



## **FAMILY HANDBOOK**

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### **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

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## WELCOME TO HP COMMUNITY

We welcome you to HP Community. We value relationships and look forward to collaborating with you on the growth and development of your child!

## HISTORY OF HP COMMUNITY

- In 1951, HP Community, formerly known as Highland Park Community Nursery School & Day Care Center, opened its doors under the direction of Martha Struve Freeman, in the basement of the YWCA on the site of the current Highland Park Public Library parking ramp. We have evolved our program over the years and moved to a new location behind West Ridge Park District in 2019. We are proud of our rich history of serving the children and families of Highland Park and Highwood and love seeing generations of families returning to our care!

## PHILOSOPHY

It is our philosophy to provide the highest quality care for your child within an environment that is safe, secure, and comfortable. While our program is based on knowledge and research of general child development, modifications are made to meet the needs and interests of individual children. Experiences and materials are provided for the development of the child socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively. Both group and individual activities provide a balanced curriculum, which includes art, music, literacy, language, math, science, social studies, dramatic play, movement, fine motor, and perception.

## MISSION STATEMENT

At HP Community, we believe every child deserves to thrive. Our mission is to provide a safe, caring, and enriching environment.

- Children and families are nurtured and supported, and diversity is celebrated.
- Each child’s individual emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development is fostered by a skilled and loving staff.
- Play is valued and natural curiosity is encouraged.

- Interpersonal relationships and collaboration are emphasized and seen as avenues for growth and trust.

## GENERAL CENTER INFORMATION

### ADMINISTRATION

Executive Director: Robin Byster      Assistant Director: Paula Johnson

Email: robin@hpcommunity.org      Email: paula@hpcommunity.org

School Accountant: Quattro Business Support Services

Email: [accounting@hpcommunity.org](mailto:accounting@hpcommunity.org)

### HOURS OF OPERATION

Full-Day: 7:30AM– 5:30PM

Added fee Extended Day option: 7:00 AM – 7:30 AM

### DATES AND HOLIDAYS SCHOOL IS CLOSED

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Year’s Day                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Labor Day                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Martin Luther King, Jr. Day                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Thanksgiving & the day after Thanksgiving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial Day                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Day                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <sup>th</sup> of July (and the week it falls in) |  |

Winter Break – 5 days at the end of December/early January

Spring Break – 1 week in March/April

Summer Break – 1 week in August

See School Calendar for specific yearly closures.

## QUALITY STANDARDS IN PROGRAMMING

### EXCELERATE IL

HP Community is a participant in the Illinois Quality Rating System, ExceleRate IL (<https://www.inccrra.org/excelerate>). Our program has met the criteria for a Gold Circle of Quality since 2017. This designation is renewed every 3 years to ensure quality improvements continue to be implemented. ExceleRate Illinois is a statewide quality recognition and improvement system designed to make continuous quality improvement an everyday priority among early learning providers. The program establishes standards for helping infants, toddlers and preschool age children develop intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. It provides a framework for early learning professionals to identify opportunities for improvement, increase their skills and take steps to make positive changes.

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## PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

Children who are three or four years of age by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current year, are eligible for our “Preschool For All” (PFA) program. PFA is a state funded grant program provided through the Illinois State Board of Education. Its purpose is to ensure all children have access to high quality preschool experiences in order to be ready for kindergarten.

Children who participate in the Preschool for All program must attend five days each week from 8:45-11:45 a.m. during the 185 school days of “Preschool for All”. Families who wish to enroll their child in both our 3-hour PFA program and the child care portion of our program will receive priority at HP Community.

“Preschool for All” meets 185 days during the school year. There is no “Preschool for All” program in the summer months, however we do year-round programming for child care.

## EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURES

For the safety of the children, their families and the staff, HP Community will follow North Shore School District #112 (D112) emergency closure policies. When D112 is closed, then HP Community will be closed as well. When HP Community is in session and D112 is not (such as over winter break, spring break or summer), and we determine that a closure is necessary due to severe weather, power outages, disaster, or any unforeseen reason, HP Community will send out a mass notice through Procure upon deciding, usually by 6:00 AM. Your child’s teacher will attempt to contact you, and a notice will be put on the Facebook page. Please note that no financial credit will be given for a snow day.

## BUILDING SECURITY & ACCESS

Everyone entering the center will be required to use the Keyless Entry System located in the foyer on the right side of the doors. Codes will be assigned to each staff member, parent or guardian. This code will be specific to each person and is not to be shared with any other individual. This same code is the one that you will use to sign your child into and out of the program daily through Procure. Other people, including those authorized to pick up a child, will need to ring the bell for entry into the building.

## DEFINITION OF PROGRAMS

There are 2 full-day early learning programs and 4 classrooms at HP Community. They are:

- 2’s & Young 3’s for up to 16 children ages 24 months to 42 months
- 3’s & 4’s for up to 20 children ages 3.5 to 5 years

## ENROLLMENT AT OAK TERRACE PRE-K

With special exception and depending on how many children are scheduled to go, we do allow children to attend our program in the morning and then be transported to Oak Terrace school for the afternoons. Priority is given to children who receive special education services (therapies) at that school. District 112 provides busing from our program to theirs.

After lunch, children are accompanied by our teachers to the bus and then picked up from the bus after Oak Terrace is complete. The children will be offered a snack and then play until families pick up by 5:30. Our full day rate tuition is charged.

**Once children are enrolled, parents are required to work out the busing arrangements with the district as they do not communicate directly with us about individual children's schedules.**

## LICENSING – REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION

HP Community is a public program voluntarily licensed to serve 80 children by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). A copy of the licensing guidelines (407's) is given out at registration and is available for review in the front office and online at:

<http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/089/08900407sections.html>

## RATIOS

At HP Community we maintain the following staff-to-child ratios in our classrooms:

<u>Child's Age</u>	<u>Minimum Ratio of Staff to Children</u>
• 2 Year	1 staff for every 6-8 children
• 3 Years	1 staff for every 10 children
• 4 Years	1 staff for every 10 children

## REQUIRED REGISTRATION DOCUMENTATION

### BIRTH CERTIFICATES

HP Community is required by DCFS to obtain a certified copy of your child's birth certificate for your child to enroll in our program. If a certified copy is not available, you may submit a passport, visa, or other governmental documentation as proof of the child's identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate.

### PHYSICAL & IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

Each child must have a current physical and immunization record on file before starting in our program. The physical must be updated at least annually; immunization records must be updated whenever a new immunization is received. Updated immunization and physicals can be emailed to [paula@hpcommunity.org](mailto:paula@hpcommunity.org) directly from your healthcare provider.

### EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION FORM

It is important that parents complete and update, as needed, an Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form. This form contains contact information for both the parents as well as the individuals authorized to pick up the child in the event of serious illness or emergency. In addition, the form allows HP Community staff members to seek emergency medical or dental care from authorized care providers in the event of serious injury. **These forms are updated at least annually.**



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## FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

Financial documentation of income is required of all families due to our grant requirements (tax return or 2 payroll stubs). Since we receive, and frequently apply for, a few grants from the state, they ask for statistics of who we serve (our demographics). Financial records of all families are kept in a separate file in a locked cabinet.

## ARRIVING & LEAVING HP COMMUNITY

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### BRINGING YOUR CHILD TO HP COMMUNITY

When arriving to HP Community, please proceed slowly through the parking lot, adhering to the posted speed limit of 5 miles per hour. Please park in the designated area and turn off your car. Please do not park in the handicap spaces if you do not have authorization.

Upon arrival, bring your child to their classroom or where their class is at the time, for example in the gross motor room or on the playground. Parents should also speak with the teacher in the classroom, if only briefly. We encourage parents to communicate with teachers about their child's temperament that day, how they slept the night before, whether or not their child has eaten that morning, etc. **Children must never be dropped off alone outside or in the hallway.**

In addition, please help us provide a smooth good-bye for your child by:

- Assisting them to wash their hands before playing
- Put all personal belongings in their cubby
- Making sure they have a dry, clean diaper on them or have used the bathroom prior to drop-off
- Planning a simple, consistent good-bye ritual (a kiss on the cheek, a kiss on the head, then good-bye) with the help of a teacher if needed.

It is required by DCFS that children be signed in on Procure with the time and name of adult dropping off. For safety reasons, do not leave other children in the car or leave the motor on in your car. If you are concerned about your car starting again in winter, please carry an extra set of keys and lock your car with the motor running.

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### PICKING UP YOUR CHILD FROM HP COMMUNITY

Please finish phone calls before entering the building. Your child has missed you and needs you to be fully present. Children must be picked up promptly at the end of each session. ***Be sure to say goodbye to let your child's teacher know that you are taking your child.*** Children must be signed out on Procure with time and name of adult picking up. People signing the children out must be 16 years of age or older. Once you have reunited with your child, HP Community is no longer responsible for your child. Please assist your child daily in collecting their artwork and possessions. When picking up your child, please enter through the front door, even if your child is outside. For your child's safety, please do not allow them to open the gate or cross the parking lot alone. Please be sure gates are closed securely after passing through them.

It is sometimes a difficult time for children when their parents come at day's end. Please try to help your child leave promptly and with ease. The teacher will be glad to be of assistance at this time.

**When someone other than the child's parents is to pick up, the school must be notified;** otherwise, we cannot release your child to that person. If this person will be picking up your child on a regular basis, you may give written permission by listing their name and telephone number on your child's emergency card. Please be sure to keep this information up-to-date. If someone else will be picking up your child for a limited time only,

write that person's name and telephone number in a note and give to the office or your child's teacher. If you find you are going to be delayed by an emergency, you must make arrangements to have someone else pick up your child. You must then call the school to inform us of who will be picking up your child.

**PROTECTION OF YOUR CHILD:** We are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS). School personnel are prohibited from allowing a child to leave with any person impaired by alcohol, cannabis or other controlled substances or any display of impairment. We will call someone on your emergency contact list in the event this happens.

As a reminder, seat belts are required by Illinois State law.

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## LATE EVENING PICK-UP FEE

HP Community charges a late fee of \$10.00 for the first 5 minutes and \$1.00 per minute thereafter if parents arrive after the scheduled pick-up time.

Once the scheduled pick-up time has passed, the director will call parents of children who are still in attendance. When the family is reached, we will ask how long it will be before they arrive to pick up their child. After the call, we document on the late log with the date, child's name, and pick up time. While waiting for you to arrive, we will prepare your child for leaving – have all backpacks, coat, etc. on so they are ready to go home when you arrive.

If you cannot be reached, we will attempt to contact the authorized pick-up persons. If we are unable to reach the authorized pick-up persons and it is after 6:00 PM, the Highland Park Police Department or DCFS will then be contacted.

Many things can happen that can cause us to be late. With that in mind each family is granted one late pick up pass where we will not charge. Our program license ends at 5:30 and staff need to be able to go home to their own families. If chronic lateness becomes an issue, a meeting with the Executive Director will be had to determine if this is the best program hours for your family.

*Under no circumstances are staff allowed to drive children home.*

## PRIVACY STATEMENT

At HPC, we are committed to protecting the privacy and security of the personal information of our children, parents, and staff. This Privacy Statement outlines how we collect, use, disclose, and protect your information.

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### INFORMATION WE COLLECT

We collect personal information that is necessary for the operation of our child care services, including but not limited to:

- **Child Information:** Name, date of birth, medical history, immunization records, special needs, and dietary requirements.
- **Parent/Guardian Information:** Name, contact information, emergency contact details, and authorized pick-up persons.
- **Staff Information:** Name, contact information, employment records, background checks, and training certifications.

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### HOW WE USE YOUR INFORMATION

The information collected is used for the following purposes:

- Providing childcare services, individualized planning of curriculum and ensuring the safety and well-being of children.
- Communicating with parents/guardians regarding their child's care, development, and any incidents or emergencies.
- Maintaining accurate and up-to-date records as required by law and regulatory bodies.
- Managing staff employment, training, and compliance with health and safety regulations.

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## DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

We do not share personal information with third parties except in the following circumstances:

- With medical professionals in case of an emergency involving your child.
- When required by law, regulation, or court order.
- With authorized service providers who assist us in operating our center (e.g., IT services), provided they sign agreements to keep the information confidential.
- Any people who provide special education or support services for your child (OT, PT, Speech, School District, etc.)\*

\*A Release of Information form must be completed before we can share any information with the above groups or in those situations. See your teacher or the front desk to obtain a copy of this form.

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## SECURITY OF INFORMATION

We take the security of your personal information seriously and implement appropriate physical, administrative, and technical safeguards to protect it. These measures include:

- Secure storage of physical records in locked cabinets.
- Use of password-protected databases for electronic records.
- Regular training for staff on privacy and data protection policies.
- Parent consent on sharing of images or child art on social media at enrollment (sign off page).

Note: While teachers have access to your child's educational file, your financial records are in a separate file in a locked cabinet.

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## ACCESS AND CORRECTION

Parents/guardians and staff have the right to access and correct their personal information held by us. To request access or make corrections, please contact the Assistant Director or update your individual records on Procure.

*Please note: any person listed on the child's birth certificate has legal rights to participate in the program and receive information about their child. This holds true unless court ordered papers are presented to the Executive Director excluding one parent from that right.*

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## RETENTION OF INFORMATION

We retain personal information for as long as necessary to fulfill the purposes for which it was collected or as required by law. When no longer needed, we securely destroy or de-identify the information.

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## CHANGES TO THIS PRIVACY STATEMENT

We may update this Privacy Statement from time to time to reflect changes in our practices or legal requirements. We will notify parents/guardians and staff of any significant changes and provide the updated statement.

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## PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

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### INTAKE INTERVIEWS

An initial intake interview with your child's classroom teacher is required, preferably before your child is enrolled in the program, but within their first week of attendance. This interview allows the teacher to learn

about your child's development, likes and dislikes and habits along with information regarding their physical well-being, for example, allergies or physical limitations. Such information is important for your child's teachers to have in order to provide the safest and most positive experience for your child.

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#### MEET & GREET AND ORIENTATIONS

At the beginning of each school year, each classroom schedules meet & greets for families to visit the classrooms prior to attending the program to familiarize themselves with their child's personal cubby space, the classroom, and the center.

Orientations take place shortly after the school year has started to review center policies and classroom procedures. It is a time to get acquainted with other families and to meet support services staff such as our social work consultant.

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#### CONFERENCES

In addition to the intake interview, you will be invited to attend two conferences during the school year, more often if requested by you or the teachers. At conferences, information will be shared with you about our observations of your child's development while participating in the program. This is an excellent opportunity to share with us what you observe at home and collaborate with us to provide the best environment possible for your child's growth.

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#### WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

Daily communication among teachers and families is very important. We encourage you to spend a few minutes sharing important information with your child's teacher during arrival and when leaving at the end of the day. Please keep in mind that when teachers are with children, the children are their first priority. For safety reasons teachers are unable to engage in long conversations at these times. We encourage you to let teachers know if you would like to have more time with them, and whether you would prefer a face-to-face meeting, virtual meeting, phone call, email, or Procure communication. The teacher will then follow up with you within the next business day.

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#### CHANGES AT HOME

It is important that your child's teacher be informed of changes at home so the teacher can discuss these changes with your child and reassure him/her while he/she is at school if that is what you wish. When teachers are aware of such changes, they can provide books and play situations that may help your child better understand his or her feelings. Children can be easily affected by changes that include complex things like moving to a new home, birth of a sibling, visitors in the home, death of a pet, separation and/or divorce, death or illness of a family member or friend. And simpler things like having stayed up late the night before, a fight with a brother or sister, not being able to finish breakfast, or a bad experience with a dog. Any knowledge or insight you may have about your child's physical or emotional health can help the teachers provide your child with love, nurturing, and time to express their feelings within the safety of their relationships. When changes occur that have a lasting impact on children, we will encourage more frequent communication with you so that we can collaborate to the best of our ability on behalf of your child.

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## SHARING DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS

During the intake meeting (or any time during your time with us) we hope that you will share any concerns you may have regarding your child's development and if they have had an evaluation previously administered by a doctor or other professional. The best way we can support your child to be successful in school and later in life is to work together when they are very young to create the best environment for them to grow and learn. With your permission, we will have you sign a Release of Information form so that we can talk with any other professionals who have been working with your child and then we can incorporate that into our curriculum.

We will share with you any ideas we may have for adaptations to the schedule, materials or environment that we think might benefit your child.

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## HPC SUPPORT STAFF

HP Community is fortunate to have a social work consultant who regularly visits the classrooms and meets with staff. She is available to meet with parents to discuss concerns or to make referrals.

## FAMILY FRIENDLY SUPPORTS

Here are some ways we would like to support you:

- Family Resource Library (located in the entry lobby) – parents can check out books related to child development, discipline or sibling rivalry for example.
- Child book lending library – feel free to take out a book to read with your child at home!\
- Annual photographs of children and their class – every year in the fall we have a professional photographer come to take photos of the individual children as well as class pictures.
- Family meetings, workshops and support groups – topics such as discipline, nutrition, transitions and health are some of the topics we have workshops on.
- Social events (Fall Fest, Pot Lucks, etc.)
- Resources for mental health, medical services and food pantries
- Clothing swaps

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## EMAILS/PROCARE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Notices are sent out regularly by the office to make immediate announcements in regard to programming and upcoming events.

HP Community is on Facebook and Instagram and often posts the events and happenings of the day. School announcements such as weather closures are posted as well. Please read the notices as they come in!

Each classroom has a private Facebook page for families to join. Teachers share photos and descriptions about the learning that is taking place on this page. Please make comments on the classroom Facebook page, as we love to hearing from you!

When you enroll your child, you will be asked to sign off on a privacy statement about the sharing of your child's image and artwork. Internet safety is important to us. Please make sure to indicate your willingness to share your child's image on Facebook, private classroom walls, our website or publicity documents. (Also see Privacy Statement in this handbook).

## ROOM TRANSITIONS

Transitions to a new classroom can be a big change for some children. Our goal is to ensure these go as smoothly as possible. When the time comes, we will inform you that your child has met the developmental milestones for the next age group and the timing for the transition.

Both your child's current and future teacher is available to address any questions or concerns you have during this process. Before the transition process is complete, the new teachers will reach out to you to schedule a meeting to familiarize you with the new classroom, children and curriculum. Your child will also have a chance to visit in their new room, meet the teachers and explore the materials about a week before the transition date. This occurs during the regular school day about a week before your child moves to the new classroom.

## PARENT PARTICIPATION

We believe that our families are an essential resource within our program community. We want you to know that your contributions of time and resources are highly valued. Some possible opportunities to participate and contribute are:

- Leading or assisting with special classroom projects
- Construction or collection of raw materials for art projects, dramatic play props, etc.
- Volunteering in your child's classroom (Becoming a Room Parent)
- Volunteering in the office
- Volunteering to serve on the center's Board of Directors or on a committee
- Celebrating your child's birthday by reading a story to the group.
- Donate and recycle materials for arts and crafts.
- Help with field trip outings
- Attend whatever celebrations, open evenings, fundraisers etc. that are organized throughout the year.

Let us know if you have a hobby or special interest you'd like to share. We also welcome you or any relatives to visit the classroom to share cultural traditions and celebrations.

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## OPEN DOOR POLICY

Parents may visit their children in our facilities any time they wish. We do ask parents who plan to volunteer frequently to follow the classroom routine, participate in classroom schedules and activities. If you wish to meet with the Director or a staff member, please make an appointment so that arrangements can be made.

### HEALTH POLICIES

For the comfort of your child, as well as the protection of other children and school personnel, you are asked to keep your child at home when there is any suspicion of illness. **Children must be free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school.** Children should only return to school when they are able to participate in the daily routine. If your child becomes ill at school, you will be notified so that you can make arrangements for their care at home. The school is to be notified immediately of all contagious diseases contracted by your child so that other families can be alerted to the exposure as soon as possible.

A child who becomes ill while at HP Community must be removed from the classroom in order to limit exposure of other children to communicable disease. An ill child will be sent to the office to wait for their parent to arrive. **We do not have the staff to cover a 1 to 1 ratio and will need someone to pick up your child within 1 hour of calling you. Please make sure you have people on your emergency pick up list who might be able to do that if you are not available.**

*Due to the changing nature of COVID19 and during high levels of flu and RSV these policies may be updated as needed.*

*HP Community reserves the right to:*

- *Exceed recommended guidance from CDC, Lake County Health Department or DCFS*
- *Make the final determination of sending a child home due to illness. Any exceptions to our illness policy will require a written note from a licensed healthcare professional stating that the child is not contagious.*

### COVID-19 Policies

- HP Community will be following current guidelines from the Illinois Department of Public Health.
- Parents/guardians and teachers must immediately notify the school via email or by phone if their child is positively diagnosed with COVID-19.
- If an infected person has been in the classrooms, we will notify all families immediately and will follow recommended guidelines.
- All teachers are vaccinated.
- We strongly recommend discussing children's COVID vaccination with your doctor when appropriate.

### ILLNESS AND EXCLUSION

Our first priority at HP Community is providing a healthy, safe learning environment for all children. Children should remain home or will be sent home as soon as possible if any of the following is experienced: an illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities (as determined by the staff); an illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can reasonably provide without compromising the health or safety of other children in the classroom; or a child is experiencing any of the following conditions:

- **Fever** of 100.4 and higher accompanied by behavior changes or other signs/symptoms of illness.
- Signs/symptoms of severe illness, including lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, inexplicable irritability or persistent crying, difficulty breathing, and/or wheezing.
- **Diarrhea** (not associated with diet changes or medications) until diarrhea stops or the continued diarrhea is deemed not to be infectious by a licensed healthcare professional.
- Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, medication, or hard stools



- **Vomiting** (two more instances in past 24 hours) until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider determines the cause for vomiting is not contagious and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
- Persistent abdominal pain (continues for more than 2 hours) or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs/symptoms of illness.
- Mouth sores with drooling, unless a health care provider determines the sores are not contagious.
- Rash with fever or behavior change, until a physician determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease.
- **Pink eye** (conjunctivitis) until after treatment has been initiated for 24 hours.
- **Head lice**, from the end of the day until after first treatment
- **Scabies**, until after treatment has been completed.
- **Tuberculosis**, until a health care provider states that the child is on appropriate therapy and can attend child care.
- **Impetigo**, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
- **Strep throat**, until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever
- **Chicken pox**, until all sores have dried and crusted (usually 6 days)
- **Pertussis**, until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed.
- **Mumps**, until 9 days after onset of symptoms
- **Hepatitis A virus**, until 1 week after onset of illness
- **Measles**, until 4 days after onset of rash
- **Rubella**, until 6 days after onset of rash
- Unspecified respiratory tract illness accompanied by another illness which requires exclusion.
- **Herpes (mouth sores) simplex**, with uncontrollable drooling

A child who becomes ill while at HP Community must be removed from the classroom to limit exposure of other children to communicable disease. An ill child will be taken to the office to wait for their parent to arrive.

*HP Community reserves the right to make the final determination of exclusion due to illness. Any exceptions to our illness policy will require a written note from a licensed healthcare professional stating that the child is not contagious.*

Please note that no financial credit will be given for a child absent due to illness.

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#### MEDICATION AT SCHOOL/OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATION

If your child requires medication, including diaper ointment, sunscreen, lotions or lip balm, during the school day, you must give written authorization to school personnel to dispense it. Medication Authorization forms can be found in the front office. The name of the medication, the dosage, and the time it is to be administered as well as your signature must be provided each day that the medication is required. For your child's safety, medication, ointment, sunscreen, lotion or lip balm, must never be sent to school in your child's backpack. You must deliver the medicine to school and give it to office personnel. Medicine must be in the original container or prescription bottle with the name of the medicine, the dosage and your child's name. We cannot administer pain medication or fever reducing medication without a specific medical reason or a doctor's note. A teacher will document the back of the Medication Authorization form each time the medication has been administered.

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## HAND WASHING

Frequent hand washing with soap and warm, running water is the most effective way to reduce and prevent the spread of illnesses commonly found in early childhood programs such as the flu, diarrhea, and pink eye.

**Parents are encouraged to assist their child in the hand washing process upon arrival.** Other times your child (and staff members) will be expected to wash their hands:

- Upon arriving at the center or when changing classrooms
- After each diaper change or using the toilet
- Before and after mealtimes
- Before and after administering medication
- After handling bodily fluids (mucus, blood, vomit)
- Before and after using the sensory table
- After coming indoors from the playground
- After handling pets and other animals
- After cleaning or handling garbage

Warm, running water (no colder than 60 degrees F) and soap must be used. Hands must be rubbed vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including the backs of hands, between fingers, under nails, and under any jewelry. A disposable paper towel should be used to dry hands and turn off faucet. Help reinforce the importance of hand washing by encouraging frequent hand washing at home as well.

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## DOCUMENTATION OF ACCIDENTS/INCIDENTS

Staff members will document accidents and incidents that occur at HP Community using an Accident/Incident Report. If the injury is serious, or there is a mark on the head or face, you will be contacted before pick-up. You will be asked to sign the report the same day as the incident. A copy may be given to you if you wish.

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## DOCUMENTATION OF HEALTH INCIDENTS

All parents will be notified of any communicable illnesses present in their child's classroom via a notice in their child's cubby or on Procure explaining the illness.

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## DOCUMENTATION OF ALLERGIES

A child with allergies must have an Allergy Action Plan posted in a visible location in the classroom. If the allergy is food-related, an Allergy Action Plan will be posted in the kitchen area as well. All staff working in the classroom of the child with allergies review the Allergy Action Plan to ensure understanding of emergency procedures should the child have an allergic reaction. All allergic reactions will be documented with a Health Incident Form.

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## ALLERGY ACTION PLAN

If your child has a food allergy, please complete an Asthma/Allergy Action Plan form, available in the front office. This form will be posted in your child's room. If medication for an allergic reaction is provided, please have your physician sign the Asthma/Allergy Action Plan as well. Kitchen staff also have the allergy list and put special meal requirements separately from the other meal components with the child's name on it.

All classrooms have an allergy list posted inside the door to the First Aid cabinet. Floaters and substitutes will be trained to check that list when working in each classroom. Teachers will provide a special place mat or marker at the child's seat when they have a food allergy so anyone who is serving food will know what that allergy is. For example, every child might have a placemat with their picture and name on it. The child with the allergy might have a red dot sticker in addition to the picture indicating what allergy they have.

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#### DOCUMENTATION OF SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

An Emergency Care Plan will be on file for any child with special health care needs (seizures, etc.). A copy of the Emergency Care Plan will be kept in the front office emergency contact file folder. All staff working in the classroom will familiarize themselves with this plan, should an emergency arise. If necessary, staff will receive training regarding a child's specific health care needs.

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#### EMERGENCY MEDICAL/DENTAL PROCEDURE

All staff members are trained in CPR & First Aid for children and adults. We also have an AED machine on site and staff is trained to use it each time we are recertified for CPR.

It is important that parents complete and update, as needed, an Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form. This form contains contact information for both the parents as well as the individuals authorized to pick up the child in the event of illness or emergency. In addition, the form allows HP Community staff members to seek emergency medical or dental care from authorized care providers in the event of serious injury. **These forms are updated annually at enrollment or re-enrollment.**

- If a child becomes ill or injured after arriving at the center, the front office staff will attempt to contact the parent(s) at all available telephone numbers. If a parent cannot be reached, the individuals listed as emergency contacts/authorized pick up persons on the Emergency Contact & Parental Consent form will be called.
- If warranted, children who are ill or injured will be sent to the office and remain under the supervision of the Executive Director and/or the Assistant Director until a parent arrives.

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#### WHEN IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IS REQUIRED

- The staff member who witnessed the emergency situation will remain with the injured child and instruct someone else to call 911.
- A staff member who witnessed the emergency situation will accompany the child to the hospital, bringing the child's physical exam, immunization records, and Emergency Contact & Parental Consent Form.
- The Executive Director or Assistant Director will contact the parent(s).

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#### SPECIAL INSURANCE COVERAGE

If you incur serious medical costs due to an injury that your child obtained at our program, and you do not have personal insurance or your insurance does not cover it, HPC has coverage to support this event. We will need a copy of the medical notes and hospital/doctor billing to process the claim. Please see the Executive Director for more information.

## NUTRITION

We encourage proper nutrition at school by serving nutritious meals and snacks. At HP Community, children are provided with a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snacks. We follow the nutritional guidelines established by the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Menus will be posted on the bulletin board near the main entrance. You may request a copy to take home if you would like. The menu can also be accessed through the Procure app.

Children will be encouraged to sample all the foods that are offered but will never be forced to eat. **Please inform your child's teacher if your child cannot eat a certain food or has different dietary needs (e.g., vegetarian, vegan, lactose intolerant) so a substitution can be made.** For certain dietary restrictions, you may be asked to provide food from home for your child.

If your child is an early riser, you may want to serve him/her breakfast before you bring him/her to school. While the program provides breakfast around 9:00am, it may be too long a period for some children to wait for food to be served. Children who are hungry have a difficult time concentrating.

Please do not bring your child's breakfast to school. Be sure that they have time to finish before you leave home. Because breakfast is served as an interest center, your child can choose to play instead of having a second breakfast.

Lunch service begins at 11:30 for the 2's and 12:00 for the 3's & 4's. Afternoon snack occurs at 2:30 for the 2's and 3:30pm for the 3's & 4's.

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## FOOD FROM HOME

Please check with your child's teacher before bringing in any food from home. A list of healthy snack options approved by the USDA and the Illinois State Board of Education is available from the front office. **All food brought in from outside the center must be pre-approved.**

Please be mindful that **HP Community is a nut free zone. No nuts or foods containing nuts should be brought into the center.**

## PAYMENT OF FEES

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### SCHOLARSHIPS AND CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

We are here to help you determine if you might be eligible for the state childcare subsidy. It is necessary that you provide two consecutive pay stubs that represent all income for the family during the same time period within the last 30 days. Funding from the Child Care Assistance Program is based on a formula that is known as the FPL (Federal Poverty Level). If it looks like you fall within the income range, we will have you complete an application for funding. It is based on family size and income. You can find the current rate at <https://www.eotta.cresa.org/FPL.php>. If you qualify, you will be eligible to pay a reduced rate for childcare.

If you do not qualify for the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) state subsidy, but cannot afford the full fee for tuition, you may be eligible for a HP Community scholarship. Please see the Executive Director for details. It is our mission to provide affordable, quality programs for the children of working parents.

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## REGISTRATION

Registration fees must be paid at the time the registration application is submitted for a child to be considered “registered”. If there is more than one child registering in a family, a single “family fee” is sufficient. Please note: a place cannot be held for a child or family without the registration fee.

**Parents who supply proof of income at registration will not be charged a registration fee.**

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## PAYING TUITION IN PROCARE

On the first of each month, you will receive an invoice through Procure. Here are some important things to know.

- You are able to pay by credit card, however you will incur a 3% fee. This helps us offset charges by the credit card company. **Debit card and ACH payments through Procure will not incur a fee.**
- Payment can be made by cash or check in the office.
- We post payments to your account on Fridays.
- Every parent/guardian that has a login with your child’s account will see your statement.
- You will be reminded of your balance each time you login to check your child in or out.
- You will be able to print your own tax report!
- You can see past payments and charges any time you would like or print a report of past charges/payments.

*All accounts need to be at zero balance at the close of each month. Please see the Executive Director if a payment plan is necessary or you would like more information about our scholarship program.*

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## LATE PAYMENTS

Payment for services is due the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month before services are rendered, i.e. services for the month of September must be paid by the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. **There will be a 1.5% late fee on all account balances that are not current on the 15th day of each month.** You are welcome to make payments, weekly, bi-monthly or monthly. Families who have not made a payment in two months must meet with the Executive Director to discuss how to proceed and make a payment plan. Should an account become delinquent for more than 3 months, the account will be sent to collections. Delinquent accounts will be responsible for all collection fees.

**If no payment has been made within 3 months, your child(ren) will not be able to attend until the balance is paid in full. Once paid in full your child can return if open slots are available or be placed on the waitlist for the next available slot.**

Children who are subsidized by the state (CCAP) are required to pay the monthly co-pay regardless of the number of days attended in the month. Subsidized children who attend less than 80% of their eligible days risk losing their subsidy.

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## RETURNED CHECKS/INSUFFICIENT FUNDS

All returned checks or direct debit payments rejected due to insufficient funds will be charged a \$25.00 penalty. Missed payments and late fees must be paid within 2 weeks. Repeated incidents of returned checks or insufficient funds notices could result in termination of childcare services. A payment plan should be discussed with the Executive Director if a family is having trouble making tuition payment.

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## EXTENDED ABSENCE

In the event that a child needs to take an extended absence (more than 2 weeks) due to extenuating circumstances and wishes to return to the program after a period of time, all arrangements must be approved by the Executive Director.

## ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is strongly encouraged. Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) participants are required to attend at least 80% of the time the program is in session or risk disqualification. Please inform your child's teacher of any circumstances that may cause extended periods of absence.

Since January 1989, the policy at HP Community has been that families are responsible for tuition fees on days when school is in session regardless of whether or not your child attends.

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## REPORTING ABSENCES

Please call or send us a note on Procure the morning your child will be absent so that we may plan our program and/or lunch accordingly. A message can be left at 847-432-3301.

### **Oak Terrace**

Calling us is especially important if your child rides the bus to and from Oak Terrace. Unless we hear from you, we will assume they will be on the bus on their scheduled attendance days.

## WITHDRAWAL

**If you will be withdrawing your child from the program a two week notice is required.** We will use that time to talk with your child about the upcoming change and to allow time for saying goodbye to friends and teachers.

Your tuition balance must be at zero on the first of the month you are planning to leave, or your child will not be able to attend (i.e. you are leaving on May 20 so your tuition is due in full on May 1 before the month you leave).

## ASSESSMENTS

Teaching Strategies GOLD™ is the assessment tool used by HP Community to evaluate identify and track each child's individual development during their time at the center. It is an on-going observation based assessment system, meaning that teachers are continually watching, observing, and documenting what children demonstrate they know and are able to do across a variety of skills and learning domains. each child's development. The information teachers gather from these observations is used to plan activities that are appropriate for each child and support furthering their growth and development while at our program. We also use this information in our meetings and conferences with you.

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## ASSESSMENT PORTFOLIOS

An assessment portfolio is kept for each child. Assessment portfolios contain a variety of items, including photographs, examples of artwork, assessment profiles, and parent-teacher conference forms. Teachers ensure

portfolios are periodically and continuously updated. Families can ask to review their child's portfolio at any time. They are routinely shared during conferences.

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#### CHILD SCREENING POLICY

Highland Park Community Nursery School & Day Care Center conducts screenings as a part of the enrollment process for all children. Parents are asked to complete a copy of the screening tool upon registration. After our office receives your input, you will be notified as to the scoring and how your child appears to be developing according to the screening results. Teachers will meet with you if there are any concerns indicated. The screening may also be administered by trained staff using the Ages and Stages- 3 tool. The screening is conducted in the child's primary language. In some cases, the Ages & Stages -Social Emotional screening tool is also used mid-way during the school year.

All children must be screened at least annually and no later than 60 days after entry into the program.

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#### GUIDANCE & DISCIPLINE

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##### PHILOSOPHY

The educational philosophy at HP Community emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships as avenues for intellectual and social growth as the preschool age child begins to interact independently outside of the family setting. To that end, our guidance and discipline policy reflects our concern with enhancing the child's abilities for success in this endeavor. We view guidance and discipline as another arena through which we can promote a child's growth and development. Our approach to behavioral issues underscores this goal.

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##### HP COMMUNITY DISCIPLINE & GUIDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Every adult who cares for children has a responsibility to guide, correct and socialize children toward appropriate behaviors. These adult actions often are called child guidance and discipline techniques. Positive guidance and discipline are crucial because they promote children's self-control, teach children responsibility, and help children make thoughtful choices. The more effective caregivers are at encouraging appropriate child behavior, the less time and effort adults will spend correcting children's misbehavior.

Effective guidance and discipline focus on the development of the child. They also preserve the child's self-esteem and dignity. Actions that insult or belittle are likely to cause children to view their caregivers negatively, which can inhibit learning and can teach the child to be unkind to others. However, actions that acknowledge the child's efforts and progress, no matter how slow or small, is likely to encourage healthy development. Teaching children self-discipline is a demanding task. It requires patience, thoughtful attention, cooperation, and a good understanding of the child. HP Community staff will use **only** positive guidance techniques.

##### **The following behaviors are prohibited in our program:**

- Corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching and other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear;
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest or use of the bathroom;
- Abusive or profane language;
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment; and
- Any form of emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child.

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##### RESPONDING TO MISBEHAVIOR

##### **Teachers agree to do the following:**

Below are strategies HP Community staff will use to respond to child misbehavior. Remember, however, that it's always a good idea if rules are explained fully and clearly understood before misbehavior occurs. Whenever possible, we involve children in making the rules for the classroom. *Prevention is the best strategy.*

- Determine the causes of misbehavior and try to be proactive in helping the child learn a skill or express themselves
- Use redirection
- Promote choices with [when ...then] statements (“When you put on your shoes, then you can run outside!”)
- Participate in the solution
  - Sometimes institute a “Take a Break” time
  - Analyze possibilities and strategize options for reducing frequent biting (in younger children) or other challenging behaviors.

**I agree, as a parent, to do the following:**

- Attend meetings or communicate with the teachers about issues that may be contributing to children’s challenging behavior (new routines at home, a new sibling, stressors affecting the family, etc.)
- Share observations about a child’s behavior at home and any history in the child’s past that might be contributing to misbehavior.
- If needed, talk to pediatricians or other professionals about developmental or behavioral concerns
- Bring in items from home that might help children with their regulation (soft toy or blanket) ability.

If these actions do not help in reducing or changing behavior the following will take place:

- Staff will report behavior and what strategies have been attempted to the Executive Director and/or Assistant Director.
- The Executive Director and/or Assistant Director will observe the child and meet with the teaching team and family to develop a **behavior management plan**. If the situation warrants, a referral to Early Intervention or Child Find (local school district screening) will be suggested to the parents. Our mental health consultant may also do an observation.
- The behavior management plan will be discussed and documented with the parent and then put into practice for a reasonable amount of time.
- The Executive Director and/or Assistant Director, teaching team, and parents will evaluate the behavior management plan. If needed, adjustments will be made.

\*\* If a child’s behavior becomes threatening to themselves, other children, staff or teachers, the child may be removed from the classroom and possibly the program for a short period of time while a plan is being formed. A behavior plan may be instituted and/or a transition plan to help families find a better suited setting for their child. Our Mental Health Consultant will support these conversations and decisions.

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**REMOVAL OF A CHILD FROM A CLASSROOM FOR BEHAVIOR REASONS:**

Children cannot be removed from the classroom with a teacher as an on-going technique for biting or other challenging behaviors as we do not have extra staff available to maintain correct ratios. In rare instances, children may be brought to the main office and the Executive or Assistant Director will assist the child in calming down and/or help staff manage the classroom.

If at any time a child’s behavior becomes threatening to themselves, other children, staff or teachers, the Executive Director will work with the parents and other professionals to determine a plan moving forward.

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Revised 10.13.22/Approved by Board of Directors 10.26.22



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## OTHER SPECIFIC DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

Written rules for all children are established and available to children, parents, and staff. These rules shall set the limits of behavior required for the protection of the group and individuals. The rules shall be understandable to children, be stated in a positive form whenever possible, pertain to important situations, and be enforceable. We believe that brainstorming and problem-solving around important classroom rules can be an effective learning experience for young children. Consequently, classrooms will post their own rules. The classroom rules (stated in child-friendly ways) may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. People must always speak respectfully to each other,
- b. School property and other people's property must be treated respectfully,
- c. Using physical force of any kind is not allowed,
- d. Children need to move in a safe manner throughout the school,
- e. Good hygiene is always practiced, and table manners are used while eating.

## BITING POLICY

Biting is a behavior that usually appears between the ages of one and three years. While biting is an age-appropriate behavior, it is important to remember it is also an unacceptable behavior in a childcare environment. Children bite for a variety of reasons: teething, sensory exploration, cause and effect, imitation, crowding, seeking attention, frustration, and stress. Biting is not something to blame on children, their parents, or their teachers. There are a variety of strategies we implement at HP Community to prevent and stop biting. This is the process followed when a child bites:

- The biting child is stopped and told, "Stop biting. Biting hurts" in a firm voice. Teachers should remain calm, being careful not to show anger or frustration towards the child.
- The biting child is removed from the situation. Depending upon the observed motive for the bite, the separation may include re-direction or meeting the child's needs. As little attention as possible will be placed on the biting child, to avoid reinforcing the behavior.
- Appropriate first aid will be provided to the child who was bitten. The bite will be washed with soap and water; cold compress will be applied to reduce pain and swelling. A bandage will be applied if necessary.

It is important to explore the reasons for biting when it occurs. Teachers will work with parents to gather information about the child's behavior and begin observations to determine the reasons for biting. Examples of triggers would be communication deficits, transitions, hunger, lack of sleep, need for oral stimulation or teething pain. Once triggers are identified, staff can work on prevention strategies and start teaching replacement skills. Below are the steps the teacher will take to identify triggers and replace the behavior:

1. The teacher will examine the context in which the biting is occurring and look for patterns. The following questions should be asked:
  - Was the space too crowded?
  - Were there too few toys?
  - Was there too little to do or too much waiting?
  - Was the child who bit getting the attention and care they at other times?
2. The teacher will change the environment, routines, or activities if necessary.

3. The teacher will observe the child, to get an idea of why and when they are likely to bite.
4. The teacher will identify children likely to be bitten and make special efforts to reduce their chance of being bitten.
5. The teacher, parent, and Executive Director and/or Assistant Director will meet regularly to regulate an action plan and measure outcomes.
6. If biting continues the teacher will observe the group more closely and work with the parents to seek out additional resources as necessary to shadow the child who is biting.
7. In rare circumstances, parents may be called to come and pick up their child early from school if more than 2 bites happen in a day. We do not always have the one-on-one staff to shadow children to keep the other children safe.

All information is confidential, and the names of the children involved in the incident are not shared between parents. In addition, biting is always documented on an Incident/Accident Report which is completed and signed by a teacher and parent. A copy is provided to the parent and the original kept in the child's permanent enrollment file in the office.

## ADDITIONAL POLICIES

### DIAPERING & TOILET TRAINING

Diapers will be changed every two hours or as soon as a child has a bowel movement. It is the parents' responsibility to provide all diapering supplies including diapers, wipes, and any ointments (to be administered with parent permission form). All supplies should be labeled with the child's first and last name. We will leave you a note on Procure and/or your child's cubby letting you know when you are running low on diapering supplies. If a child runs out of diapers, a fee of \$5.00 per diaper used that is supplied by the center will be assessed and added to your monthly tuition bill. If your child does not have a supply of diapers after 3 days, you may be asked to keep your child at home until diapers are provided. *If you are struggling financially and need help finding a resource for free or reduced diapers, please let the Assistant Director or your teacher know and we will provide resources for free or low cost diapers.*

We look forward to working with children who have demonstrated readiness and shown an interest in toilet training. Please refrain from starting potty training on a weekend, and then send your child in underwear on a Monday without telling the teachers you would like to start potty training first. We would like to meet with you to review our Potty-Training Contract (see Appendix) to ensure collaboration for successful toilet learning.

Interest in potty training is indicated by having a dry diaper after nap and/or for extended periods throughout the day, talking about or interest in using the toilet, some vocabulary or words about potty, etc. The center will follow the parents' lead in terms of timing, language, and process. **Please make a plan with your child's teachers** when you feel your child is ready.

The childcare environment is a very different one than home to learn the routine for potty training. Distractions and resistance to a new bathroom environment contribute to this challenge. ***For health and sanitary purposes, children's bowel movements must be able to be contained in their pants. If they cannot be, a pull-up or other accommodation will need to be worn or a pause in the learning may need to occur.***

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## CLOTHING

Children at school are active and should wear clothing that is comfortable and washable. Clothing should be easy to get on and off to encourage children to dress independently and prevent toileting accidents. Belts are discouraged.

Be sure to send your child in clothing appropriate for outdoor play as children do go outside every day, weather permitting. In winter, please dress them in a coat, hat, mittens, snow pants and boots. Water repellent clothing is recommended for your child's comfort. Please label all clothing sent to school with your child's name. Please provide extra shoes/slippers with soles to be worn in the classroom when boots are necessary for outdoor play. This helps us to keep the center clean, prevents your child from overheating and provides more stable footwear that is appropriate for indoor play.

Sometimes it may be necessary for your child to change their clothes while at school. Please send at least 1 extra set of labeled clothing from home to be kept in their cubby. Wet or soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and hung in your child's cubby. Please be sure to remove the soiled clothing bag, check what was taken from the extra clothing bin in the cubby and return the next day with replacements for the cubby.

Please send your child in rubber soled gym shoes. Sandals, party shoes and flip-flops are not safe for climbing, and do not protect toes from wood chips and wheeled toys.

Sunglasses may be worn outside to provide UV protection from the sun. It is recommended that children also wear a wide brimmed hat.

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## TOYS FROM HOME

Generally, we do not allow children to bring toys from home, as sharing favorite toys can be difficult. However, if you and your child's teachers determine that a "transitional object" between home and school would be helpful for your child's adjustment, we recommend a photo, a book, stuffed animal, doll or small car. Breakable objects, very expensive items, toys composed of many pieces and "superhero" figures are not permitted in the classroom.

Special "loveys" (blanket or stuffed animal) are welcome for children who nap at the center.

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## BIRTHDAY & HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

If celebrating birthdays is one of your family's customs, we are ready to participate too! Some of the ways we do that are celebrating their birthday at school with a variety of customs, which may include singing, a birthday hat, a birthday book etc.

In an effort to be consistent with DCFS and School District 112 policy, we are no longer encouraging families to bring birthday treats to school. Instead, we suggest that you join your child at school for their simple birthday celebration. We suggest the following ideas but are interested to hear if you have one of your own: Perhaps you and your child could select a favorite book that you could read to your child's class as part of the birthday celebration or provide a non-food item from our recommended list of alternatives for birthday celebrations.

To prevent hurt feelings among children we ask that invitations to your child's birthday party at home **NOT** be distributed at school. Instead, we ask that you mail or deliver them to the children's homes. If you plan to

invite most of the children from your child's class, please consider inviting all of the children so that hurt feelings might be spared. A rule of thumb that some parents keep celebrations simple by have found helpful is to invite only the same number of children as the age of the child, e.g. if your child will be turning four, invite four children. A smaller group can be more manageable and result in a more enjoyable time for those involved, especially the birthday child.

Holiday celebrations at HP Community focus on understanding family traditions of celebrating and not celebrating. Our learning goals are to prepare children to live in a diverse society respecting others while also respecting their own traditions. We invite and welcome anyone from a child's family to come and talk about their traditions.

Holiday celebrations at HP Community may include a special food snack that will be distributed in the classroom. This treat will be agreed upon by the classroom teachers and parent volunteers. As always, we ask that good nutritional practices be taken into consideration and that sensitivity is shown to children with known food allergies in the classroom.

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#### PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Please be reminded that parents are responsible for the safety of their children after the teachers leave the playground. We ask that you continue to enforce our playground safety rules while on the premises. In order to accommodate all the classrooms' outdoor/gross motor play times, we discourage families from lingering on the playground and in the gym once the next group of children come into the area.

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#### MANDATED CHILD ABUSE REPORTERS

As childcare professionals who interact with children on a daily basis, each staff member of HP Community is a mandatory child abuse and neglect reporter and must contact the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services whenever abuse or neglect is suspected.

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#### TOBACCO USE

Cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products are prohibited on HP Community premises, including parking lots and outdoor play areas.

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#### FIREARMS AND WEAPONS

Firearms and all other weapons are prohibited.

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#### ACCESS POLICY

Any person in the center who is not a staff member, substitute, or subcontracted staff or volunteer who has had a record check and approval to be involved with childcare **shall not** have unrestricted access to children for whom that person is not the parent, guardian, or custodian, nor be counted in the staff to child ratio.

**Unrestricted access** means that a person has contact with a child alone or is directly responsible for childcare.

Persons who do not have unrestricted access will be under the direct supervision and monitoring of a paid staff member at all times and will not be allowed to assume any childcare responsibilities. The primary responsibility of the supervision and monitoring will be assumed by the Lead Teacher unless they delegate it to another Teacher due to a conflict of interest with the person.

Center staff will approach anyone who is on the property of the center without their knowledge to ask what their purpose is. If a staff member is unsure about the reason, they will contact the Executive Director or Assistant

Director to get approval for the person to be on site. If it becomes a dangerous situation, staff will follow the “Dangerous Adult” procedure. Non-agency persons who are on the property for other reasons such as maintenance, repairs, etc., will be monitored by a paid staff member and will not be allowed to interact with children on the premises.

A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor (even if the sex offender is the parent, guardian or custodian) who is required to register with the Illinois sex offender registry:

- Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer at the childcare center.
- Shall not be on the property of the childcare center without written permission from the Executive Director, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender’s own minor child to and from the center. The Executive Director is not obligated to provide permission and must consult with their DCFS licensing agent first.

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#### SECURITY CAMERAS

Cameras (two with audio) are located in classrooms and other public areas of the school for security purposes. Recorded images will be reviewed in the event our program has a specific need to review them. Recorded information is kept only for 60 days and is stored in a secure location at the school with access by authorized staff only. Information obtained through video monitoring will be used exclusively for safety, security and work-related purposes.

#### CURRICULUM

The curriculum at HP Community includes play-based learning with child-initiated and teacher-directed activities and experiences offered to young children that support and enrich their development physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. HP Community uses the Creative Curriculum for Preschool and Infants, Toddlers and Twos as guides for planning the curriculum in each of its program rooms.

Each classroom has weekly lesson plans, posted in the classroom and on each classroom’s private Facebook page. These plans contain a number of activities, designed to foster each child’s development, and the development of the group. Lesson plans should change to accommodate the children’s changing interests.

Each classroom is set-up in centers, which include blocks, dramatic play, books, gross motor, fine motor, science, math and art. Outdoor play is important to a child’s physical development and must be included in both the morning and afternoon schedule. Self-selection or “free play” is a daily part of the curriculum and means a child can choose which center or activity they participate in. This promotes creative expression and the development of important social skills.

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#### REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO LEARNING

The Reggio Emilia approach focuses on a child's natural development. It’s child-centered and directed, taking the philosophy that learning must make sense to the child in order to be effective and meaningful. A child's point of view is completely respected, and the child is encouraged to follow their own educational path.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy is based upon the following set of principles: children must have some say over what they learn; the senses play a big role in the learning process -- children must be able to touch, move, listen, see and hear in order to fully process something; children are encouraged to interact with other children and

explore the world through material items and relationships; children should be encouraged to always express themselves and be given infinite means and opportunities to do so.

Parental involvement is invited and encouraged. Many parents volunteer in the classroom and employ many of the methods found in the classroom at home. A variety of materials are used -- clay, paint, dramatic play among others.

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#### DAILY SCHEDULE AND ACTIVITIES

Each classroom team works cooperatively to create a daily schedule and plan activities that meet each child's developmental abilities and needs. The daily schedule and activities create a balance between active and quiet times; large and small group, and individual activities; small and large muscle activities; indoor and outdoor play times; as well as times for self-selection and teacher-directed activities.

Consistency from day-to-day is particularly important to the overall well-being of the children and classroom environment. Children **thrive** on consistency! Please try to bring your child into the program by 8:45 AM each day so they are present for the beginning of the day routine or circle time. It is often hard for young children to come in on activities that have already begun.

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#### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The classrooms are arranged in accordance with the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ERS). A copy can be provided for you to review at your request.

Classrooms and hallways are decorated with children's own artwork and photographs of animals, people, food, and pictures of the children themselves and are placed as close to children's eye level as possible. Regular cleaning and maintenance of the classroom is completed daily and helps ensure a healthy environment.

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#### FREE PLAY

“Free play” (also called child-initiated activities, free choice, self-selection) is incorporated into the morning and afternoon schedule. Teachers actively participate with the children during free play activities by asking questions about what the children are doing, participating in their pretend play, reading books when prompted, encouraging children to try new activities or play with a new toy, etc. Free play is another opportunity for a child to grow socially and cognitively through the development of relationships.

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#### OUTDOOR PLAY

There is less structure in an outdoor learning environment; however, staff members actively engage in activities when prompted by the children. Outdoor play is an opportunity for children to run, jump, climb and use their bodies in ways that would otherwise be unsafe in an indoor classroom. In addition, a large amount of social interaction takes place when children play outdoors.

**Children will go outside to play in the winter as long as the weather is above 20 degrees including wind chill. In the summer, we go out even if it is very warm (depending on the humidity and temperature). Please dress your child appropriately.**

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#### NAP/REST TIME

The Illinois Department of Children & Family Services requires that all children be provided with a regularly scheduled nap or rest time. Children will not be forced to sleep but may be encouraged to lie quietly for a period of time. The length of time a child should have to remain resting varies by child. After 45 minutes of resting, children who are not sleeping will have the opportunity to engage in quiet activities.

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## MULTIMEDIA

The use of multimedia in our program is an extension of the teaching and learning that takes place in our classrooms. Children are not required to view part or all of a video or television show, or to play computer games. Instead, the activity is offered as one of several centers. All multimedia must be appropriate for the ages of the children, have a rating of “G” or “E” and must possess an educational theme. Computer time lasts for short durations of time, not more than 10 minutes per child per day.

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## WEAPONS/VIOLENT PLAY/BULLYING

There is a strict policy of allowing no weapon play at HP Community. Children are not permitted to play with weapons of any type or size or to pretend that other items are weapons, including their fingers, hands, or blocks. Redirection should be used when a child is engaging in weapon or violent play. If a child brings a weapon to the center, the weapon should be placed out of sight and sent home the same day with a note explaining the policy about weapons.

Competitive behavior is minimized in our programs. In young children, competition often increases negative behavior and decreases acceptance of others. Bullying is not considered acceptable behavior; We actively teach children how to be a friend, how to solve social problems and appropriate ways to interact with others.

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## PETS & VISITING ANIMALS

HP Community has an onsite comfort dog named Ruthie. Ruthie is fully immunized and is checked by the vet annually. She resides in the Executive Director’s office until a child needs comforting. Teachers have the option of having Ruthie visit their classroom for short visits.

Staff may introduce a class pet to the classroom. Pets and visiting animals that are brought into the classroom must be carefully considered for their temperament, health risks, and appropriateness for young children. No animal may be brought into the center without first notifying and receiving permission from the Executive Director or Assistant Director. Once approved by the Executive Director or Assistant Director pets and visiting animals must have documentation from a licensed veterinarian or animal shelter to show that the animal(s) is fully immunized and that the animal is suitable for contact with children.

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## FIELD TRIPS

HP Community offers a variety of experiences both at and away from the center. Field trips are a creative way to enrich a project and expand the learning environment. Parents must complete a “Field Trip Permission Form” for field trips requiring transportation. Walking field trips are approved as part of the intake interview process. These forms can be obtained from the Executive Director and/or Assistant Director. Parents must be notified at least one week before the planned field trip.

As a participant in our program, your child may participate in short, unannounced field trips including but not limited to walks as a class around the perimeter of the building and/or nearby neighborhoods; trips to local parks; trips to local businesses. Teacher-child ratios are maintained at all times. Parents sign off on a general “Parent/Guardian Permission” form at enrollment for this type of field trip.

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## FEEDBACK/WORKING TOGETHER

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### ANNUAL SURVEY

Your feedback and observations about how we can make our program better are very important to us. Each year in December, we conduct a family satisfaction survey. Please take the time to fill that out and let us know how we are doing or what we might do to improve our program. We use the information we gather from that survey

to guide us in our strategic planning process as well as annual goal setting. Once we tally the results, we share them with the Board of Directors and present our findings to the families.

The staff and Executive Director is always open to hearing from you by email, phone call or Procare note.

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#### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

We ask that any areas of concern be addressed to our staff in whichever way you are most comfortable. It is best if parents are to first meet with their child's teacher regarding any issue. Then, if they still feel the issue has not been resolved, then the parents should feel free to speak with the Director regarding the issue. After discussing the issue, the Executive Director may then schedule a meeting with the teacher and parents to resolve any outstanding issues.



## POTTY LEARNING AGREEMENT

Dear Families,

Potty training is an exciting time for you and your child. We have found throughout our experience, that if your child is ready to master potty learning, it will only take a few weeks. If it takes longer, they may not be ready and we may want to try it again a little later. We want this to be a successful time in your child's life, not a frustrating one for all. We know that in order for this to be successful we need to partner together for your child's best interest.

The following are a few of the signs you might see at home or we see when your child may be ready to potty learn:

- Shows an interest in the toilet
- Can recognize when their diaper is wet or soiled.
- Stays dry for a long period of time
- Can undress and pull up his/her own pants
- Wants to be independent
- Can use consistent words or gestures to communicate.
- Can try to wipe themselves.

Once your child stays dry for several hours and uses the toilet on their request, it's time to start!

HP Community Staff will agree to:

- Encourage, support and praise all success that your child achieves during their potty training experience.
- We will expect accidents and treat them as teachable moments. We will watch for and identify signals that may help us make it on time next time as well as encourage children to be independent in changing their own clothes.
- We will take children to the bathroom at regularly scheduled times during each day and on demand when necessary.
- Communicate to parents daily regarding our bathroom experiences. This communication will come in a way as a personal conversation or writing on the child's daily note.
- Commit up to 1 month to the process of potty training unless parents inform us that the experience is not able to be a positive one at this time.

Parent's agree to:

- Provide at least 3 changes of clothes, including pants, underwear and socks **daily**. Please have an extra pair of shoes in their cubby as well. Soiled clothing will go in the child's cubby to be taken home.
- Have their child wear elastic waist clothes.** No buttons, snaps, belts, or one piece clothing. Leggings, sweat pants and elastic waist pants are best. No dresses for girls, it's hard to coordinate holding up the dress and sitting on the toilet at the same time. The children should be able to easily pull up and down their own clothing.
- Potty training should begin at home the weekend before we start the process at school.

- We ask that underwear rather than pull-ups be worn, as pull ups don't let the child "feel" wet.
- Provide diapers for nap time.
- On the weekends and time with you, you will also be consistently taking them to the bathroom and encouraging them to go to the bathroom at home.
- Let us know the words you are using for body parts, urination and bowel movements.

Many people believe children need "material rewards" such as sticker charts or candy to learn how to potty. We have found that once the child is ready and sees how excited we all are for them to accomplish this task that is all they need for reinforcement. We will give a child a high five or sing a silly "potty song" that makes them smile and is very encouraging!

We will communicate with the family as to how potty training is going. We will potty train for a period of 3-4 weeks and then assess how the child is doing. If we are not feeling that the child is ready, we will put them back into diapers and try again at a later date. If the child is ready, it should only take a few weeks!

When this signed agreement is returned, we will start the potty training process here at school. Sincerely,

HP Community Staff

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## FAMILY HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Please sign and return this page to the office or your intake teacher.

I/We have read and agree to abide by the policies of HP Community as specified in the Family Handbook.

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Signature of Parent/Guardian

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Date Signed

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Signature of Parent/Guardian

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Date Signed

