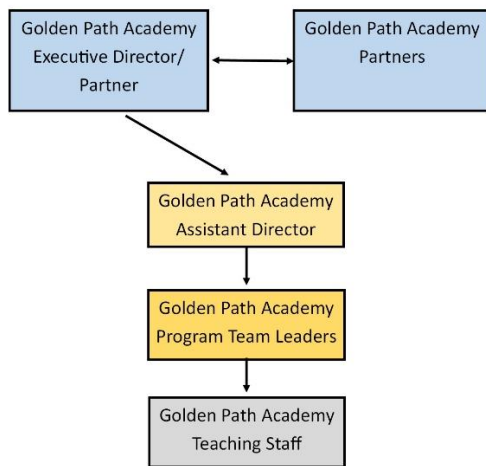
- **Hours of Operation**

Golden Path Academy is open Monday-Friday, from 6:30a-6:30p. There is no limit to the number of hours per day a child may attend (when enrolled in the full-day program).

- **Access to the Center by Parents**

All parents that have legal custody of their children will be given access to their children at all times of the day. Each household will receive a separate access code to enter the building.

- **Administrative Structure**



- **Non-Compete**

Golden Path Academy invests in the training and development of employees. A well-trained staff is critical to the function and growth of a quality childcare program. GPA aims to reduce turnover among staff and to offer a consistent level of care for all students. Employees may offer babysitting services during non-business hours, as the employee desires. However, employees are specifically forbidden from accepting nanny or home-daycare inquiries from families of GPA (currently enrolled families or those who were enrolled while the employee was employed by GPA).

- **Holidays**

Golden Path Academy will be closed on the following holidays: New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Friday following, and Christmas Day. Golden Path Academy classes and offices will be closed on these days. If a holiday occurs on a Saturday, the previous Friday will be observed as the holiday. If a holiday occurs on a Sunday, the following Monday will be observed as the holiday. Golden Path also will close at 12:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve, when the day falls Monday-Friday.

In addition, Golden Path classes will be closed on Columbus Day and Presidents’ Day each year for staff training and development.

There is no adjustment to tuition or fees for holidays observed. Part-time students may not “switch” or “swap” days when lost due to a holiday.

- **Inclement Weather**

Golden Path follows the inclement weather policy of the federal government in Washington, DC. If the federal government changes operating status to “closed” because of local weather conditions, then Golden Path will also close. If it begins to snow during working hours and the federal government declares an early closing, Golden Path will alert parents of an early closing schedule. We do encourage parents to pick up their child as soon as possible during inclement weather, in order to allow our employees a safe journey home. Golden Path reserves the right to close the facility should it be determined that the conditions are a hazard to the children and employees. Parents will be notified of emergency closings through the KidReports app and/or email. Parents can also usually find closing information posted on the Golden Path Academy Facebook page.

- **Arrival and Departure of Children**

Parents are required to drop off and pick up their children to an approved Golden Path employee. Parents should also check their child in to the Procure system, located in the GPA reception area. When departing, parents should connect with a staff member before removing their child from the classroom or grouping. Parents should check their child out of the Procure system, as well.

Should a child arrive after an off-site scheduled activity or field trip has begun, the child will join the classroom nearest to his/her age with available space until their class returns to Golden Path.

Parents are required to provide written permission to Golden Path for someone else to pick up a child. At pick-up time, the front desk employee will ask the authorized person for identification and will provide an “authorized pick-up badge.” This badge is shown to the classroom teachers prior to the release of the child. Anyone who attempts to pick-up a child without possession of an “authorized pick-up badge” will be redirected back to the front desk or to an administrator.

In an emergency, parents may also contact GPA by phone to authorize an alternate person to pick up. GPA may call the parent back to validate the request. The phone number at GPA is 571.349.9277.

If a child is not picked up at the appropriate time, staff will immediately contact the parent. Late fees are charged (\$20 for every 15-minute period) beginning immediately after the required time of pick-up. There is no “grace period” for late pick-up.

- **Communication**

Golden Path recognizes the importance of open communication between parents, teachers, and administrators. Parents will receive information about their children in several forms:

- verbal communication at drop off and pick up. Please keep these interactions brief so that teachers may remain focused on the class and classroom activities.
- online app. GPA uses “KidReports” software to share daily information with parents. Upon enrollment, each parent’s email address will be added to the KidReports app. Parents will receive a welcome email with directions for creating an app log-in. Parents can download the app for use throughout the day. Information becomes available as teachers log activities and schedule items. A “Daily Report” email is automatically sent each evening after a child is picked up.
- “Director Update” email. The executive director sends regular emails to parents. These emails include upcoming special event schedules, policy reminders, and more.
- parent teacher conferences. Conferences are offered twice per school year. Additional times to meet with teachers or administrators can always be requested as needed.

- **Transportation of Children**

Parents of school-age students are responsible for notifying Golden Path when their child will not be in attendance, either at Golden Path or on the bus to Golden Path. Parents must notify Golden Path by 2:00 p.m. Bus drivers will check the school-age bus attendance log prior to leaving for the bus run. When a child does not board the bus and the driver does not have prior notice of absence, the bus driver is required to wait at the school until the elementary school staff confirms the child's absence or alternate mode of transportation. Parents who do not notify Golden Path of their child's absence from the bus will be charged a \$10 "no call, no show" fee. Children arriving on a Golden Path bus will be checking in to the attendance system upon arrival at GPA.

Children who are transported to Golden Path from another program will be checked in to the attendance system immediately upon arrival at GPA. When a student is more than 15 minutes late (and no notice has been given by the parent/guardian or the program), the parents and/or the program will be contacted to confirm attendance at Golden Path.

Staff who drive Golden Path vehicles must disclose any moving violations in the past five years prior to employment. Staff will receive training prior to operating Golden Path vehicles.

IV. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- **Child Abuse/Neglect**

If any employee suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, the law (VA Code § 63.2-1509) mandates that the employee reports the suspected abuse or neglect within 24 hours. All reports are made directly to the child abuse hotline at (800) 552-7096.

- **Emergency Procedures**

An emergency plan reduces the possibility of harm to children, staff, and visitors to the center. All employees are familiar with:

- the location of all stairways and exits. Maps of evacuation routes are posted in each classroom.
- the Golden Path emergency preparedness plan.

In the event of an emergency, an administrator will notify parents/guardians, either through a phone call or an email or message through Kid Reports. Staff may be tasked with contacting or following up with specific parents.

- **Evacuation and Shelter-in-Place**

Evacuation/fire drills are conducted monthly. Shelter-in-place drills are conducted twice annually. Refer to the Golden Path emergency preparedness plan for details.

In the event Golden Path would need to evacuate due to an emergency, our temporary evacuation center is the Loudoun County Building, located at 21641 Ridgetop Circle. This is directly next door to Golden Path. Golden Path will immediately contact parents if evacuated. All pick-up procedures and policies would still apply.

- **Medication**

If a child is to receive any type of medication while at Golden Path, an "Authorization for Dispensing Medication" form needs to be on file. A physician must authorize the dispensing of any medication for more than 10 days. A physician must also authorize the dispensing of any medication contrary to the package directions. The forms are available at the reception desk, and once completed need to be returned to the front desk, along with the medication to be administered. A separate form needs to be completed for each type of medication that is to be administered. An administrator will log the medication and sign the form. Once the form and medication is logged and signed by an administrator, the medication will be available to the classroom. All medications must be secured in the appropriate location.

For non-prescription topical medications (including sunscreen, diaper cream, and insect repellent), a parent should complete the "OTC Topical Medication Form." Each topical medication must have its own form. The form and medication should be submitted to the front desk, where it will be logged by an administrator. Once the form and medication is logged and signed by an administrator, the medication will be available to the classroom. After the medication is applied, the child will be checked for adverse reaction. Use of insect repellent and diaper cream will be logged.

All medications must be in the original containers, be unexpired, and be clearly marked with the child's name and dosage to be given. Prescription medication must have the original pharmacy label.

- **Confidentiality**

Golden Path stresses the importance of protecting the rights of privacy of children, their families, and our employees. The practice of maintaining the confidentiality of verbal information and written records is a basic policy of our center. Any information about children or their families will be shared on a "need to know" basis only. Golden Path does not sell or distribute contact information.

- **Vehicle Safety**
Employees who drive Golden Path vehicles or transport Golden Path students must complete a “driver authorization form.” Drivers must have evidence of a safe driving record. Drivers will be legally-licensed and shall not be under the influence of any chemical substance that may alter their ability to drive safely. Regardless of the circumstances, drivers may not send or read text messages and e-mails or use wearable technology while driving.
- **Playground Safety**
Employees will be located at strategic places on the playground in order to view and manage all areas of use.
- **Incident Reports**
All accidents/incidents must be described in an incident report. Employees will complete the form in full. Parents will be informed immediately by phone if there is an injury to the child on the head or neck. All other minor injuries will be reported to parents at pick up.

V. DAILY ROUTINES

- **Positive Discipline**

At Golden Path one of our primary goals is to provide a safe, nurturing, and pleasant environment for all of the children we serve. Staff will provide each child with guidance that helps the child acquire positive self-concept and self-control. Behavior guidance used by each caregiver will be constructive, positive, and suited to the age of the child at all times. Clear and consistent age-appropriate limits will be set, and with these limits each child will gently learn what it is appropriate behavior. The following rules and standards apply.

To prevent unacceptable behavior from occurring the staff will:

- model appropriate behavior.
- arrange the classroom environment to enhance the learning of acceptable behaviors.
- use descriptive praise when appropriate behavior occurs.

When unacceptable behavior occurs or is about to occur, staff will use:

- redirection (substitute a positive activity for a negative one).
- distraction (change the focus of the activity or behavior).
- active listening to determine the underlying cause of the behavior.
- the “cozy corner” (a calming area of the classroom where a child can take a break until ready to return to group activities).

Separation from the group is used as a last resort, only when less intrusive methods has been tried and/or behavior of the child is dangerous to self and others.

Children are encouraged to solve as many of their own problems as possible under the guidance of a staff member. Children are encouraged to use words to handle their differences. Employees will model for students how to stop unwanted interference from another child. When a situation necessitates teacher intervention, age appropriate and constructive methods of discipline will be used, starting with a verbal intervention, redirecting, and removing a child from the situation if necessary.

We must be aware of and comply with all federal, state, and local laws prohibiting corporal or abusive punishment in child care settings. Staff is expressly prohibited from using unproductive or shaming methods of punishment.

Golden Path Academy believes that parents and teachers must work together to address persistent behavioral issues such as biting, unusual or dangerous aggression, bullying, etc. Parents will be contacted for a conference when a child appears to be unusually stressed, anxious, or otherwise motivated to engage in negative behaviors. Children who cannot adjust to the group environment, do not benefit from the programs offered, or endanger the safety and well-being of others may be dismissed from Golden Path after the executive director and teachers have made every effort to work with the child and the parents to eliminate the problematic behaviors.

- **Sample Daily Schedules**

Routine is important for children to feel safe and secure in their environment. Sample schedules for toddlers, preschoolers, prekindergarten, and after-school students are provided. There may be changes to these schedules as needed throughout the day. Infants, while utilizing routine in the classroom, do not have a set daily class schedule.

SAMPLE Toddler/ Beg. Preschool Schedule
6:30am Quiet Activities
7:30am Breakfast
8:00am Open Centers
8:30am Diapering/Toileting
9:00am Circle Time, Large Group Activities
9:30am Morning Snack
10:00am Gross Motor (playground/multi-purpose room)
10:30am Open Centers, Diapering/Toileting
11:30am Lunch
12:30pm Nap Prep, Diapering/Toileting
1:00pm Nap
3:00pm Quiet Table Activities, Diapering/Toileting
3:30pm Afternoon Snack
4:00pm Gross Motor (playground/multi-purpose room)
4:30pm Circle/ Story Time
5:00pm Open Centers, Diapering/Toileting
6:30pm Center Closes

SAMPLE Int. Preschool/ PreK Schedule
6:30am Quiet Activities
7:30am Breakfast
8:00am Open Centers
9:00am Circle Time, Large Group Activities
9:30am Morning Snack
10:30am Open Centers, Small Group Activities
11:30am Gross Motor (playground/multi-purpose room)
12:00pm Lunch
12:45pm Nap Prep
1:00pm Nap
3:00pm Quiet Table Activities
3:30pm Afternoon Snack
4:00pm Circle/ Story Time
4:30pm Gross Motor (playground/multi-purpose room)
5:00pm Open Centers
6:30pm Center Closes

SAMPLE After-School Schedule
3:15pm Arrive at GPA, Settle in Classroom
3:30pm Afternoon Snack & Devotion
4:00pm Homework, Quiet Activities
4:45pm Class Activity
5:00pm Gross Motor (playground/multi-purpose room)
6:00pm Student Selected Activities
6:30pm Center Closes

- **What to Bring**

Please label all items with your child’s name. GPA is not responsible for lost items.

- *Change of clothes: All students should have a change of clothes available. Students in our Infant, Toddler, and Beginning Preschool classes may need more than one set of extra clothes.*
- *Nap items (for children 12 months old and up): Please bring either 1. a crib sheet and blanket or 2. A commercial “nap mat” product that has both a bottom and top layer. Students aged 2 years and older may have a pillow with a removable pillowcase.*
- *Comfort items: Students may bring a stuffed animal, pacifier, etc. as needed. We suggest teaching your child to leave these items in his/her cubby. Staff will help reinforce this expectation during teaching hours. Students are welcome to have stuffies and pacifiers (for younger children) during nap.*
- *Water bottle (for students in Beginning Preschool and above): Please take home and wash weekly.*

- **Nutrition and Food Services**

All meals and snacks are provided as part of tuition cost. Breakfast is served from 7:30-8:00a. After 8:00a, breakfast will not be served. Morning snack will be served at 9:30a to all students. Lunch will be served between 11:30a and 12:30p, depending on age group. Afternoon snack will be served at 3:30p to all students.

Hot lunch is made from scratch and provided by Good Food Co. (www.goodfoodco.com). All meals and snacks meet the USDA childcare requirements.

- **Allergies & Concerns**

Information about children with allergies or special dietary needs will be posted (with parent permission) in each room. Food from home for snacks or meals is not allowed for children, unless a doctor's note is provided. There is no change in tuition cost for families who provide snacks/meals from home.

Golden Path is a "peanut safe" facility. No one should bring peanut butter or any peanut products into the classrooms at any time. Occasionally, food that may be cross-contaminated with peanuts will be served. Parents of children with severe allergies are welcome to provide food from home, with a doctor's note.

All outside treats that will be provided to a group of children must receive a "peanut safe sticker" from the reception desk or an administrator. These items may not contain peanuts as ingredients. Food without this sticker may not be served to the class.

Lunch food is provided from an outside vendor. From the Good Food Co. website,

For children with allergies, we provide all schools with a comprehensive list of foods that should be avoided. Ask your child's school for a copy. If your child's allergy doesn't appear on our list, we'll be happy to talk to you personally about our menu. We don't process any peanut products in our kitchen. Still, some manufacturers, from whom we purchase food, may change their formulas without notice, or produce items with allergens on the same lines. Because we live in an imperfect world, parents of children with life threatening allergies are encouraged not to participate in our food program and should consider sending food from home.

- **Diapering and Potty Training**

Diapers will be changed every two hours, or more often, if needed. Parents should provide diapers, wipes, and any diaper cream or lotion, as needed. Diaper creams and lotions will be stored out of reach of children. Teachers will remind you when your child needs more diapers or wipes. Please provide these items as requested. An additional 'diaper fee' may be charged if Golden Path must provide diapers or wipes to your child for an extended amount of time.

Parents and teachers will approach potty training as a team. Continuity is key, so it is best that parents and teachers are utilizing the same methods and schedules for potty training. Food items will not be used as a reward for potty training at GPA. Teachers will request additional clothes and underwear for children who are in the potty training process. Please ensure that these items are provided and labeled with your child's name. Children in Intermediate Preschool and above must be in underwear while at GPA.

- **Cleaning and Sanitizing**

Tables used for eating and high-chair trays will be both cleaned throughout the day and sanitized before and after each use. Changing tables will be cleaned and sanitized after each individual use. Toys that have been put in the mouth will be set aside and sanitized. Any surface that has been contaminated with bodily fluids will be cleaned and sanitized. Rest mats will be sanitized weekly. Other items that will be cleaned/sanitized on a regular basis: non-mouthed toys, countertops, door knobs, light switches, classroom phones, etc.

- **Illness**

In a child care setting, children come into contact with groups of other children outside their families. It is in this situation that the illness of one child can spread if stringent measures to prevent this spread are not taken. For this reason, staff will take constant precautions to prevent the spread of disease. Per the Virginia state licensing requirements, parents will be contacted to pick up any child with:

- fever of 101 degrees or greater
- diarrhea (courtesy call at 2nd instance, call for pick up at 3rd instance)
- vomiting
- unexplained symptoms of a contagious disease (major rash, sever coughing, difficulty breathing, etc.)
- lack of appetite, general lethargy, or change in typical behavior

Parents will be asked to sign a form acknowledging that their child has been sent home sick. Children may not return for 24 hours and must be symptom free upon return. Children who are evaluated by their health care professional and symptom free may return prior to the 24 hours notice, with appropriate written documentation.

- **Swaddling**

Infants may be swaddled while in the care of Golden Path. Whether or not to swaddle is a decision for parents, however, once an infant is able to roll over from back to belly while unswaddled, Golden Path will discontinue the use of a swaddle. Infants will be swaddled using a large, thin blanket and the down-up-down-up method. While the swaddle should be secure around the arms and torso, it should be loose and allow movement in the hips and legs. As the infant ages, efforts will be made to wean from the swaddle by reducing use (one arm out then both arms out). Parents may also provide a “sleep sack” or “swaddle sack” for use instead of the DUDU swaddle method. Items that restrict the use of a child’s arms will not be used once the baby can roll from back to belly while unswaddled.

