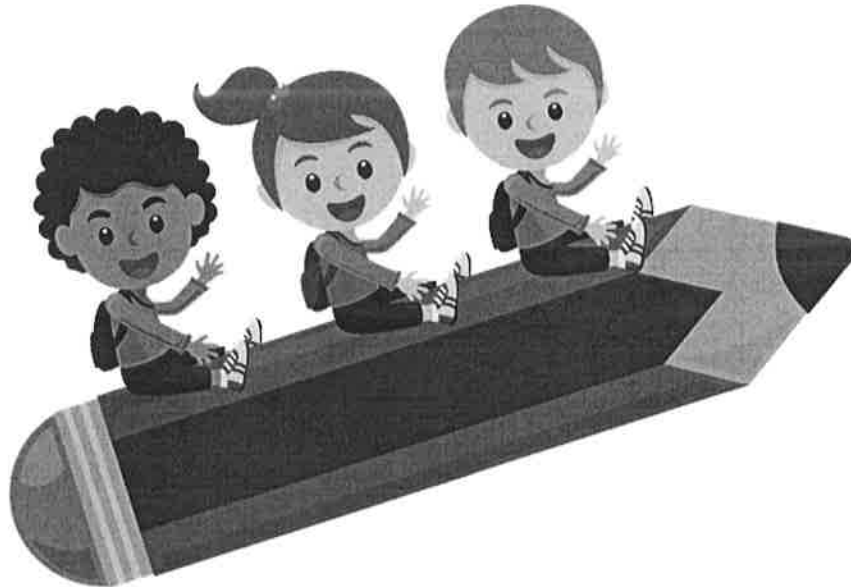


***Early Care  
Parent Handbook  
2020-2021***



The Norridge Park District's  
Early Care and Preschool Academy  
Located in the Leigh School  
8151 W. Lawrence Ave. Norridge, IL 60706

708.453.2141

708.453.6024 FAX

[www.norridgepk.com](http://www.norridgepk.com)

Demi Parashos, Assistant Superintendent

Eileen Wright, Programs Coordinator



The Norridge Park District's  
Early Care & Pre-School Academy  
"Committed to Quality Care"

EARLY CARE PARENT HANDBOOK

WELCOME

The Norridge Park District sincerely welcomes you and your child to our academy. Thank you for entrusting the care and education of your child to us. This handbook is a guide through our program and policies. Please take the time to review the contents. If you have any questions call or stop into the academy office. The office is open 6:30am – 5:30pm Monday through Friday. The phone number is (708) 453 2141.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

The purpose of this Handbook is to describe the *Early Care* program for children aged 2 through 5 offered by Norridge Park District's Early Care & Pre-School Academy (the "Academy").

**Please note:** A variety of other programs for ages 3 through 12 are also available to children and their families. If you would like information on the *Preschool* or recreational *School Age Care* Programs offered by the Academy, please contact the center during office hours.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Early Care Program's Mission is to meet the developmental needs of enrolled children and the societal needs of their parents by providing top quality care in a nurturing and educational environment, while taking time for fun.

PHILOSOPHY

The Academy's Philosophy rests on its commitment to aid and assist in each child's individual growth and development through developmentally appropriate practices, including play. It is through play that a child can master abstract concepts and acquire cognitive, social-emotional, language, cultural awareness and motor skills in a non-threatening environment. At the Academy we believe each child is unique, with his/her own individual strengths and the environment created at the Academy offers each child the opportunity to develop his or her own individual differences and skills. We recognize and accept the family as the child's primary care-giver and teacher, and seek a partnership with each child's family as we help lay a foundation for his/her future.

ADMINISTRATION

The Academy is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services ("DCFS"). The Norridge Park District's Board of Park Commissioners sets policies for the Early Care Program in accordance with DCFS licensing standards and the Early Care Program's Mission and Philosophy. The Academy's administrative staff, composed of a Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and a Programs Coordinator who enforce these policies and creates procedural guidelines for staff, children and families.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Academy operates between the hours of 6:30am until 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. The Academy's office operates between the hours of 6:30am until 5:30pm, at which time enrollment questions, registrations and payments are taken.

### BUILDING SECURITY

We are very careful about providing a safe building for children and staff. The locked entrance to the academy is equipped with a security camera. To enter the building, please ring the doorbell on the wall outside of our entrance; you will be asked to identify yourself, your child and the program your child attends. Do not be offended if we do not recognize you through the camera. Please do not open the door for others or allow them to follow you into the building. Everyone entering the academy must be properly identified. Thank you for your cooperation.

### STAFF CREDENTIALS

All Academy staff meets or exceeds the licensing requirements set by DCFS. Full time staff is composed of Master, Bachelor and Associate's degreed teachers who specialize in Early Childhood Education and/or Elementary Education. Early Childhood Teachers have either: a minimum of 60 credit hours from an accredited college or university with six semester hours in courses related directly to child care and/or child development from birth to age six; or 1 year experience with 30 semester hours and 6 credit hours in child care or child development; or carries DCFS approved credentials such as a CDA (Child Development and Associate Credential). School Age Workers (Group Leaders) require a high school diploma, must be at least 19 years of age and have either: 30 semester hours of credit from an accredited college or university with six semester hours related to school age child care, child development, elementary education, physical education, recreation, camping, or other related fields; or has 1560 clock hours of experience and six semester hours related to areas noted above; or has 3120 clock hours of relevant experience. All Early Childhood Assistants, School Age Assistants, and WSSRA Volunteers must have a high school diploma or GED. School Age Assistants and Volunteers must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child in the program group. Many of our assistants are enrolled in college or have experience in, or related to, child care and development. All lead and support staff are certified in First Aid and CPR and participate in regular training to update and enhance their skills.

### ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT POLICY

The Academy accepts any eligible child whose needs can be met in its setting with or without reasonable accommodation. In all cases children must be able to participate and substantially benefit from the program without risk to themselves and/or others.

Listed below are the steps taken for every child upon enrollment:

- If the situation warrants, the child is placed upon a waiting list until a slot is available.
- Once a slot becomes available the parent may register the child.
- All the necessary forms must be filled out and turned in at least 24 hours prior to the start date, along with the family's security deposit.
- Placement is assigned.
- The child enters the program on a trial basis.
- Parents are kept aware of the child's adjustment during this trial period.
- The child is accepted into the program after an initial transition period, not to exceed 28 days.

**Please note:** Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the Academy, or whose

conduct is detrimental to himself/herself or the group, shall be discharged from the facility. At that time appropriate referrals to other agencies or facilities will be made to the parents.

#### *Non-Discrimination Policy*

No parent or child shall be unlawfully discriminated against with respect to the child's admission to, or participation in, Academy programs.

#### *Statement of Confidentiality*

All children's files are kept strictly confidential. Information will not be released to any person, organization or agency without the signed, written consent of the child's parent or legal guardian unless otherwise required by law, or permitted by law in connection with any legal proceeding.

Every employee/volunteer of the Norridge Park District's Early Care and Preschool Academy must sign a Confidentiality Statement. This statement notes that every staff person must maintain in confidence all information relating to a child and/or family or situation relating to child and/or family. Specifically this means that: we will not discuss any information pertaining to a child and/or family with anyone other than the appropriate individuals (i.e., staff, supervisor, program director, or director); we will not discuss any information pertaining to a child and/or family in public, or in areas where discussion may be overheard by unauthorized persons; we will not discuss or post any information on any social media site or email without parent consent and we will immediately report all incidents, accidents, or injuries no matter how minor to the program director or supervisor if they affect the safety of any child, staff or volunteer. Parents seeking outside resources or agencies to evaluate, service, or support their child within our program will sign a Release of Information statement before staff will share information about the child. All personal information in a child's enrollment file is kept in the office with access limited to the office staff and/or the teaching staff in an as needed basis; all emergency information, observations, checklists, portfolios, and report forms for individual children are kept in a secure location in the classroom with access limited to the teaching staff. Parents/guardians may have access to their individual child's enrollment information and /or classroom assessments at any time. Information regarding a child's special dietary needs, allergies and/or health concerns will be discreetly posted for the classroom staff's knowledge only.

#### REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR EARLY CARE PROGRAM

- The Early Care Program accepts children ages 2 through 5. Children must be at least two years of age before entering the Early Care program. A valid birth certificate is required at the time of registration.
- At the time of registration a \$50.00 nonrefundable registration fee is required. All paperwork will be issued at the time of registration. The registration fee will hold a slot for exactly two weeks. If your child does not enroll within two weeks, an additional registration fee will be required in order to hold the slot. **NO REFUNDS ARE GIVEN** for registration fees. If your child drops from the program and returns at a later date, you are required to reregister your child with another \$50.00 fee.
- Children in a three, four or five year old classroom must be completely potty trained.
- 24 hours before your child's start date all the enrollment paperwork is due; all forms are reviewed and/or updated quarterly as needed; in September all forms are updated. All forms are placed in your child's permanent file kept in a secure location in the administrative office. The content of the file is confidential, but is immediately available

to administrators or teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian for access to records, the child's parents or legal guardian and regulatory authorities (DCFS), on request.

- Parents/Guardian Information Sheet
- Authorized Pick-up List Consent Form
- Personal History, Health, Nutrition, Toileting Habits, Social/Emotional Relationships.
- Consent for walking trips, Bus Transportation, Photos in Classroom
- Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
- Late Pick-Up Policy
- Tuition Policy
- Guidance and Discipline Behavior Policy
- Park District Waiver, Release of all Claims and Hold Harmless Agreement
- Statement of Understanding / Acknowledgement of Parent Handbook
- Child and Adult Care Food Program Annual Enrollment Form

#### *Physical Exam Form*

An Illinois Certificate of Child Health Examination form, no older than 6 months, with TB and Lead Test, and up to date immunizations is required. Parents must review and complete the Health History portion of the form and sign the statement giving permission for health information to be shared with appropriate personnel for health and educational purposes only. The physical exam must be updated every two years. The office staff will notify parents when the new exam form is due.

- 24 hours before your child's start date a security deposit equal to one week's tuition is due. Security deposits are credited only when a week's written notice of intent to drop from the program has been given to the Academy's office personnel.
- All children must be enrolled a minimum of two days per week. Children enrolled less than five days per week must maintain a consistent weekly schedule. Days may be added based on availability, with advance notice and when applicable, an additional fee.
- Parents are responsible for payment whether or not their child is in attendance.
- 20% discount is given to every additional familial child enrolled in the same program.

***Please note:** Parents of children with disabilities, requiring reasonable accommodations in order to participate successfully in a program, or children with special medical needs are requested to notify the Academy at least 28 days prior to their child's enrollment, in which case the registration fee will hold a slot for 28 days.*

#### *Family Orientation*

As part of the registration process, a short orientation will be presented. In September a formal Orientation Program is presented in the classrooms on an advertised evening; a packet of information is distributed and teachers explain the curriculum and classroom procedures. Families joining the program after September will receive the orientation materials and are encouraged to make an appointment to meet with the teachers. We have staff on hand who can assist with Polish, Russian, Czech, Greek, and Spanish translations. Please ask in the office for assistance.

#### **CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

It is the policy of the Academy not to unlawfully discriminate against otherwise qualified children on the basis of physical or mental disability. The Academy will make reasonable

accommodations to permit qualified children with disabilities to participate in the Academy's programs.

### *Notice/assessment of disability*

The Academy recognizes that meeting the needs of a child with disabilities requires an interactive process to assess the child's needs in terms of the nature and appropriateness of the program, to determine any reasonable accommodations that may be necessary in order for the child to be able to participate successfully in the program, and to communicate and attempt to resolve any issues that arise with respect to the child's participation following enrollment, and welcomes constructive dialogue. This process generally will include Academy staff, the child's parents, staff of West Suburban Special Recreation Association (the agency that serves as the Academy's primary resource on children with special needs and inclusion assistance), and medical and/or clinical professionals providing services to the child, and if and as appropriate professionals from the child's school. For this reason, parents must notify the Academy whenever possible at least 28 days prior to their child's enrollment if their child has a disability which may require an accommodation for the child to participate fully and successfully in the program. Parents should at this time advise the Academy's administrative staff of the disability and any accommodation the parents believe, or the child's medical provider or other consulting professional has advised, may be necessary to meet the child's needs with respect to the program.

**Please note:** The Academy reserves the right to defer a child's start date in the program if sufficient notice of disability is not provided to allow the Academy to responsibly assess the child's needs as related to the program, and any accommodations which may be required to facilitate the child's successful participation in the program.

### *Procedure*

The Park District belongs to the West Suburban Special Recreation Association (WSSRA) and relies on this organization's resources to help Academy staff provide the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities consistent with the fundamental nature of the Before and After School Care program. The following procedure is followed by the Academy to achieve this goal:

1. WSSRA will be contacted for input and observation of the disabled child prior to enrollment in the program.
2. A parent/Academy conference will be scheduled and the following points will be covered:
  - a. The parent's experience with the child as it relates to the disability.
  - b. Whether the child has been medically evaluated to determine whether or not there is a disabling condition and if so, its extent.
  - c. IFSPs, IEPs, and other individualized plans in place for the child.
  - d. The parent's suggestions for possible reasonable accommodations to permit the child to successfully participate in the program.
  - e. Staff's suggestions for possible reasonable accommodations to permit the child to successfully participate in the program.
3. If the child has not been previously medically evaluated, the child's parents will be requested to obtain a written medical opinion as to the child's disabling condition and the medical provider's suggested reasonable accommodations necessary to allow for the child's

successful participation in the program in view of the fundamental nature of the program and the services provided by the Academy.

4. The parent's refusal or failure to provide the written medical opinion within a reasonable period of time, and to authorize appropriate Academy staff to speak with the medical provider for necessary clarifications and/or additional information, as such staff deems necessary in order to responsibly evaluate the accommodations that may be needed, may require denying the child enrollment and the parent will be so advised.
5. After receipt of the medical opinion, staff recommendations and WSSRA assessment, there will be a follow-up staffing between appropriate Academy staff, and if deemed necessary or advisable by Academy Administrative staff, WSSRA staff, and the child's parents to evaluate any reasonable accommodations and whether the child's needs can be met without fundamentally altering the nature of the program offered by the Academy.
6. If it is determined, with or without a trial period, that the child cannot successfully participate in the program, with or without a reasonable accommodation, the parents will be advised and appropriate referrals made.

*Please note:* If the Academy staff determines that an enrolled child may have a disability, whether or not previously identified, which is interfering with the child's successful participation in the program, the child's parents will be notified in writing and a conference scheduled. At the parent-staff conference the parents will be requested to engage in the interactive process, as set out above, to determine if there is a disability which is interfering with the child's successful participation in the program and, if so, whether the Academy can meet the child's needs with or without a reasonable accommodation.

***Specialized Consultants:***

- The academy works closely and cooperatively with West Suburban Special Recreation Association to prepare and provide appropriate accommodations for children with special needs. The Inclusion Coordinator from WSSRA completes observations, participates in multi-disciplinary staffings, provides resources and strategies for classroom staff, and if indicated approves the hiring of inclusion partners. The inclusion partners hired to work within our program meet all of the employee requirements set by DCFS and the Norridge Park District. The partners are trained to assist with an individual within the classroom setting; the partner is not hired or intended as a private instructor, tutor, caregiver, or respite worker.
- At times, a specialized therapist provided by Early Intervention or District 80 may provide services while a child is present at the academy. Parents must sign a Release of Information Form and provide all information regarding the dates and times of therapy sessions. Therapists must check into the academy office and show appropriate identification. The academy will provide space for the therapist to work with the child. The teaching staff may share information or consult with the therapist regarding strategies and resources in working with the child.
- Vision and Hearing Screenings for children aged 3-5 years are provided in the spring. Parents are informed of the dates, fees and permission requirements.



### CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL MEDICAL NEEDS

Many children have special medical needs such as asthma, diabetes, or seizures. To assist the academy in its efforts to meet your child's special needs, whenever possible parents must notify the Academy at least 28 days prior to their child's enrollment if their child has specific medical needs. Parents should at this time advise the Academy's administrative staff of the child's medical needs and any special training or devices necessary to meet the child's needs. If it is determined, with or without a trial period, that the child cannot successfully participate in the program without altering the fundamental nature of the program, the parents will be advised and appropriate referrals made.

**Please note:** The Academy reserves the right to defer a child's start date in the program if sufficient notice of special medical need is not provided to allow the Academy to adequately prepare for the safe care of the child.

### CHILDREN WITH ALLERGIES

Food or environmental allergies must be documented by your child's health care professional. A Medical Exception Statement for Food Substitution form signed by your child's physician must be on file before alternative foods or beverages can be brought in for meal services for your child. All alternative foods must follow the USDA guidelines for healthy meals (we will not allow chips, cookies, cakes, or sweet beverages) Reasonable accommodations will be made to maintain areas used by children who have allergies to dust mites or to components of furnishings or supplies according to the recommendation of health professionals. If it is determined, with or without a trial period, that the child cannot successfully participate in the program without altering the fundamental nature of the program, the parents will be advised and appropriate referrals will be made.

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE:** The Academy is a **PEANUT SAFE ZONE**, peanuts and peanut products are not served or allowed into the program. It should be recognized that this will reduce but not totally eliminate the risk of accidental exposure.

### TUITION/FEES/CHARGES

#### Tuition Payments

- Parents are billed according to their child's schedule given at the time of registration.
- Parents are responsible for payment on a weekly basis.
- All tuition payments are due on Monday of the current week, however payments will be taken up until Friday without penalty.
- Payments can be made in advance, however if a payment is late, **an additional charge of \$10.00 per child** will be assessed every week payment is not made. This includes parents on subsidy. *Service will be suspended for families more than two weeks behind on payments until the account is brought up to date.*
- Payments can be made in cash, check, and money order, Visa, Discover or MasterCard.
- Parents may pay in person weekly or participate in the Tuition Express automatic payment program. Contact the office for Tuition Express applications.
- Part-time enrollment is considered to be 2 through 4 days. The Academy does not permit part-time hourly enrollment. Parents are allowed to increase or decrease days based on slot availability and advance written notice. Tuition will be amended to reflect any changes.
- Parents whose children attend part-time are not allowed to swap days.
- Full tuition is due for scheduled program days whether or not your child is in attendance. This includes holidays.

• CREDIT IS NOT GIVEN FOR ABSENCES, ILLNESSES, OR HOLIDAYS. (See page 9)  
**IMPORTANT:** *In the extreme instance that payment has not been received over a two week period and prior arrangements have not been made, service will be denied. Accrued late fees for non-payment or late pick-ups will automatically be deducted from your child's next tuition payment.*

#### *NSF (Not Sufficient Funds)*

The NSF fee is \$25.00 and will be applied to:

- All NSF checks;
- Declined credit cards or insufficient funds in checking or savings accounts attached to the Tuition Express automatic payment account.

Recovered monies are taken in cash or credit card, in person, payment only.

Please note: If the Academy receives three NSF checks or Tuition Express NSF/credit card declinations in a 12 month period from an individual/family, that family will be put on a CASH OR CREDIT CARD in person only payment plan.

#### *Additional Child Discount*

Additional child discounts are given to families with more than one child enrolled in the same program. This discount will be applied to the child/children with the lesser tuition fee or the older child/children at the rate of 20%.

#### *Subsidized Care Clients (ACTION FOR CHILDREN)*

The Academy accepts subsidy payments from the state. To determine eligibility the parent is instructed to call Action for Children and inquire about the program and obtain the proper paperwork. It is the state's determination whether or not a family is approved for subsidy (by income qualifications). If approved, the Academy requires the client to pay the difference between what the state pays and what the District charges for tuition. This will be significantly different than the determined "parent co-payment" issued by the state. The amount owed will differ from month to month based on the amount of service days in a given month. Clients must keep subsidy approvals up to date. If your approval expires you will be charged full tuition. The Academy distributes the monthly charges prior to the beginning of a new month. Any questions can be forwarded to the office. Subsidy clients are also responsible for keeping a security deposit on file equal to one week's full tuition, based on the child's schedule, at the regular rate (not the subsidy rate). The security deposit goes toward the child's last week of care. All clients, including subsidy clients, are subject to late fees for past due tuition. For rate information, please visit the office.

#### *Residency Status*

In order to be considered a resident of Norridge, the enrolling family must provide a minimum of two forms of identification. The first form must be a valid Illinois driver's license with an in-district address (see the Academy office for address listings). The other form must be current utility bill, credit card bill, lease agreement, mortgage payment, etc. At the time of enrollment if the family cannot provide all necessary forms of identification, non-resident rates will be applied. If a family subsequently provides the proper documentation, resident rates will be applied at that time. No back dated credit will be given in these circumstances

### *Residency Update*

From time to time, at least annually, the Academy will require each family to resubmit their proof of residency and fill out a new enrollment form for each of their children attending the Academy. If it is determined by this update, or from information obtained from any other source, that a family who originally qualified for resident rates is no longer resident, non-resident rates will be charged back dating to the beginning of the child's most recent enrollment.

### *Security Deposit*

- A security deposit equal to one week's tuition is required prior to each child's start date.
- The security deposit will be credited to the child's last week of enrollment only when a written notice has been given to the Academy's office personnel at least one week in advance. Security Deposits are not refunded. If we do not receive written notice, the deposit is lost.
- Every August/September tuition increases at which time the child's security deposit must increase to reflect the higher rates.

### *Vacation Credit*

- Vacation credit is given to every Early Age Care family (excluding summer only enrollees) who has been enrolled for a minimum of six months. At that time one-week credit is earned.
- If a family has been enrolled at the Academy for more than one year, a vacation credit of two weeks is given.
- Vacation credits must be taken in full week increments.
- Children cannot be in attendance during the week vacation credit is taken.
- Vacation credits cannot be held over. If they are not taken, you lose them.
- Vacation credit extends and renews from September 1 through August 31.

### *Late Charges*

The Academy closes at 6:00pm exactly. Late pick-up fees go into effect at 6:01pm. The Academy frowns upon late pick-ups and therefore enforces a strict policy to deter such tendencies.

**IMPORTANT:** *A neglect report will be made at the local police station and forwarded to DCFS for a child whose parent is over 45 minutes late without any telephone contact with Academy Staff. Please see the section on procedures for "Arrivals & Departures" for additional information on this policy.*

### Late Pick-up Charges accrue as follows:

\$5.00 from 6:01 until 6:10pm.

\$2.00 per minute from 6:11pm and thereafter.

### OBSERVED HOLIDAYS

The Norridge Park District observes the following holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day & the Friday after, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July & Teacher Institute Day (third Friday in August). The Academy is closed on these days. If a holiday falls on a Saturday, the previous Friday will be considered a holiday; if the holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday will be considered the holiday. Full tuition is due for all holidays, the teacher's institute day and any early dismissals.

### EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

It is Academy policy to offer classes at all scheduled times under normal circumstances. However, some things are beyond our control, such as power outages, lack of heat, lack of water, and/or severe weather conditions. In case of an emergency that necessitates the closing of the Academy during hours of operation, parents will be contacted to come pick-up their child immediately. In case an evacuation needs to occur, children will be transported to the Park District Recreation Building, 4631 N. Overhill Ave., Norridge, where parents will be contacted to come and pick up their child immediately. Staff will remain until the last child goes home. ***Please note:*** If, in the event of an emergency, the Academy does not open, tuition will not be charged. If the Academy has to close once it has opened for business (due to circumstances beyond our control) full tuition will be assessed.

In the event of inclement weather conditions or other emergency, please contact the Academy's hotline for up-to-date information on whether the Academy is open.

The Academy participates in the EMERGENCY CLOSING CENTER. Listen to WGN Radio 720-AM, WBBM Radio 780-AM or watch CBS Ch. 2, NBC, Ch5, ABC Ch.7, FOX 32, WGN-TV, or CLTV cable for closing information.  
[www.Emergencyclosings.com](http://www.Emergencyclosings.com)

*E-Mail Blasts:* The Academy will also attempt to send out e-mail blasts notifying parents that we will be closed.

### KEEPING YOUR CHILD'S INFORMATION CURRENT

It is extremely important that your child's enrollment information be kept up-to-date. If any of the following information should change, at any time, please notify the Academy's office personnel as soon as possible:

- Your Place of Employment
- Any of Your Phone Numbers at Home or of Emergency Contacts
- Your Address
- Names, Addresses, Phone Numbers of Authorized Persons who pick up your child
- Any Changes in Your Child's Enrollment Schedule
- Any Changes in Marital Status, Custodial Agreements or Order of Protection
- Residency Status

### CUSTODIAL AGREEMENTS

The Academy endeavors to respect the rights of all parents to participate in the growth and development of their child or children. It is Academy policy that all staff remains neutral in cases of divorce or separation of enrolled children's parents. In the instance of a family divorce or separation, the Academy requires that the custodial parent maintain with the Academy at all times, a copy of the most current custodial agreement and/or court order. The Academy will attempt to adhere to, and fully cooperate with, the procedures set forth in such agreement and/or court order so as to maintain a stress free environment for all children and to lessen the burden on staff.

***Please note:*** The Academy reserves the right to suspend, refuse or discontinue service to any child in instances where the custodial agreements and/or court orders presented regarding

such child are ambiguous or conflicting, directions given by parents regarding custody are frequently changing, undue burden is placed on staff or where a parent or parents engage in conduct when present at the Academy which the administrative staff of the Academy determine is detrimental to the program or to other children in the program.

### DAILY ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

All children arrive and depart the Academy through the designated Academy entrance. Please ring the bell and identify yourself by name. All children must be accompanied into the Academy by an adult, escorted to his or her classroom and signed in. In order to make the arrival and departure transition a smooth experience, we recommend the following procedures:

#### *Initial Adjustment Period*

It is important for all parents to realize that some children have little, if any, difficulty adapting to new situations, while others take longer periods of time. Much of the grief and anxiety expressed at first is a good way for children to get their feelings out in the open. We find that the child's concern ends soon after he or she enters the classroom and is engaged in the day's activities. Often a readjustment period may occur after a long weekend, vacation or absence. Your continued, positive reinforcement will alleviate any difficult transition from recurring. If your child has had an upsetting experience such as the death of a loved one or pet, please let us know. Our goal is to help your child work out any feelings they may have, through play, art, books or sympathetic discussion. Keep in mind your child's overall growth and development is important to us.

#### *Child's First Day*

Going to school is a big step in the life of your child. To assure a smooth transition you can help your child by planning the following:

1. Schedule a visit for you and your child to see the facility and classroom prior to your child's first day of enrollment.
2. Plan to stay with your child for at least 30 minutes on his/her first day. For younger children, plan on remaining with them for their first day, if possible.

#### *Illness*

A daily pre-admission screening is conducted by Academy staff to determine if a child has any obvious symptoms of illness. Please see the section headed "Illness and Exclusion" for additional information on this policy.

#### *Daily Sign-In/Sign-Out*

It is required that every child be signed in and signed out on a daily basis. Sign sheets are located in every classroom. Any child arriving before his/her classroom is opened or leaving after his/her classroom has been closed can be signed in/out at the Academy's office counter. There is always an administrator on duty at the office counter from 6:30 a.m. until the last child leaves at 6:00 p.m.

**Please note:** The parent agrees that the Park District shall have no responsibility or liability for any child dropped off by a parent without accompanying the child to the Academy office or to the child's classroom and signing him/her in.

### *Drop Off*

1. Enter through the designated entrance.
2. Escort your child to his/her classroom.
3. Sign your child in.
4. Exchange greetings with the staff.
5. Help your child hang up his/her belongings.
6. Remind your child to wash his/her hands, and assist if necessary. Hand-washing is a DCFS requirement of all children upon arrival.
7. Exchange good-byes with your child and staff.

### *Pick Up*

1. Enter through the designated entrance.
2. Walk to your child's classroom; check his/her file folder for important information.
3. Sign your child out.
4. Acknowledge to the staff you have arrived and will be leaving with your child.
5. Supervise your child to the car.

### *Emergencies*

The Academy understands that emergencies occur. However, it is essential that the Academy be immediately informed if you are unable to pick up your child on time. A phone call will help alleviate any anxiety your child may have, and our staff may be able to assist by calling someone from your pick-up list to come and get your child for you.

**Please note:** It is extremely important that emergency contact information for your child be kept up to date.

### *Absences*

In response to heightened alerts concerning missing children and the introduction of the Amber Alert System, the Academy has incorporated a strict policy for parents to follow when their child will be absent from the program. The academy will make attempts to contact that child's parent inquiring as to his/her whereabouts.

**IMPORTANT:** *The Academy re-emphasizes its longstanding request to parents to notify the Academy if their child will be absent from a scheduled program. If a parent habitually fails to notify the Academy that their child will be absent from a scheduled program, as required by these policies, the Academy reserves the right to suspend or expel the child from the program.*

### *"No-Show" Procedure*

If a parent, or other authorized person, does not arrive to pick up a child at the scheduled time and the Academy has not been informed of an emergency necessitating such no-show the following procedure will be followed:

- The late pick-up fees, set out on page ... will go into effect immediately;
- After ten minutes have passed, staff will begin to telephone all contacts on record for the child, beginning with the parents, then the three emergency contacts listed on the enrollment form, and lastly all persons on the child's authorized pick-up list;
- If none of these persons can be contacted within 45 minutes of the scheduled pick-up time, police assistance will be sought.

Please note: The Academy reserves the right to suspend, refuse or discontinue service to any family with three or more late pick-ups within a one-month period.  
**IMPORTANT:** *The Academy reemphasizes the importance of having up-to-date emergency contact numbers on file for your child.*

#### *Neglect report*

If a parent, or other authorized person, is over 45 minutes late for the scheduled pick-up of their child and has failed to make telephone contact with the Academy informing staff of the delay, the child will be considered to be in a state of neglect and the proper authorities will be called. A neglect report will be made at the police station and forwarded to DCFS.

#### **OUT OF THE ORDINARY PICK-UP**

The Academy staff will not release a child to any person, whether related or unrelated to the child, who has not been authorized by the parent or parents to receive the child. If someone other than those authorized must pick up your child for any reason, the Academy must be notified of such an occurrence **in writing** (a written note of consent faxed to the Academy will suffice), followed by a telephone call from an Academy staff member to the parent at a telephone number on file at the Academy. The Academy will not accept notification of any changes in pick up or emergency contact information over the phone. **The note must include the following information: The adult's full name, the adult's address as it appears on his/her photo ID, and a signed permission from the child's parent authorizing the parent's consent to allow this person to pick up their child.**

Please note: A parent or other authorized person must be contactable at a telephone number previously provided to the Academy to confirm any out of the ordinary pick-up. The Academy will NOT release a child without speaking directly to a parent or other authorized person.

#### *Proper identification required*

Persons not known to the staff will be required to provide a current, valid, photo ID (driver's license, photo ID card issued by Illinois Secretary of State or other photo identification to establish identity) at the time of pick up. A child will not be released to any person not listed on the consent form, or any person without the proper identification.

Please note: No one under the age of 16 will be allowed to pick up children.

#### *Parents/Guardians "Under the Influence"*

The Academy subscribes to a stringent drug and alcohol policy. If a parent or guardian is suspected or shows any signs of being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, the staff will discuss with that parent an alternative pick-up person for the child. As advocates for the children under our care, we want to ensure their safety at all times. It is our hope that the parent will be cooperative, but in the event he or she is not, we will call the Norridge Police Department for assistance.

**Park District Employees:** Employees of Norridge Park District are prohibited from picking-up children from the Academy other than their own or a direct relation. Norridge Park District employee will not be permitted to be placed on a parent's authorization list.

## PARKING

Street and lot parking are available to parents. Please refrain from parking on Giddings, as it is designated resident parking only. Please adhere to all local parking signs and ordinances. Please understand that the asphalt strip parallel to the front door and Courtland Avenue is an official fire lane and is not to be used for parking. Anyone not adhering to the parking procedures is subject to warnings and parking tickets.

**Please note:** Do not leave your car running with purses, children or valuables unattended.

## EDUCATION & CURRICULUM

It is the intent and purpose of the Academy's Early Care Program to provide education through developmentally appropriate practice, which includes play. Play is a child's most important work. The Academy houses self-contained classrooms that are large, colorful and well equipped. All furniture, equipment and materials in the classrooms are carefully chosen to support our philosophy that children learn through play and developmentally appropriate practices.

### *Group Assignments*

We provide a stable learning environment for children by assigning them to a primary classroom run by consistent teachers and teacher assistants. When staff members are absent we use permanent substitutes who are familiar with the program, routines, curriculum and above all the individual children. The teaching staff is familiar with each child's needs, uniqueness, sensitivities, and educational goals. The children's primary classroom is their home base, where they spend the greatest part of their day and feel comfortable and secure with familiar adults, classmates, routines, furnishings, and equipment. The children also have opportunities to visit or participate in activities in other rooms during gathering or dismissal times, and/or for special events or activities.

### *Two/Three Year old Group*

Our youngest learners are encouraged to stay in their primary classroom for at least 9 months for their comfort, security and success. Continuity of care has been found to have profound implications for children's development, research indicates that children benefit from remaining with the same early childhood teacher over time. Stable, nurturing relationships with adults provide a secure base from which children learn and grow.

### *Children are Unique*

At the Academy we believe that each child is unique. Every child has his or her own individual strengths that can be further developed through play. By experiencing the world through play, children are better equipped to master abstract concepts concretely. We believe children like to be successful and are happiest when they have mastered a skill or solved a problem on their own. The environment created at the Academy offers each child the opportunity to develop individual differences, solve problems and master skills. Much of what we do at the Academy is designed to educate the "whole" child.

### *Preschool Screening*

All early age care children will be screened by the teaching staff as a means of obtaining information about the child that may be helpful or necessary in planning the educational program. Parents will be asked to participate in the screening process by signing a screening permission form and by completing a rating form on their child.



### *Curricular Guidelines*

The Academy's Early Care Program utilizes the Illinois State Board of Education's Early Learning Standards, an Assessment Program, and The Creative Curriculum format. Planned activities revolve around play-based, developmentally appropriate practices. The curriculum is organized around six basic developmental categories: Social/Emotional, Motor, Cognitive, Language & Early Literacy, Multicultural Awareness and Health/Nutrition/Safety. Children's skills are assessed according to the Illinois State Board of Education's Early Learning Standards and the Assessment Program. All educational goals and objectives are progressive and follow developmental milestones ranging from the easiest, to the most difficult. Parents are formally informed of their child's progress twice a year through scheduled Parent-Teacher conferences. Parents may also make an appointment to meet with teachers to discuss their child's experiences and progress at any time during the program year.

### *Computer Learning*

In addition to the regularly planned educational experiences, beginning computer and tablet skills are introduced to children in the 3 and 4 year-old classrooms.

### *Mixed Age Grouping*

The term, "mixed age grouping" is used to emphasize the goal of pursuing teaching and curriculum practices that maximize the benefits of interaction and cooperation among children of various ages. In this context, it is children ages three through five years. A mixed age group is intended to optimize the educative potential of the group. Teachers encourage children to turn to each other for help with all aspects of classroom activity, including the mastery and application of basic early literacy and numeric skills. However, in mixed age grouping, teachers use small temporary sub-groupings of children who need the same kinds of instruction to help them acquire basic skills. Mixed age grouping provides older children with the opportunity to be helpful, patient, and tolerant of younger peers' competencies. Exposure to older children as nurturers provides younger children with models of behavior they can emulate when they become the older members of the group. Research indicates that academic achievement in mixed age groupings is the same as, or better than, the academic achievement of children in same age classes.

### *Transitioning to New Rooms or Programs*

Helping children make a successful transition to the next age level or program is a great benefit to children and to their next teacher. To support the transition process the teaching staff:

- discusses the possibility of transition to the next age level with parents – both the teaching staff and the parents should agree that the child is ready physically and emotionally to move up to the next level
- allows the child to visit the new classroom to meet and greet the teaching staff and children and to spend time interacting with the group; this process typically takes up to a week of daily visits with the child returning to his/her home room for lunch and rest
- reads books and creates stories about children who go to a new class
- role plays situations the children are likely to encounter in the next class

- assists parents in transitioning to kindergarten programs by providing information about local elementary schools and registration dates
- coordinates with District 80 Kindergarten staff regarding curricular and transition needs.

### *Lesson Plans*

Lesson plans are written on a weekly basis and reviewed by the Academy's administrative staff. Within each classroom, age appropriate activities revolve around themes that encourage imagination and the child's natural love for learning. Pre-reading and math skills are continuously reinforced throughout the play-based curriculum. Social and emotional development is emphasized through hands-on experiences where children have opportunities to strengthen their skills by sharing with others, participating in a group living environment, eating family-style mealtimes and recharging their energies during rest time.

### *Healthy Habits*

The children's daily routine also incorporates "healthy habits" which includes brushing teeth after breakfast and lunch, proper hand-washing, and nutrition education in all classrooms. While children are in our care they receive breakfast, hot lunch and an afternoon snack.

### *Rest/Nap Time*

Rest Time is included daily from 1 to 3pm. Each child is assigned a cot for his/her use. The teaching staff sanitizes each cot weekly and puts on a fresh sheet. Parents are asked to supply a blanket, small pillow, and stuffed animal (if needed) for optimal rest. Each classroom has a cot map posted noting the location of each child. The supervising teaching staff darkens the room slightly and plays soft music for a restful period. The children are asked to rest quietly for the first hour, after that the child who is awake may read a book or work on a quiet activity. The two/three year old staff may rock children who are restless. Children are allowed to use the restroom during nap as needed.

### **DAILY ROUTINE**

A general daily schedule is posted in every classroom as a resource for parents. The schedule allows for large and small group interaction, as well as active and passive learning experiences. Time is set aside for meals, toileting and rest. The schedule is designed to be flexible yet structured enough to serve as a predictable daily routine for children. Children enrolled in the two-year old program receive a daily progress report that highlights the child's accomplishments, meal and sleep patterns as well as toilet habits. If your child is still in diapers or pull-ups the two year old teaching staff team is responsible for all toileting procedures. We believe providing a consistent routine helps ease the transition from home to school for the younger children.

### **OUTDOOR PLAY**

The Academy has an outdoor playground, courtyard and front field that the children utilize on a daily basis. In addition, teachers may choose to take a walk around the neighborhood for outdoor exercise. If a child is well enough to be in care, he or she is well enough to go outside. The children stay indoors when it is raining, if there is a wind chill factor below zero degrees, and/or if it is an Ozone Alert day. From time to time, teachers will send home a reminder indicating what clothing is needed for outdoor play.

## ATTIRE

Children should be dressed according to the season. Whatever the weather, children should be dressed in durable, comfortable play clothes so that they can move freely and not worry about ruining their attire. Remember children may be sitting in the grass, playing in the sand, running through sprinklers, painting and sweating! Therefore, children should wear clothes that they are allowed to get dirty. Gym shoes are highly recommended for all age groups. Dress shoes, sandals (including jelly shoes and flip-flops) and the like, are not recommended for safety reasons. Children are asked not to wear long dangling earrings, necklaces or other jewelry that could get caught during play or injure the child or another child in the program. It is recommended that younger children, who are not potty trained, bring in two changes of clothes, including socks. All clothing should be labeled with the child's name so misplaced items can be returned to their rightful owners.

**Please note:** It is recommended that the child's name not be displayed on the exterior of the child's clothes or belongings.

## WHAT TO SEND FROM HOME

Unless an item is necessary for a child's security such as a blanket, stuffed toy or doll for naptime, we ask that home toys remain at home. On occasion the classrooms might have "Show & Tell", when home toys are allowed; other than on this occasion home toys are not recommended by the Academy. At the beginning of enrollment and/or the start of the new program year, each child is given a supply list of required items. Parents are given ample time to turn-in the items. Please see your child's teacher for a current supply list if you have not received one. From time to time teachers ask parents to bring in treats from home for a theme-related celebration. Please be aware that any food items brought in need to be store or bakery bought and sealed within the original package. Homemade treats are not allowed and cannot be accepted.

### **The following items are needed on a permanent basis for continued enrollment:**

1. Blanket, pillow, and if needed stuffed animal for rest time. These items must go home on a weekly basis for laundering.
2. An extra set of clothes including socks, underwear, shirt and pants. Two sets for children who are not potty-trained.
3. Toothbrush and tube of toothpaste. (Replenish as needed.)
4. Backpack for school projects and letters sent home.
5. Art supplies as requested by teacher.

## VALUABLES

We insist that guns, harmful toys, large amounts of money, valuable jewelry, expensive clothing and shoes or any other items of value, never be brought to the Academy. Trading Cards (Pokemon, Baseball) of any kind are not allowed. These items should be left at home. Books and children's C.D.s are easily shared and are most welcome.

**Please note:** Children may bring in age appropriate games for the computer which must be rated E for everyone. No teen or adult rated games are allowed. Also, movie DVDs or video tapes must be rated G to be shown.

## LOST & FOUND

Lost items are turned into the Academy's main office. If your child misplaces something, stop by the Academy office to check the lost and found. The Norridge Park District's Pool also has a lost & found and many misplaced children's items may be found there during the summer months. Any unclaimed items are cleaned out monthly and given to charity.

Please note: The Academy will not accept responsibility for any child's item that is lost, broken, misplaced, stolen or loaned to other children and/or staff.

## SANITATION AND PEST MANAGEMENT

### Building and Classrooms

The cleanliness of the classrooms is maintained by the teaching staff and a contracted cleaning service. Staff is responsible for daily cleaning and sanitation of equipment and furnishings used by the children. On a monthly basis, more often during cold and flu season, the staff cleans and sanitizes all equipment, toys and manipulatives in the classrooms. The contracted cleaning company comes in after hours to provide daily trash removal; sweeping, vacuuming, mopping and buffing of all floors; dusting; polishing; and cleaning/sanitizing of all restrooms. Deep cleaning of all classrooms, hallways, and restrooms is completed on a regularly scheduled basis.

Environmental Hazards: Norridge School District 80 follows all public health requirements regarding environmental hazards within the building. In the event of an "OZONE" alert the children are kept indoors in the climate controlled classrooms. To reduce indoor air pollution the academy follows the guidelines listed:

- Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the child care premises or near children
- Idling vehicles are discouraged near the premises
- We prevent mold and mildew by reducing excess moisture, managing leaks and cleaning up spills immediately
- We limit the use artificial air fresheners that contain multiple chemicals
- We are phasing in the use biodegradable, least toxic cleaning products (Green Products)
- We use Integrated Pest Management (see below)
- We use non-toxic art supplies

### Food Service Sanitation

The food service program is maintained by a Nutritionist certified in Food Service Sanitation in the State of Illinois. All meal service foods (breakfast, lunch and dinner) are shared family style in the children's classrooms following all USDA guidelines. Breakfast and snack are prepared and served by the nutritionist. Lunch is catered in by an authorized childcare food service company. The nutritionist monitors food temperatures and serves out the lunch food into covered containers. The food along with serving dishes and utensils is transported to each classroom. Classroom staff cleans and sanitizes all tables before food service; the children are directed to wash their hands before sitting down at the tables. With their washed and gloved hands the teaching staff guides and assists the children in serving the food. Good manners and conversation is modeled during meal time. After meal service, all serving containers, dishes, and utensils are returned to the kitchen where the nutritionist washes, rinses, and sanitizes each piece.

### Integrated Pest Management

It is the policy of the academy to implement and practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to control pests in the building and minimize the exposure of children and staff to pesticides. The IPM program includes: regular monitoring to identify pest problems; preventative actions to reduce future pest problems; preference for the use of non-chemical control methods to address pest problems; when necessary, and the use of least hazardous chemical controls after non-chemical control methods have been applied. Orkin Pest Control Company is contracted by the Academy; it complies with IPM by refraining from routine pesticide spraying, providing detailed service reports with each monthly visit, and recommending pest prevention. If pesticide application is deemed necessary, parents and staff will be notified in writing two business and no more than thirty days prior to the pesticide application (antimicrobial agents and insecticide & rodenticide baits are exempt from notification.)

### ILLNESS & EXCLUSION

The Academy seeks a partnership with parents in the effort to keep all children healthy and free from contagious disease. Health practices at the Academy are designed to minimize illness and include specific procedures regarding sanitation, hand washing and the exclusion of sick children. These procedures have been designed according to the DCFS licensing standards and in conjunction with the Cook County Health Department. Children do become ill, often at unpredictable and inconvenient times. Working parents often feel stressed when children are ill. If we work together we can minimize illnesses and stress levels. While none of us like to think about children becoming ill, now is the time to make arrangements for sick child care, knowing that illnesses will develop until your child's immunity system is built up. All information about a child's health and/or medical condition is kept strictly confidential.

#### *Illness Policy*

All children attending a program at the Academy must be in good health. If symptoms of illness are present at home, you should not bring your child to the Academy. Please notify the Academy when your child is ill so we can be alert to similar symptoms in other children. The Academy is required to report certain illnesses to the health department. Every day upon arrival, all children will be screened by their teacher for any obvious signs of illness. If symptoms of illness are present, the child care staff will determine whether they are able to care for the child safely, based on the apparent degree of illness. If your child appears symptom free upon arrival, but symptoms develop later on during the day, staff will determine whether or not childcare can continue.

Any child who is suspected of being ill or becomes ill, shall be immediately isolated from the group in the Academy's main office and will need to be picked up from the facility by a parent as soon as possible, optimally within one hour. In the event a parent cannot pick up his/her child in the suggested time frame, staff will call those listed on the enrollment form authorized to assume this responsibility for you. Sick children will be supervised and comforted by office administrative staff; a cot with a blanket, and quiet books and toys will be available for the child until a parent can pick up.

### *Exclusion Guidelines*

Mildly ill children, who can participate in all activities normally, do not need to be routinely excluded. This could include a child with a cold. However, in order to prevent the spread of disease, children will be excluded from care until the symptoms or conditions listed below are resolved or until evaluation by a physician determines that the child can return to the Academy.

- Fever, including low grade, a change in behavior (irritable, restless or listless), and/or symptoms of an illness. A fever is considered a temperature over 99 degrees.
- Loose stools (diarrhea) with two or more episodes.
- Vomiting with two or more episodes within the previous 24-hour period.
- Evidence of severe illness such as lethargy, unusual sleepiness, prolonged crying, obvious discomfort, difficulty breathing, uncontrollable coughing, wheezing, and/or poor appetite.
- Mouth sores or ulcers.
- Head Lice
- Any illness which prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.

Please note: Children sent home with a fever are required to stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours.

### *Illnesses that require a doctor's note in order for the child to return to care*

Any child suffering from any of the following conditions will not be permitted to return to the Academy without a doctor's note authorizing their return:

- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) with discharge (child must have been treated 24 hours before returning to the program)
- Rash (sometimes) associated with other signs of illness, fever or change in behavior.
- A specific contagious disease such as whooping cough, strep throat, scabies, chicken pox, mumps, measles, ringworm, impetigo, scarlet fever, etc.
- A child who has received stitches.
- A child who has broken a bone.
- A child who underwent surgery of any sort.
- A child who has injured their teeth in any way.

Many illnesses/injuries require exclusion for 24 hours after treatment has begun unless a physician authorizes an earlier return. Other illnesses/injuries may require a longer time frame of exclusion, such as chicken pox. Major illnesses/injuries and specific contagious diseases need a doctor's note, releasing the child in order to return to the Academy.

Please note: The Academy will not accept a child back into the program who was sent home with a suspected serious illness/injury without a doctor's release.

### *Written Notification*

The Academy notifies all families in writing of any illness that may be present in their child's classroom, specifying the date of illness, symptoms to watch for and the incubation period.

### *Emergency Medical Attention*

The Academy's emergency medical procedure is extremely conservative in order to protect as many children as possible. If your child becomes acutely ill or sustains a major injury while in our care and requires medical attention the Academy staff will call for paramedic help to transport the child to the local hospital. A designated staff member will accompany the child. Parents will be notified to proceed to the hospital's emergency room by the Academy's office

personnel. An accident/incident report will be completed and placed in the child's file. The child's teacher will make a follow-up phone call to the child's home the same evening of the occurrence.

***Please note:*** At the time of registration all parents must sign a consent form authorizing the Academy to administer emergency medical treatment. Your signature on the enrollment form gives the hospital permission to care for your child.

### ***Accident reports***

Every time a child gets hurt, however slight the injury, an accident report is prepared by the teacher. If the injury is serious (injury to head, wound that is bleeding, a bite, or a deep cut requiring stitches) the parents will be notified immediately. All accident reports must be signed by the child's parent and become part of the child's permanent record.

***Please note:*** If a parent refuses to sign an accident report, his/her child will not be allowed back into the program until the report is signed.

### **MEDICATION**

The Academy only administers medication for life maintenance purposes, such as insulin for a diabetic, an "epi-pen" for a specific allergic reaction, or an inhaler for an asthmatic.

- A written note confirming the child's medical condition is required from your licensed health care provider; details including proper dispensing of the medication, schedule, directions for administering the medication, and possible side effects should be noted. A standing order may guide the use of over-the-counter medications detailing the specific instructions for individual dosing of the medication. See office for form.
- A release form must be signed by the parents and kept on file in the Academy's office.
- Depending upon the child's medical condition and type of medication, parents may be required to participate in a meeting to train the teaching staff in the proper administering of the medication.
- Medication must be in its original container and labeled with the child's first and last name, name of the clinician, expiration date, and manufacturer's instructions and/or prescription medications must be labeled with the full pharmacy label detailing the name and strength of the medication as well as directions on administering and storing.
- Medications that are vital to a child's health, such as an asthma inhaler, diabetes medication, or epi-pen for severe allergic reactions are kept in the classroom secured in the first aid bag or in a locked cabinet. All other medication is kept in the Academy office and stored under lock and key.
- Staff will keep a medication log detailing date and times that the medication was administered.
- ***Please note:*** No other forms of medication will be administered by the Academy staff. This includes all over the counter medication as well as prescription antibiotics. Please consult with your physician regarding alternative medications, such as 12-hour antibiotics or suspension liquids that do not have to be taken while your child is in our care.

## **First Aid**

For minor cuts, bumps, bruises, scrapes, etc., the staff administers first aid and completes an accident report form. Keep in mind the Academy's first aid procedures are very basic. Soap, water, Band-Aids and ice packs are the only forms of treatment allowed. All Academy staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR.

## *Topical Products*

Any topical product, such as diaper ointment, sunscreen and insect repellent must be approved by the parent in writing prior to use on a child.

## **Insurance**

The Academy meets all published DCFS requirements for insurance coverage. All children enrolled at the Academy are covered under public liability insurance. It is expected that costs for medical treatment will be covered under the parent's health insurance.

## **Food & Nutrition**

All children enrolled in the Early Care Program who are present for mealtimes will be served breakfast, hot lunch and an afternoon snack. All food is provided by the Academy. All parents receive monthly menus listing all foods served. Every meal and snack is prepared and served according to USDA requirements. From time to time the teachers may ask parents to bring in foods from home for a theme-related celebration. Please be aware that any food items brought in need to be store or bakery bought and sealed within the original package. Homemade treats are not allowed and cannot be accepted. The Academy operates "family style" meals, which includes children in every aspect of the meal, including set-up, serving when appropriate and clean up to the best of their ability.

## *Meal substitutions*

All food is provided by the Academy. The only exception to this rule is if a physician has signed off on a health condition, indicating the child cannot eat the food provided by the Academy and the child must bring his/her own food from home. Any food brought from home for an individual child must be clearly labeled with that child's name and cannot be shared with other children. All alternative foods must follow the USDA guidelines for health and nutrition; no chips, cookies, cakes, candies or sweet beverages will be served. This policy is strictly enforced by the Academy. The physician's note is required at the beginning of every enrollment period and it must indicate a legitimate health reason as to why the child needs home food. The note will be held on file for the season and must be renewed every season. Medical Exception forms for food are available in the office.



## **Birthday Celebrations**

In consideration of our preschool participants with food allergies or sensitivities and to support the fight against childhood obesity, we ask that all in-class birthday celebrations be non-edible. We will celebrate your child's special day with a birthday crown, poster, and/or a special card and the group will sing the "Happy Birthday" song. Optional non-edible birthday celebration suggestions: donate an educational game or toy to the classroom; or give out age appropriate stickers, pencils or erasers. Please note any cakes, cookies or candies will not be accepted for distribution in the classroom and will be returned to the parent.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of the Academy to be in compliance with Public Act 100-0105 which prohibits expelling young children (ages 0-5) from their program because of a child's behavior. Our goal is to meet the needs of the child within our existing program and resources. The staff at the Academy work hard to prevent behavioral problems by arranging the classroom environment so children are able to work in small groups and have a large choice of activities. Each classroom is divided into a minimum of seven separate activity centers. These activity centers give children the freedom to choose and the ability to experience success through self-direction. Staff are trained to direct behavior along appropriate channels. Children are encouraged to use their words and not actions to solve problems. Academy staff act as role models and employ ample praise for appropriate behavior. *Please note:* All parents and every staff member sign a statement of understanding in regard to the Academy's Guidance and Discipline Policy included in your child's enrollment package, so that clear understanding exists between both parties.

*Discipline policy posted in each classroom*

The following steps are taken regarding discipline:

First: Verbal reminder of the rules.

Second: Redirection to another activity.

Third: Taking a break and stepping away for a few moments.

Last: Incident Report that must be signed by parent at pick up time.

*Minor Incidents*

When a minor incident, including an isolated instance of the use of mildly inappropriate language not directed at another child or staff person, occurs within the classroom the teacher will follow the discipline policy above. Verbal cues and positive reinforcement will be used as appropriate. If the child needs to take a break and step away from an activity, he/she will not be left alone. He/she will always be kept in full view of the teacher.

### *Major Incidents*

Teachers will notify the Academy administrative staff of any incident involving aggressive and/or violent behavior by a child, such as an act of cruelty, intimidation, bullying, biting, kicking, punching, hitting, using obscenities and verbal threats of physical harm, lewd conduct, intentional destruction of property, or behavior that puts the child himself/herself at risk of physical harm. The child's parents will be notified by Academy administrative staff of incidents with an immediate phone call and an incident report will be prepared for the parent's signature at the time of pick up.

### *Dismissal procedure*

As noted earlier the Academy is in compliance with Public Act 100-0105. The Academy will document incidents that occur, communicate with parents, plan for addressing issues including resources and help in transitioning their child to another program. During this time the Director of Parks and Recreation will be kept informed. It is the support of the Director of Parks and the District's Board of Park Commissioners that the Academy will continue its efforts to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of the children in the program and to keep every child in care safe and free from harm.

### *Incident Reports*

An incident report is written for all major disciplinary incidents, as described above, as well as any out of the ordinary occurrence in the child's day (such as the need to change clothing, losing a tooth, etc.). When deemed necessary, the child's parent is notified with a phone call to explain why an incident report had to be written. It is the District's policy that the child's parent must sign the report at the time of pick up, acknowledging the fact that the report was read and has been made aware of the situation. Signed reports become part of the child's permanent record.

### *Guidance Policy*

It is the Academy's philosophy and policy that corporal punishment of children in the program is unacceptable. The Academy does not condone the use of abusive or profane language or threats of physical punishment directed at an enrolled child.

### *Violence Policy/Tobacco/Firearms*

In the event any parent(s) threaten(s), is violent or harmful to their child, to another child, or a staff member, or other parent at the Academy or to property at the Academy, such an occurrence is grounds for immediate termination of services from the Academy. The Academy adheres to a strict, zero tolerance policy concerning any type or situation of violence involving parents. Firearms are strictly forbidden (Law Enforcement Personnel exempt) on the premises. Smoking and use of tobacco products within 15 feet of the building is forbidden by Illinois law.

### **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

The center views parents as partners in the health, education, growth and development of their children. The center aims to be supportive of a parent's role and wishes to supplement the participation of every child in the program in a most positive, productive and professional way. The center emphasizes an environment that is exciting and fun for all children. When the positive aspects of meeting new friends and experiencing new activities are presented to children, we find the transition from home to school to be successful.

### *Difficulties, Differences*

We afford all parents the opportunity to discuss any concerns they may have with the academy's director and/or related staff. While it is not always possible for the teaching staff to discuss a concern during class time they will be happy to schedule an appointment for a meeting or phone conference. We do take parents' concerns seriously. Staff and administration will work together to make a plan to address your concerns. We will keep you informed of solutions and progress. We want to work in partnership with you to provide the best educational experience for your child and we *are* interested in your questions, concerns, and perspective.

### *Open Door Policy*

The Academy subscribes to an "open door" policy in which parents are encouraged to visit their children at any time of the day. Parents are invited to stay with their child on his or her first day to ease the transition from home to school. Since every child is different and transitions may become harder as time goes on, the door is always open to stay until you and your child feels comfortable. Whether your child has a hard or not so hard transition, you are always welcome to visit the center. Please refer to your child's classroom's daily schedule to select the best time for your visit, depending upon what it is you wish to observe or participate with the group.

### *Parent Volunteers*

We encourage parents to volunteer to assist and spend time in the classroom with your child. You may read a book, share a special hobby or craft, teach a few words in another language, play a musical instrument, share information about your job, participate in a field trip, and/or help out with an activity or event in the classroom. Please see your child's teacher if you wish to help - the teaching staff will also send out requests for parent help from time to time.

Everyone is welcome to participate.

### *Informal Conferences*

Teachers are available for informal conversations regarding your child's well being at various times throughout the day. If need be, a phone call or short visit can occur. However, if you have a concern regarding your child, we recommend scheduling a specific meeting between you and your child's teacher.

### *Parent Communication*

Every month the Academy email blasts "Kid-Bits", a newsletter highlighting the events and activities provided to children the month before. In addition to the newsletter, all parents receive monthly menus for all meals served at the Academy. From time to time notes and flyers go home, in an effort to keep all parents up-to-date and informed of Academy doings. All correspondence from the office is placed in the child's file folder located in the file organizer on the wall directly outside each classroom. All correspondence from the Academy that is not emailed will be placed in your child's folder located outside of their classroom.

### *Website*

The Norridge Park District website includes information about all park district programs, events, and resources. Information about the academy including forms, and parent resources can be found at: [www.norridgepk.com](http://www.norridgepk.com)

### *Parent Input/Program Evaluation*

Parent input regarding the program is a valuable resource. Every program year a parent/family survey will be distributed. Results of the survey will be published in the Kid-Bits newsletter. A planning meeting to review the survey, share concerns, questions, thoughts and ideas and to set goals will be scheduled annually; parents, administration, staff and community members will be invited to participate. Parents are also encouraged to contact staff or Academy administration at any time to express concerns or share ideas. A suggestion box located in the hallway near the office is also available for parent use.

### *Fundraising*

Twice a year the center fundraises in an effort to cut down on operating costs that are passed on to families. We encourage 100% participation of all families in order to make our efforts a success. All proceeds from the events go towards the children's classrooms. The annual fundraisers are scheduled in the fall and spring. The top selling student receives a week's free tuition (see the office for details). The top selling classroom receives a party.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Early Care Trips are planned for children in the Three, Four and Five year old rooms at an additional fee. During the regular program year the Academy schedules two field trips out of the Academy for the children, excluding the two-year old room. During the summer children attend three field trips out of the Academy. Trips are planned to accommodate the age and abilities of the children. Field trips are transported by a hired school bus company; seat belts are provided on the busses. During field trips the safety and security of your child is a priority. Depending upon the number of children participating in a particular trip, parents may be asked

to help out as chaperones. The staff supervises the children at all times; they carry attendance sheets, first aid bags, cell phones for communication, and a list of emergency phone numbers on all trips. Group counts are taken before, during, and after the trip. *Please note:* Due to the limited availability of staff, the Academy is unable to provide alternate care if a parent elects that their child should not participate in a scheduled field trip. No credits are available in such instances because of the fixed costs incurred by the Academy in providing field trips.

### TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

The Norridge Park District utilizes two 15-passenger childcare busses to transport children to and from the Norridge Park District Community Park for recreational activities as well as for field trips. Each bus is equipped with seat belts. Children are required to sit and wear a seat belt while the bus is in transit. A member of the teaching staff escorts the children to the bus, assists with seating and seatbelts, rides with the group, assists the children in getting off the bus safely, and keeps track of the names and number of children in his/her care. Children with disabilities will be escorted and supported by inclusion aides as required during transport. Children who travel on contracted bus services to and from Special Education programs are required to have a transportation consent form signed by a parent.

### CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT POLICY

All Academy personnel, regardless of position, are mandated reporters of any suspected child abuse and/or neglect, in accordance with Illinois state law. The Academy is required to have a written policy indicating compliance with the law. A child is considered neglected if he or she is not provided with adequate food, clothing, medical attention or protection. If any of these conditions are suspected, the Academy is required to file a report with DCFS. It is not the place of staff to determine if a child is or is not being abused and/or neglected, but rather only to report the suspected abuse and/or neglect to the proper authorities. Failure to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect can result in criminal charges being brought up against the Academy and any involved staff members. If any staff member observes signs of suspected abuse and/or neglect, the staff person must indicate this in a written observation and immediately report the findings to the Academy's administrative staff. A staff member will seek to inform the parent/guardian of the situation and try to secure cooperation when a report must be filed to DCFS. The parent or guardian's explanation of the child's situation will be recorded along with the staff member's observation. The observation will be immediately reported to DCFS with or without parent involvement. If a parent or family refuses to talk with the staff about the child's situation, or a child does not attend school after inquiries have been made, an additional report to DCFS will be made.

**IMPORTANT:** *If a parent shares with the staff his/her concern that he/she may be abusing their child, the staff will work to help the parent receive the appropriate services and will support the family in reporting the situation to DCFS.*

### SUMMER CARE

During the summer season the children participate in outdoor activities. Activities include splash time or a swimming lesson, playground and field games, art activities, free choice of room centers, three major field trips, special event days and occasional mini-field trips. Many activities occur during the morning hours. We ask that all children arrive to the center no later than 9:00am.

*Please note:* The two year old children do not participate in traveling to the park or field trips. Sprinklers are set up and outside time takes place on the academy grounds; the two year old children may take short walks in the immediate neighborhood with the 6 passenger strollers.

#### *Incident Weather/Ozone Alerts*

All children will remain at the Academy if the weather is inclement. If the weather should turn while the children are at the park, they will be transported back to the Academy immediately. On days when the weather exceeds 95 degrees and/or an "OZONE ALERT" has been issued, all children will remain at the Academy in their air-conditioned classrooms.

#### *Summer Dress Code*

Children should come dressed in play clothes according to the weather. Each child will receive a Norridge Park T-shirt at the start of the program. Shirts must be worn on all scheduled field trips. Parents may want to send along a hat for protection from the sun. All towels, bathing suits, underwear and clothing need to be labeled with your child's first and last name. All children are required to wear their bathing suit under their clothing every day, as they will participate in splash time daily. Clean underwear and a towel should be brought to the Academy packed in the child's tote bag.

#### *Sun Block & Insect Repellent*

At the beginning of the summer season all parents will receive a consent form allowing the use of spray sun block and/or insect repellent for topical application. Each child is required to bring in a spray bottle of sun block (at least SPF 15 and/or insect repellent; the staff will assist children with application from the community bottles. Children with allergies or skin sensitivity can request application of a specific brand sent by parent.

#### **STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING**

At the time of enrollment you must sign a statement of understanding indicating your intent to read and adhere to all policies in the parent handbook, and any subsequent amendments. From time to time policies are reviewed, added or changed. If so, an addendum is issued to all families to attach to their existing handbook.

Early Care Parent Handbook

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