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**Sample Parent Handbook**

**NOTE: All items in red are required by licensing. Make sure you are reviewing your copy of the ND Rule while you create your program’s handbook. These are suggestions for creating your document and it is your responsibility to tailor it to align with your own program and be knowledgeable of the content. Additional resources and forms can be found at www.ndchildcare.org**

**Cover Sheet**

**Write an Introduction**

**Part One: About the Program**

**Mission/Philosophy**

* Your mission statement should be clearly defined. What is your purpose and what are your goals for the children and families in your program?

**Hours/Days of Operation**

* List your program’s hours of operation, holidays and days closed

**Hiring Policy**

* List the hiring practices/policies for staff
  + Educational requirements
  + Continuing education requirements
  + All staff must have CPR and First Aid
* How you obtain references and employment histories of staff members
  + All staff are background checked and fingerprinted
* Staff under the age of 18 will not be left alone with children and must always be supervised by an adult
* Discuss the methods of performance evaluations

**Grievance Procedure**

* Explain your process for handling complaints/concerns
  + Example: If you have any concerns or complaints about the program, please address them with the director as soon as possible. If you have a serious complaint that you feel is not being addressed, you may contact the licensing specialist,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (insert name and phone number)

**Mandated Reporter**

* Licensing requires all staff members are mandated reporters and they will report any suspected child abuse or neglect as required by North Dakota Century Code 50-25.1-03.

**Liability Insurance**

* Explain that liability insurance is a licensing requirement (center license only) your program meets.

**Media Release**

* It is recommended to have a written permission form on file for all children to have their picture taken. Pictures of the children are taken quite often for room display, bulletin boards or sometimes social media. Children cannot be photographed without a permission form from their parent/guardians.
* All records and information with respect to children, families and staff are kept confidential

**Visitors**

* Explain your policy for allowing visitors in the building such as all visitors are required to check in, so staff know who is always in the building.
* Explain that parents have unlimited access and at times may need to alert the program they would like to come in dependent on what may be going on in the program/community.

**Part Two: Enrollment**

**Eligibility**

* List the ages of the children you accept. Note that you do not deny enrollment based on race, creed, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

**Enrollment Requirements**

* Pre-admission visits must be provided to parent(s)/guardian(s) to view the facility and discuss the policies. Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be provided with written notice of any significant changes in services or policies.
* You may wish to start each contract with a *(define length)* probationary period and both parties evaluate if the program is the best fit for the program/child/family.
* List the required forms that need to be completed prior to attendance. Also note that these forms will be updated annually. (Make note that all records are kept confidential.)
  + Immunization records
  + Child Information Sheet
  + Birth Certificate/Passport (must verify identification of children in care)
  + Parent Statement of Health
  + Food Program Form (release of information form must be available and signed prior to the release of information)
  + Enrollment form
  + Parent Consent Forms (Infant Sleep Permission Form, Water Activity Permission Form, Field Trip Form, Medication, etc.) Forms available on Child Care Aware of ND website
* All records and information with respect to children, families and staff are kept confidential

**Responsibilities of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)**

* Children’s Arrival and Parent/Guardian Departure
  + Parent’s/Guardians need to notify program of any changes in schedule
  + Offer suggestions on successfully dropping off or picking up children
  + List procedure for arrival and departure (parent/guardian/approved adult must walk child to and from the facility at arrival and departure, helping them with their coats, helping them wash their hands, verbal exchange with the staff required at both arrival and departure to ensure staff are aware child has arrived or is departing).
  + Explain where people should park. (designated parent parking spots, not in front of building blocking sidewalks, keeping sidewalk open so people that are entering and exiting the parking lot can see children that may be crossing, and remind everyone to enter and exit parking lot with caution.)
  + Parent/Guardian should remove the infant from the car seat as well as any outerwear upon arrival.
  + Upon departure parent/guardian should place their own child in their car seat and secure the car seat safety straps.
  + If the program suspects the person picking up the child is under the influence, program will call one of the alternative people listed to transport the child.
  + Explain the importance of signing in and out
    - Explain the sign in/out procedure. Consider using an electronic system for more accurate and consistent information.
* Authorization to Pick Up Child(ren)
  + Only authorized the people listed on your Child Information Sheet may pick up the child(ren) from the program. Please notify me of any contact information changes.
  + Explain your process to release the child(ren) to adults not on the list and that they will be asked for a photo ID before releasing the child(ren).
  + If there is a court order (such as a divorce settlement or restraining order) that limits the rights of one of the child’s biological parents to drop-off/pick-up child(ren), you must provide the program with a copy of that court order.
  + Determine if you have an age requirement for picking up child(ren) (example: Must be 18 years or older).
  + Follow North Dakota car safety restraint laws
* Parent/Guardian and Staff Communication
  + Identify where parent/guardian information boards are located. It is recommended to have an information board for each classroom to communicate with parent/guardians and a program information board located near the entrance of the building for general information.
  + List other forms of communication such as newsletters, e-mails, texting, etc.
  + All parent/guardians should be asked to refrain from using their cell phones during arrival and departure time.
* Required Supplies
  + Explain that the parent/guardian is responsible for providing extra clothing (appropriate size and for the season) for each child in case they become soiled.
  + List all required supplies need for child(ren). Ex. Diapers, bottles, wipes, etc.

**Fees**

* Rates and any applicable fees should be included in your contract
  + Rate per child (full-time, part-time, drop-in)
  + Advance payment for the last two weeks of care
  + Additional fees such as late pick up, late payments, NSF
  + Supplemental fees such as transportation, deposits, holding fees, field trips, curriculum, registration fee, food
* Payment Policy
  + List when tuition fees are due (it is recommended payment is made prior to receiving care)
  + List types of payments that are accepted (check, credit card, automatic transfer)
  + List the appropriate name checks need to be made out too and where checks can be dropped off
* Sick and Vacation Allowance
  + Explain your program’s vacation/sick days and how many each client receives
  + Explain if vacation time must be in consecutive days or can be daily increments
* Waiting List
  + Explain your waiting list procedure. List any applicable fees/deposits
  + If you have a priority policy for employees and currently enrolled families for the waiting list, it is important to note that
* Late Pick-up / Arriving Early
  + Explain your programs late pick/early arrival policy (if a fee is charged, the amount, when the fee starts, when it must be paid)
  + Define your policy if it continually happens
* Termination Policy
  + Client
    - Client has the right to terminate but must give a two-week notice. Payment is due for the notice period whether the child(ren) attends or not.
    - Client has termination rights if they feel the safety of their child(ren) is in jeopardy. Parent(s)/guardian(s) do not need to give a two-week notice, pay for the two-week period and the advance payment is refunded in this case.
  + Program
* Program may terminate the contract at will. If the two-week payment was collected in advance, the program must either offer care or refund the payment.
* Program reserves the right to terminate immediately if the client does not meet contract and policy obligations.

**Schedules**

* Attendance
  + Explain whether the family will be billed for days the child(ren) are scheduled due to vacation/ illness.
* Changing Schedule
  + Explain how much time you will need in advance for any change in schedule. It is also recommended to not guarantee that the change in schedule can be met but instead will be evaluated on a case by case need.

**Storm Days**

* Explain your procedure for storm days. (How and when parent/guardians will be notified, and how the decision is made to close ex. follow school closings)

**Part Three: Program Policies and Procedures**

**Curriculum Overview**

* If your program follows a curriculum, please explain it here.
* The program provides written daily routines of individual or small group activities appropriate to age and needs of children. The program must include activities that foster social, intellectual, emotional, and physical growth.

**Daily Reports**

* Parents may request daily reports for their child/children, including details regarding eating, napping, and diapering

**Daily Schedule**

* Include a copy of room’s daily schedules
* It is recommended that at the infant/toddler age daily schedules are very flexible and used for a guideline.
* Daily schedule will be posted in each classroom
* The daily routine fosters development of good health habits, self-discipline, adequate indoor/outdoor play, rest/sleep, and mealtimes with opportunity for various experiences.
* The environment protects children from physical harm without restricting physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. Environment and interactions requirements are complied with and reviewed.

**Program Activities**

* List any additional activities your program offers.

**Supervision**

* Supervision means a staff member responsible for caring for/teaching children being within sight or hearing range of an infant, toddler or preschooler at all times so the staff member is capable of intervening to protect the health and safety of the child. For the school-age child it means a staff member being available for assistance and care so that the child’s health and safety is protected. It is recommended to have children within sight AND hearing for all ages.
* Ensure that children do not depart from the child care premises unsupervised, except when the parent and provider consent that an unsupervised departure is safe and appropriate for the age and development of the child. The provider shall obtain written parental consent for the child to leave the child care premises unsupervised, which must specify the activity, time the child is leaving and length of time the child will be gone, method of transportation and parental responsibility for the child once the child leaves the child care premises.

**Guidance & Discipline Policy**

* Explain how your program focuses on positive guidance. Licensing requires you have a written policy regarding discipline and that plan be interpreted to staff before they begin working with children.
* List items that will not occur in your program
  + Examples could be any type of physical punishment, withholding things such as food, physical restraints (cannot use highchairs, pack and plays, or other restrictive environment), etc.

**Transition of Children**

* Explain when children will be transitioned to the next age group (i.e. based on chronological age, staffing and maturity of child). You may want to explain that parent/guardian wishes are always respected but may not always be granted due to the above.

**Personal Possessions**

* Explain the programs storage of personal belongings and how storage is labeled
* Explain your policy for toys brought from home. Most programs do not allow this due to the possibility of the toy being broken or misplaced. The exception to this rule could be nap or comfort item or toys brought specifically for show and share

**Transportation**

* Explain your transportation policy if you provide any type of transportation. If you do not transport, it needs to be stated that no transportation is your policy.
* Let families know children will never be left in a vehicle unattended
* Let families know, if transporting, children will be placed in age appropriate, compliant child safety restraint.
* Explain the insurance coverage your program carries if transporting and any additional program policies such as all drivers will be over the age of 18.

**Accountability Policy**- Program must establish procedures for when a child(ren) fails to arrive as expected

* If the child(ren) will not be attending or is going to be more than 10 minutes late, you must notify the program. The director/staff member **(program designates responsibility**) will call the parent/guardian or emergency designee if the parent/guardian cannot be reached.

**Field Trips**

* If your program will be going on periodic field trips explain the permission slip policy and any fees for the field trip.
* Explain how children will be transported to/from field trips (walking/driving).
* It is our policy that staff will take along a first aid kit, recent photo of each child, emergency contact information and any emergency medication and a copy of the care plan for children with special needs.

**Pets and Animals**

* The operator shall ensure parent/guardians are aware of the presence of pets and animals in the child care.
* The operator shall ensure that the child care is in compliance with all applicable state and local ordinances regarding the number, type, and health status of pets or animals.

**Part Four: Health and Safety**

**Incident Policy**

* Explain when first aid will be administered or when incident reports will be written up, when parent/guardians will be called and when emergency services will be called.
* Let parent/guardians know incident report forms are required within 24 hours of incident and recommended it be signed by the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian receives a copy and a copy placed in the child’s file.

**Emergency Procedures**

* The program will determine if they will shelter in place or seek shelter in an alternate location. and document on SFN 517 form and post for parents to view.
* Be sure to cover how you will communicate with families, what has happened, and how parents/guardians should proceed.
* Program follows state guidelines for emergency drills
* It is always recommended for children to keep shoes on in case of emergency

**Children with Special Needs**

* Explain that all children with diagnosed special health needs are required by licensing to have a current written health care plan signed by a parent/guardian or physician (should be updated yearly).
* Emergency medication and/or equipment included in a child’s care plan should be provided by the parent, so it is available when the child is in care. If not provided program will need to call 911 or have an emergency plan in place.

**Immunization Policy**

* Licensing requires that children be up to date with their immunizations or have a valid exemption.
* Discuss the program policy concerning unimmunized children. It is recommended to consult an attorney to discuss liability risk.
* If a vaccine preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs at the program, it is recommended for unimmunized children to be excluded for the duration of the possible exposure.

**Guidelines for Exclusion**

* Exclusion is recommended when the child is no longer able to comfortably participate in activities or the child needs greater care than the child care staff can provide, therefore compromising the health and safety of the other children, fever above 100.4 with behavior changes, when stool cannot be contained in diaper, with two or more episodes of vomiting within the last 24 hours and abdominal pain. For information on specific illness exclusion please refer to the resources at [www.ndchildcare.org](http://www.ndchildcare.org).
* Explain that your program can override a health care provider’s orders based on your program’s policies.
* Parents must notify the program when child is ill.
* Explain procedure that will be followed if children become ill while at the program.

**Medication Policy**

* Explain your medication policy by listing whether you will distribute medication as needed or only distribute life-saving medicine required by health care plans.
* Written parental permission to give prescription, over-the-counter medication, and over-the-counter products is required. It is recommended to obtain written instructions from a health care provider in addition to the written parental permission to administer prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications.
* Explain to parent/guardian that medication should be given to staff and should not be left in diaper bags/backpacks or placed in cubbies.
* Programs should only accept medication in its original container that is labeled with child's name.
* Expired medication should not be given.
* The program will include completed medication records in the child’s file.

**Outdoor Policy**

* Share your outdoor policy according to the day’s outdoor temperature. National Standards for Child Care recommend that children are taken outside when temperatures are above 15 degrees F (wind chill or temperature) and below 90 degrees F (heat index). Use caution when temperature/wind chill is 0-15 degrees F.
* Recommend a health care provider’s written order if parents request that their child does not go outside for play.
* Explain that parents are responsible for providing weather appropriate clothing and shoes (rubber soled, closed toe, back strap, etc.) for active play.

**Aquatic Policy**

* If program participates in aquatic activities, program must have written parental/guardian permission and a description of the child’s swimming ability in writing before the program will allow a child to participate in aquatic activities. If not participating, it needs to be stated your program does not participate.
* List all types of water play/aquatic activities provided at the child care program (ex. swimming, wading, sprinklers, field trips to pools, etc.)
* State staff-to-child ratios during aquatic activities/water play
* State additional safety precautions that the program will take regarding aquatic activities/water play. Ex. Staff will not be involved in any activity other than directly supervising the child(ren) during water play; children will always be kept in sight during water play.

**Meals and Snacks**

* Explain how meals are prepared (onsite or catered)
* Infants should be fed on demand. A written order from the infant’s physician is recommended for alternative feeding instructions.
* Food supplied must meet USDA requirements
* Daily or weekly menus are posted
* Adaptations concerning special food requirements and request from parents.
* Children are encouraged to eat but coercion or force feeding is never allowed
* Discuss how food allergies will be handled and posted.
* Let families know if your program practices family style dining
* Discuss rules for food brought from home (special diet, special events, birthdays)
* Notify parents if program participates in food program

**Toilet Training**

* It is recommended to have a discussion with parent/guardian before starting toilet training. It is important to consider if the child is developmentally/physically ready, (toileting readiness checklist), and the importance of consistency between home and child care, etc.
* It is important to ask parent/guardian to provide several changes of clothing as well as undergarments in case of accidents.
* It is not recommended to allow underwear until the child has mastered toileting. Sanitary conditions cannot be maintained if children are having more than an occasional toileting accident while at child care.

**Nap and Rest Time Policy**

* List nap/rest time schedule for children. Let families know which items are supplied by your program. Discuss items families are responsible to supply. Let families know how nap items are stored and that they will be responsible to wash them at least weekly unless otherwise soiled.
* Licensing requires space be provided for quiet play for children who do not nap.
* Recommend acquiring parent/guardian permission to rub child/children’s back during rest time.

**Infant Sleep Policy**

* Explain that all infants under the age of 12 months will be placed completely flat on their backs for sleep in a safety approved crib or pack and play. The infant’s face must remain uncovered when sleeping. If parents request their infant is placed in an alternate sleep position or in another device/equipment for sleep, parents must provide a written order from a health care provider. If parents request their infant is placed in an alternate sleep position or in another device/equipment for sleep, parents must provide a written order from a health care provider stating justification for the request.
* If an infant falls asleep while not in a crib or pack and play, the infant must be moved immediately to crib or pack and play.
* Explain that licensing requires written parental permission to use a blanket, sleep sack, security item, or pacifier.
* Licensing requires regular visual checks and a monitor in the room with the infants when they are sleeping unless a staff member is in the room. It is recommended to conduct visual checks every 10-15 minutes.

**The Signatures of the Parties to the Program Policies**

* By signing these policies, clients indicate that they have also read the provider’s policies and agree to follow them.
* Failure to enforce one or more of the terms does not waive the provider’s right to enforce any other terms of this agreement.

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Director’s Name (print) Signature Date

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Parent/Guardian Name (print) Signature Date

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Parent/Guardian Name (print) Signature Date

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Co-signer’s signature\* Date

\*A co-signer is required if the client is under the age of 18.

**Attention parents.**

**Licensing requires all parents to be given a copy of our program parent handbook.**