



## Family Handbook

926 Noyes Street  
Evanston, IL 60201  
847-869-7170

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

*Unity Preschool lays a foundation for success by providing children with a family-centered, play-based learning environment where their natural curiosity and interests inspire our curriculum and activities.*

# WELCOME TO UNITY PRESCHOOL

Unity Preschool is a not-for-profit preschool with a tradition of more than 60 years of providing early education to children of Evanston and the surrounding area. Unity is a part-day developmental preschool governed by a parent Board of Directors.

Unity is licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Other affiliations include the Evanston Early Childhood Council and the Childcare Network of Evanston. In addition, Unity works with Evanston/Skokie District 65, Oakton Community College, Northwestern University, and the Noyes Cultural Center

**Unity Preschool admits students of any race, color, gender identity and expression, national or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender identity and expression, national or ethnic origin in administration of our educational or admission policies. Unity Preschool is an equal opportunity employer.**

## OUR PHILOSOPHY

Unity Preschool provides a warm, inviting environment for children to develop socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. The emphasis is on building relationships with other children and adults in a happy, safe and stimulating setting. Creating a positive self-image for the child is of primary importance. Within the context of play, comes growth and learning.

The design of our program and the arrangement of our three classrooms encourage choices and decision making by offering a wide variety of activities and materials. Each room provides experiences with small manipulative toys, art, music, block play, sand and water play, dramatic play, science, and literature. The schedule provides opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, quiet and active, large muscle and small muscle, child initiated and staff initiated and opportunities for play as individuals, in small groups or in large groups.

Our curriculum is planned around the interests of the children within each classroom. We promote developmentally appropriate practices and the activities are planned with the skill level of each child in mind. Our curriculum goals include introducing children to simple conflict resolution skills and encouraging children to think, reason and experiment. We also emphasize an anti-bias perspective which means that we help children learn to identify and challenge prejudice and stereotyping. Unity is also committed to being good stewards of our planet by reducing, reusing and recycling as much as possible.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A Board of Directors governs Unity Preschool and is composed of current and past parents/caregivers or community members with an interest in Unity. This Board sets policy and works in conjunction with the Director, who is in charge of the day to day operations of the school. Parents are invited to attend Board meetings, and the dates of these meetings are published in the monthly newsletter. Minutes from the board meetings will be available via email upon request. The names and phone numbers of all board members are available in the Unity office. Please feel free to contact them with any questions.

## COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Community Council, consisting of parents/caregivers of Unity students, meets monthly and is responsible for organizing social and fundraising events for Unity. Parents are invited to attend Community Council meetings, and the dates and times of these meetings are also published in the monthly newsletter.

## CLASS OFFERINGS

Unity offers classes for children ages 2-5 with a variety of options available for days of attendance. Classes are all 9:15-11:45am, Monday-Friday. Parents may choose which days of the week their child attends, space permitting.

## DAILY SCHEDULE

As a developmental preschool, we believe that children learn through play experiences. Each component of the day provides children with a chance to interact with adults, other children, and enjoy a wide variety of experiences. We consider these play experiences to be a child's work. The components of the day include: Free play, teacher-directed art or science activities, clean up, group circle time, snack, and large motor activities.

## ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

Registration for families of current Unity students/siblings and former Unity students/siblings and new families begins each year in January. Applications are processed on a first come, first served basis. If there are more applicants than spaces available, a waiting list is maintained for each class, ordered by the date/time the application is received. Unity maintains age requirements for each class, and maintains limits on group size for each class. Children must be 2 before attending Unity Preschool.

## HOURS

All classes meet from 9:15 to 11:45 from the beginning of September to the end of May.

## EARLY BIRD DROP OFF

Unity offers an early drop off option. Children may be dropped off as early as 8:30. Children will play with teacher supervision for 45 minutes before school begins. They will then be taken to their classroom, or to the park, at 9:15. Early drop off enrollment is by semester. The fee must be paid for each committed day that school is in session, whether the child attends or not. Parents may sign up for an occasional drop in day, space permitting. See the Early Bird form for details.

## LUNCH BUNCH ENRICHMENT

The lunch bunch program is offered as an enrichment opportunity for children who are 2.5 years old as a service for parents. The hours are 11:45 am-2:15 pm. Children may enroll from one to five days a week, Monday-Friday.

Enrollment commitment is in three month periods with the same for billing. The fee must be paid for each committed day that school is in session whether your child attends the lunch session or not. You may not swap a lunch bunch if your child cannot attend a particular day. Parents may sign up for an occasional drop in day (space permitting) at an additional cost. See the Lunch Bunch Enrichment form for details.

Children should bring their lunch from home, including a drink. **Please remember that Unity Preschool does not allow nuts or foods containing nuts.** We will refrigerate all lunches by 10:15 am. Please label your child's lunch.

## TUITION POLICY

A non-refundable deposit of \$100.00 is due upon registration. Tuition for the upcoming school year may be paid in one annual payment, four equal installments, or nine equal payments. Invoices will be emailed and also can be accessed via brightwheel.

Since our operating expenses are relatively fixed before school begins, there are no refunds given for time missed because of extended illness or vacation. If a student drops from our preschool program, our refund policy is as follows:

### TUITION WITHDRAWAL POLICY

If a student withdraws by:

- May 31st, one (1) month's tuition is non-refundable
- June 30th, two (2) months' tuition is non-refundable
- July 31st, three (3) months' tuition is non-refundable
- October 31st, four (4) months' tuition is non-refundable
- November 30th, five (5) months' tuition is non-refundable
- After December 31st, there are no tuition refunds

This schedule will be changed for children who enrolled after May 1.

### LATE PAYMENT POLICY

If tuition is not paid by the due date, a late fee of \$25.00 may be charged. If tuition is two months in arrears, a late fee of \$50.00 may be charged. If tuition is three months in arrears, the child's enrollment may be revoked.

### RETURNED CHECKS

All returned checks will be charged at the rate of the bank processing fee.

## TUITION ASSISTANCE POLICY

The tuition assistance policy of Unity reflects the school's commitment to embracing the diverse population of the greater Evanston community. Awarding financial aid to families with need broadens the socioeconomic base of the school and allows us to reach out to people who would otherwise be unable to participate in our program. For a complete copy of the tuition assistance policy and/or an application, please contact the director.

## CALENDAR AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Unity generally follows the same calendar as District 65, with a few differences. Please refer to the Unity calendar for specific holidays and school closings. A copy of the school calendar is posted on the bulletin board in the common area of the school and is also available on the school website: [www.unitypreschoolevanston.com](http://www.unitypreschoolevanston.com). Please take time to post school holidays on your home calendars. When District 65 closes due to inclement weather, we will be closed as well. Unity may also be closed at the discretion of the director or board if safety is an issue. Families will be notified via brightwheel app and email if school is closed. Additional days are built into the calendar in case of school closing.

## PARKING AT SCHOOL

When you are dropping off or picking up your child, you may utilize Maple Street, south of Noyes or metered parking on Noyes or at the Noyes Cultural Center Parking Lot. Please obey all parking signage.

## CARPOOLS

If your child will be part of a carpool, please make sure that your child understands each day's arrangements and knows who is picking up. A note detailing carpool plans should also be given to your child's teachers. Please add any approved pickups to your child's brightwheel account prior to them picking up your child. If teachers do not recognize the approved pickup, they may ask for a photo ID before releasing your child.

## DROP OFF AND PICK UP

**Saplings (2/3s)** Drop off and pick up are at the main Unity door unless otherwise arranged/notified via brightwheel. Please be sure to communicate special pick up permissions in advance. Your child's teacher will have a QR code for sign in and sign out via brightwheel.

**Pawpaws (3/4s) and Sassafra (4/5s)** Will meet at Tallmadge Park in front of the Noyes Cultural Center as weather permits. Please dress appropriately, as we will generally favor beginning with gross motor outdoor play so long as the wind chill is above 19 F. On days with poor weather conditions, the teachers will notify of drop off at the classroom door via brightwheel by 9 am. Pick up is at the classroom door. Please be sure to communicate special pick up permissions in advance. Your child's teacher will have a QR code for sign in and sign out via brightwheel. daily sign in and sign out list for your signature

## LATE PICK UP

Please be prompt in picking up your child at the end of the school day. Please call the school and send a message via brightwheel if you will be late in picking up your child.

In the event that you are 10 minutes late for pick up at the end of class or the end of Lunch Bunch, we will call your home and then your emergency phone numbers listed in your child's file until we are able to locate someone who is authorized to pick your child up. At 11:55 your child may be brought to the lunch bunch room to wait until your arrival. The late pick-up fee is \$10.00.

If you are frequently late (more than three times in a month) the director will contact you to discuss making alternative arrangements for pick up or changing the child's school schedule (if space is available on other days).

## SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

**Unity is a smoke-free and gun-free facility.**

### CAR SAFETY

Current state laws require that all children up to their 8th birthday must be secured in an appropriate child restraint system (a car seat or booster that meets NHTSA safety standards). All other passengers and drivers must wear seat belts. We encourage you to observe these laws and make sure children are settled and secure before starting your car. When dropping off and picking up your

child, it is safest to have children enter and exit from the curbside of the car. Please do not leave siblings in the car while dropping off your other children. Help us impress upon your child the importance of caution when near or crossing a street.

### **UNITY SCHOOL EMERGENCY PLANS**

Fire and Disaster Emergencies: Fire and emergency drills will be planned by the director and conducted during each full month in operation. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. Teachers are responsible for guiding children out of the building and for having their attendance clipboard in their possession. One designated staff member will be responsible for having the class phone that holds all emergency information for each child in the class.

This will be used to call parents in the case of a real emergency or disaster. Children will be evacuated to the Noyes Cultural Center across the street from 926 Noyes. An all-school message via brightwheel will be sent out as soon as the children's safety is secured. A notice will be posted at the school entrance identifying the emergency site.

### **MEDICAL EMERGENCIES**

In the event of a medical emergency, a staff member will call 911. Whenever possible, a staff member will accompany a child who must be transported to the hospital. Every effort will be made to contact the child's parent or guardian. Failing that, an effort will be made to contact a person listed as an emergency contact. In case of extreme emergency and in the event that the parent cannot be reached, parents are required to give permission on the Unity Authorization form to authorize whatever treatments are deemed necessary by the attending physician and to agree to any expenses incurred.

## **HEALTH INFORMATION**

### **ABSENCES**

Please let us know if your child will be absent via a message on brightwheel. If your child has been absent for several days we will call you if we have not heard from you.

### **MEDICAL**

All forms required by law must be in a child's file in the school office prior to the first day of school. The forms include the following:

- Child & Family History Form
- Certificate of Child Health Examination (from your child's pediatrician)
- Medication and Emergency Care Authorization Form
- General Release Form
- Copy of Child's Birth Certificate

The Certificate of Child Health Examination must include a lead test with results recorded, a TB test and results if indicated by the examining physician, and the physician's and the parent's signature. Every two years a new Certificate of Child Health Examination must be completed. It is also the policy of Unity that children must be fully immunized and the dates must be recorded on their medical form. In accordance with the Child Care Act a parent may request that immunizations, physical examinations and/or medical treatment be waived on religious grounds. Beginning in October 2015, the Illinois Department of Public Health requires that any parents opting out of any immunizations must submit a Certificate of Religious Exemption to the school authority/director of the preschool. Required immunizations include: measles, mumps, rubella, Haemophilus influenza B, Hepatitis B, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, and varicella (chicken pox).

### **BIRTH CERTIFICATE**

DCFS requires all families to: provide us with a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age of child.

### **ILLNESS**

Please check your child every morning for signs or symptoms of illness and use judgment in sending your child to school. Do not send a sick or overtired child to school. When a child's resistance is low, they are more susceptible to illness. A fresh cold, sore throat, or upset stomach can infect an entire class, including the teachers. We therefore ask you to keep children home if they appear ill.

Unity will continue to follow all DCFS and IDPH recommendations surrounding Covid-19 and other highly contagious communicable diseases. Please communicate directly with your child's teacher or director [director@unitypreschoolevanston.com](mailto:director@unitypreschoolevanston.com) regarding absences for sick symptoms. PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL OF THESE REQUIREMENTS AS MANY OF OUR FAMILIES HAVE YOUNG INFANTS OR IMMUNOCOMPROMISED AND VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS.

# WAIT!

## Check your child's symptoms before child care drop off.

American Academy  
of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



Did your child or anyone in your household have any of these symptoms in the last 24 hours?

- ☐ A fever over 100.4 degrees F
- ☐ Shortness of breath
- ☐ A cough
- ☐ Chills
- ☐ Muscle pain
- ☐ Headache
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ New loss of taste or smell
- ☐ Congestion or runny nose
- ☐ Nausea or vomiting
- ☐ Diarrhea

If you checked any of these, please keep your child home and call your pediatrician.

Children will be sent home if they do not seem healthy upon arrival, become ill at school, or report having been ill within the past 24 hours.

#### Guidelines for keeping your child at home

- If your child has an excessively runny nose
- If your child has diarrhea
- If your child has vomited within the last 24 hours
- If your child has a croupy cough
- If your child has a fever (even a low grade fever), temperature of 100.4F or above.
- If your child is overly tired
- If your child has a sore throat
- If your child has a contagious disease (often a child is most contagious at the beginning of an illness)

#### Guidelines for returning to school after an illness (the minimum 24 hour rule):

- If your child had chickenpox: after all pox scab over (1 week minimal)
- If your child had diarrhea: when there are no loose stools for 24 hours
- If your child had a fever: after being fever-free for 24 hours if the fever never reached 100.4F
- If your child had head lice: the morning after the first treatment
- If your child had pinworms: 24 hours after treatment
- If your child had open sores (impetigo): after sores are no longer draining and treatment has begun
- After your child has been on an antibiotic for a full 24 hour period and symptoms have subsided
- If your child had Covid-19 or the flu, fever-free for 24 hours with improvement of symptoms

Please contact Unity if your child is diagnosed with any of the following illnesses, as the school must notify other parents:

- Strep throat, impetigo, or cellulitis
- Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease
- Pink Eye
- Lice
- Pertussis or parapertussis
- Covid-19
- Flu

If your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you, or if you are unavailable, one of your emergency contacts, to take your child home.

If your child needs to receive medication during school, we require a note from your child's physician giving us permission to administer the medication. The medication must have instructions clearly marked on the bottle. In addition, our Medication Administration form will need to be completed by a parent/guardian.

Unity Preschool reserves the right to update this policy in line with recommendations from DCFS, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the CDC.

## POTTY TRAINING

Unity supports children during all stages of potty training. While there is no requirement that children in any of our classes be potty trained to attend school, we encourage parents to work with their children when they feel they are ready for training. Please update your child's teacher as to progress or problems with this process so they can be supportive and attentive to your child's needs. Please feel free to contact the director if you need assistance or have questions.

Part of toilet training is teaching your child to wipe themselves after going to the bathroom. While teachers are available to help children with wiping, this is only on an as needed basis and should not be relied upon for hygiene purposes.

## GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

In accordance with Illinois State Licensing requirements, Unity is required to have a guidance and discipline policy. Both staff and parents/guardians are required to read this policy and sign a document that they have done so. Separately, DCFS requires that all parents read and sign-off on the Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers.

### GUIDANCE POLICY

Unity shall set limits (discipline) which help children develop self-control, assume responsibility for their own acts and learn to understand the rights of others. Discipline may include firm positive statements and redirection of behaviors by staff. Teachers will help children to understand the rules of the school, limits and consequences of their actions and encourage children to resolve their conflicts through the use of their words. Unity also teaches beginning strategies for problem solving and conflict resolution. These strategies include helping children understand their options, learn to make good choices and then reflect on and evaluate consequences of those choices.

### SCHOOL RULES

Our school rules include but are not limited to:

- Respect one another
- Behave in a safe manner
- Be fair in your play
- Respect the school environment

There will be times when children may lose control of their behavior. Teachers may give children an opportunity to regain control of themselves in a quiet place in the room or nearby. The teacher will remain with the child and help them to identify, verbalize and understand their feelings.

### CONTACT PARENTS AND DEVELOP A PLAN

Parents/guardians will be contacted if teachers have a concern about a child's behavior. Open communication between family and staff is essential. Parents/guardians may be asked to reinforce school expectations at home, as teachers also work towards the home goals of behavior at school when possible. Conferences with parents/guardians and the teachers and/or director may be encouraged to share information and seek to understand how the child behaves outside of school. Together, teachers, the director and parents/guardians will discuss solutions and set goals for resolving the behavior issues. Teachers will implement the agreed upon plan of action discussed. A time frame will be set for review and for a follow up conference with parents/guardians. At any time in this process, the director may recommend that parents seek help from community professionals.

### ENROLLMENT TRANSITION POLICY

We recognize that all children develop social skills and adjust to the school environment at their own individual rate, and that there is a wide range of normal behavior in adjusting to the preschool setting. If a child is having an unusual amount of difficulty assimilating into the group setting, the school will work with the child's family to solve the problem with the support of Director, teachers, outside professional consultant if available, and parental conferences. If interventions are unsuccessful, the Director will work with the family to find a more appropriate placement for their child, based on the following Department of Children and Family Services regulation:

"Infants, toddlers, and preschool age children who, after documented attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrate an inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the facility, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall



be transitioned to an alternative program. For infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children, in all instances when a facility decides that it is in the best interest of the child to transition to a different program, the child's and parents' needs shall be considered by planning with the parents to identify the new program and working with the parents and pending program on a transition plan designed to ensure continuity of services to meet the child's needs. "

#### **PROCESS FOR ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR:**

When a child's behavior is negatively impacting their health and safety or the health and safety of the classroom community, the following process will be followed:

1. The Director will meet with the classroom teachers to discuss the situation. The Director will observe the child in the classroom. Parents/caregivers will be notified that the child is struggling in the classroom.
2. A meeting will be held with the teachers, parents/caregivers, and the Director. If there are concerns that the child's behavior is a symptom of an undiagnosed disability or developmental delay, the Director will provide referrals to outside agencies for evaluation. A plan will be created to provide interventions to support the child, and the Director and teachers, with outside professional input when available, will determine how progress will be measured and tracked.
3. The teachers will work with the Director to put the plan in place and track progress. The school will communicate regularly with the family about the child's progress. After an agreed upon period of time, the team will again meet with parents to discuss progress.
4. If the child responds to the interventions and Unity Preschool feels that the child can continue at the school in a manner that is safe for the entire classroom, the child will continue their enrollment for the remainder of the school year. If the child does not respond to interventions, the Director will work with the family to transition the child to a more appropriate setting for the child.

Unity Preschool takes this position as the child's advocate and is committed to exhausting all means within its disposal to keep a child in our program. Ultimately, however, the welfare of the entire class must take precedence over the needs of any given child.

#### **CLOTHING**

Dress your child in simple play clothes. We try to keep paint, glue, etc. off clothes through the use of smocks, but it is not a foolproof method. We recommend you dress your child in clothing that is easy for them to put on and take off.

We request that all children keep a complete, extra set of clothes at school, including socks, underwear, shirt, and pants.

Please put your child's name on all clothing, especially loose items and boots.

We recommend that children wear sneakers to school. Party shoes, sandals or flip flops can be challenging on climbing equipment. Pants are appropriate playground attire for all genders. If your child is wearing a dress, please be sure their legs are covered for safety when climbing. If your child wears snow or rain boots to school, please send extra shoes to wear at school. Extra footwear may be kept at school if desired.

All classes go outside daily throughout the year. Regular outdoor play at Unity is at Tallmadge Park and the Nature Playspace across the street. Please dress your child accordingly. Mittens and gloves should be attached to coats with clips, when possible. On snowy days, children need to wear hats, boots, and snowpants.

#### **WEATHER-RELATED DECISIONS**

At Unity, the health and safety of children is our top priority when making decisions about outdoor play. We take into account various factors, including air temperature, wind chill, humidity, access to shade, playground conditions, and whether children are dressed appropriately for the weather. We also consider the duration of extreme weather conditions—such as heat or cold that lasts for several days—when determining outdoor play plans.

*Please note, the school day will operate on its regular schedule unless otherwise notified.*

We use a [weather index chart](#), along with guidance from District 65 and the City of Evanston, to help us make informed choices. When determining outside temperatures and weather, we use the Accuweather App.



- **Heat Index:** When the combined temperature and humidity result in a “real feel” of 100°F or higher, outdoor play during peak sun hours (late morning to mid-afternoon) will be limited.
- **Wind Chill:** Outdoor play may take place when the Accuweather “Feels Like “ (wind chill) is 19°F or above.
- **Air Quality Alerts:** Unity follows the City of Evanston’s air quality guidelines. Families of children with heart or lung conditions are encouraged to make individual decisions to reduce exposure based on their child’s health needs.

Air Quality Index (AQI)	Action
101 - 150	Issue advisory regarding the air quality standards
151 - 200	With an abundance of caution, the City will consider moving or rescheduling outdoor events
201+	Cancellation of outdoor events

## SNACKS

The children are served a snack each day they attend school. Unity provides snack for each classroom. The fruit/veggies will be washed and prepared in the Unity kitchen. Per our DCFS licensing requirements, we must offer two of the following food groups:

- Fruit (no grapes)
- Vegetables (no carrots)
- Cheese (slices only, no sticks or cubes)
- Grains (no popcorn)
- Birthday Snack (oreos, popsicles, or rice krispie treats)

The snack list may be modified depending on the allergies in your child’s classroom.

Unity Preschool does not serve or allow nuts or foods containing nuts.

**IF YOUR CHILD HAS ANY ALLERGIES WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT, PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER IN WRITING.**

Illinois requirements state that no home-baked goods be served at school. However, regulations allow us to prepare snacks at school.

## FIELD TRIPS

All Unity field trips are either walking or on public transportation. Parents are always invited to accompany classes on field trips; and, generally, children who do not normally attend on the day for which the field trip is scheduled are invited to come along.

## PETS

Unity does not allow any animals on school grounds except for pets of the preschool or when prior permission from the director has been granted.

## BIRTHDAYS

A birthday is an important event and we will mark this special day. You may supply birthday napkins for the birthday child to pass out during snack time. The birthday child will choose a special snack from our birthday menu. Summer birthdays will celebrate their half birthdays at school. Please remember, children's feelings can be hurt very easily. **Please do not deliver party invitations at school.**

## TOYS FROM HOME

Unity does not encourage children to bring toys from home unless asked to do so by a teacher. If a child brings a toy from home, they will be asked to keep it in their school bag during school hours. Guns or war toys are not to be brought to school at any time.

Occasionally children may benefit from bringing a transitional object to school to help ease separation anxiety and to make the transition from home to school. If you feel this is the case for your child, please talk with your child's teacher for suggestions before bringing items from home.

While pacifiers might be used at home for self-soothing, they are not appropriate for preschool. If your child utilizes a pacifier at home, please do not bring it to school.

## HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

As a school we are constantly reassessing whether our current approaches are serving our students well and promoting the most inclusive environment for discovery. We have learned that holidays are important, traditions connect people, and learning about them when we are curious is part of what shapes a more welcoming community.

Our current teachers have put a lot of care and thought to be able to teach about holidays and holiday traditions. Unity is a non-sectarian school; efforts will be made to represent information without endorsement of religion.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

While Unity is a very tight knit community, we do think it is important to create professional boundaries between staff and families. We ask that parents do not "friend" Unity Staff on social media until their child(ren) no longer attends Unity.

## COMMUNICATIONS

We take very seriously our responsibility to communicate with parents. We utilize the brightwheel app for the majority of communications from Unity. Questions about scheduling, notes about your child, and thoughts for your child's teachers can all be communicated through the messaging on the brightwheel app. We also utilize email as another means to communicate with parents/caregivers. This process will be facilitated both through the use of classroom email lists for specific class information and through school wide lists for general school or board announcements

The monthly newsletter will be sent via email for your convenience. If you would like a hard copy, please let the director know. We will also send home many notes and handouts throughout the year.

## PARENT/FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, a number of parent and family activities are planned. Family events may include: Back to School Popsicle Social, Chili Cook-off, Noodle Night, CommUNITY breakfast and end of year picnic. The annual Auction party is for adults only. The Community Council supports additional social events throughout the year. Please check your email, monthly newsletters, and posters throughout the school for upcoming events.

## CONFERENCES

There will be three scheduled parent/teacher conferences during the school year. The first before school begins, the second conference in November, and the third in March. Parents/caregivers will be notified of conference dates in advance. Staff members are available and happy to meet with parents to discuss questions or concerns anytime throughout the year. The best time to make arrangements for a meeting or phone conference is after 11:45am. Throughout the year staff may also request conferences with parents/guardians, if deemed necessary.

## VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS

Parents/caregivers are welcome in our classrooms at any time to observe, visit with children or help with an activity. We strongly encourage family members, grandparents and neighbors to volunteer at Unity. If you would like to volunteer in your child's classroom, please contact your child's teacher.

If you have a special talent or hobby that you would like to share with a group of children, we encourage you to contact us. On occasion, teachers may ask parents to share their heritage, customs, traditions or language with children in our school.

## FUNDRAISING

The Community Council sponsors several fundraising events throughout the year that provide opportunities for parents/guardians to both socialize and support our school.

Fundraising is a necessity to run our school. We cannot run on tuition alone. Your participation by either volunteering for or financially supporting these events allows Unity to keep our tuition costs in-line with other schools in our community.

## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

If you have a question or concern with any procedure or policy of Unity, please feel free to set up an individual meeting with the director. Unity believes that most issues can be worked out through individual meetings or conferences between parents/guardians and staff or parents/guardians and the director. However, there is a process in place when an individual meeting or conference does not fully satisfy the aggrieved party. The parent/guardian may ask to meet with the Board of Directors. The President of the Board will convene the meeting at a time convenient to both parties. After a presentation and discussion of the concern by the parent or guardian, the executive committee will, within three days, meet with the director to discuss the matter. The parent or guardian will be contacted within three days of that meeting regarding the decision of the Board.

## GENERAL RELEASE POLICY

Personal information about children, families and staff will be kept strictly confidential and will not be released to anyone without a valid warrant for the information.

# SUMMARY OF LICENSING STANDARDS FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

## Introduction

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is responsible for licensing day care centers. When a day care center is licensed, it means that a DCFS licensing representative has inspected the facility and the facility was found to meet the minimum licensing requirements. A license is valid for three years. The day care center's license must be posted. It will indicate the maximum number of children allowed in the facility and the areas where children may receive care.

Licensed day care facilities are inspected annually by DCFS licensing staff. If a complaint has been received regarding a violation of the licensing standards of a day care center, a licensing representative will conduct a licensing complaint investigation to determine if the alleged violation should be substantiated or unsubstantiated. Individuals may contact the Day Care Information Line to learn of substantiated violations.

## Day Care Information Line      1-877-746-0829

This statewide toll-free information line provides information to the public on the history and record, including substantiated violations, of licensed day care homes, day care centers, and group day care homes. This number operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers

The following is a summary of the licensing standards for day care centers. It has been prepared so that you may monitor the care provided to your child. This is a brief summary and does not include all of the licensing standards for day care centers. State licensing standards are minimum standards, while some municipalities may impose stricter standards on day care centers operating within their jurisdictions. If you observe a violation of any of these standards, you are encouraged to discuss your

concerns with the day care center operator. In most cases, parents and day care operators are able to resolve the parents' concerns and issues. If you believe the day care operator is not responding to your concerns, and may not be meeting state licensing standards, you may make a complaint to the local DCFS Licensing Office or by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-2873 and stating that you want to make a licensing complaint. A DCFS licensing representative will investigate your complaint and report the results back to you. The day care center is required to provide a copy of its own written policies regarding the operation of the facility to each staff person and to parents of enrolled children.

## Staffing

- The day care center must have a qualified child care director on site at all times. The director must be at least 21 years old, have completed two years of college or have equivalent experience and credentials.
- Early childhood teachers must be at least 19 years old, have two years of college or have equivalent experience and credentials.
- School-age workers must be at least 19 years old. They must have completed one year of college or have the equivalent experience and credentials.
- Early childhood assistants and school-age assistants must have a high school diploma or the equivalent and must work under direct supervision of an early childhood teacher or a school-age worker.
- Student and youth aides must be at least 14 years of age, at least five years older than the oldest child in their care, and must work under direct supervision of an early childhood teacher or a school-age worker.
- Student and youth aides are not generally counted for purposes of maintaining staff/child ratios.
- The director and all child care staff must have 15 hours of in-service training annually.
- All staff must have current medical reports on file and are subject to background checks for any record of criminal conviction or child abuse and neglect.
- A person certified in first aid, including CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, must be present at all times.
- All child care staff in a facility licensed to care for newborns and infants must have training on the nature of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), SIDS and the safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

### Group Size and Staff Requirements:

AGE OF CHILDREN	RATIO	STAFF/CHILD GROUP SIZE	MAXIMUM
Infants (6 weeks through 14 months)	1 to 4	12	
Toddlers (15 through 23 months)	1 to 5	15	
Two years	1 to 8	16	

Three years	1 to 10	20
Four years	1 to 10	20
Five years (preschool)	1 to 20	20
School-age: Kindergartners present	1 to 20	30

- Exception: One early childhood teacher and an assistant may supervise a group of up to 30 children if all of the children are at least five years of age.
- Whenever children of different ages are combined, the staff/child ratio and maximum group size must be based on the age of the youngest child in the group.

## General Program Requirements

- Parents must be allowed to visit the center without an appointment any time during normal hours of operation.
- Staff must demonstrate respect for each child enrolled regardless of differences in gender, ability, culture, ethnicity, or religion.
- There must be a balance of active and quiet activity. Children of all ages shall be encouraged to participate daily in at least 2 occasions of age-appropriate outdoor time, with active movement or play for mobile children.
- In pre-school programs where children receive care for less than three hours per day, outdoor activity is not required.
- Children will be limited in the amount of daily passive screen viewing.
- Children may not be left unattended at any time.

## Infants and Toddlers

- Infants and toddlers must be in separate space away from older children.
- A refrigerator and sink must be easily accessible.
- Toys and indoor equipment must be cleaned and disinfected daily. Safe, durable equipment and play materials must be provided.
- Either the day care center or the parent may provide food for infants not consuming table food. Feeding times and amounts consumed must be documented in writing.
- No food other than formula, milk, breast milk or water may be placed in a bottle for infant feeding. Microwaves are not to be used for bottle warming.
- Infants must be placed on their backs to sleep.
- The facility must have a clearly defined diaper changing area with the procedures for changing diapers clearly posted. A hand-washing sink must be accessible.
- Staff changing diapers must wash their hands and the child's hands with soap and running water after diapering.
- Information about feeding, elimination and other important information must be recorded in writing and made available to parents when the child is picked up at the end of the day.

- Only new cribs manufactured on or after June 28, 2011 can be utilized.

## School-Age Children

- The facility must have a designated area for school-age children so they do not interfere with the care of younger children.
- Clear definitions of responsibility and procedures are to be established among parent, day care center and school when children move to and from school.
- A variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials must be available for children. Opportunities must be provided to do homework, if requested.

## Evening, Night and Weekend Care

- Family-like groups of mixed ages are allowed.
- Staff must be awake at all times and in the sleeping area whenever children are sleeping.
- Dependent on age, each child must have an individual cot, bed or crib.
- An evening meal and a bedtime snack must be served.
- Breakfast must be served to all children who have been at the facility throughout the night and are present between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

## Enrollment and Discharge

- Parents must be provided the names, business address and telephone number of persons legally responsible for the program.
- Parents must be provided the following in writing: Information on the program, fees, arrival and departure policies explaining to the parents and guardians what actions the caregiver will take if children are not picked up at the agreed upon time, as well as policies related to guidance and discipline.
- Parents must complete an initial enrollment application, which includes a certified copy of their child's birth certificate (which will be copied by the center and returned to the parent), emergency numbers, and persons authorized to pick up their child.
- A child may only be released to a parent or other responsible person designated by the parent in writing.
- Daily arrival and departure logs must be kept by the center.

## Guidance and Discipline

- Parents must be given a copy of the guidance and discipline policy.
- The following are prohibited:



- corporal punishment
- threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest or use of the bathroom
- abusive or profane language
- public or private humiliation
- emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing or isolating a child
- “Time-out” is to be limited to one minute per year of the child’s age.
- “Time-out” may not be used for children less than two years of age.

## Transportation

- The driver must be 21 years of age and hold a driver’s license that has been continuously valid for three years.
- Children must not be allowed to stand or sit on the floor of the vehicle.
- Age appropriate safety restraints must be used when transporting children in vehicles other than school buses.
- Any vehicle used to transport children must have liability insurance coverage in an amount required by statute.
- The driver must make sure that a responsible person is present to take charge of a child when delivered to his or her destination.

## Health Requirements for Children

- Parents or guardians of infants, toddlers and preschool children enrolling in day care for the first time must provide a medical report dated fewer than 6 months prior to enrollment; children transferring from another licensed day care center may use their current medical report, if it is less than one year old.
- Parents or guardians of school-age children may submit a copy of the most recent regularly scheduled school physical (even if it is more than 6 months old) or the day care center may require a more recent medical report by its own enrollment policy.
- A medical report indicating that the child has been appropriately immunized must be on file for each child. Parents are encouraged to be informed about childhood immunizations by going to the following Web site:<http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/pgci.htm> . A tuberculin skin test is to be included in the initial exam unless waived by a physician.

The medical report is valid for two years for infants and preschool children. Exams for school-age children are required consistent with the requirements of the public schools.

- The center must comply with the Illinois Department of Public Health’s Hearing and Vision Screening Codes and the Illinois Child Vision and Hearing Test Act.

- Children aged one to six years must have either a lead risk assessment or a lead screening.
- Water must be freely available to all children.
- Children's hands must be washed with soap and water upon arrival at the center, before and after meals or using the toilet, after wiping or blowing their noses, after outdoor play and after coming into contact with any soiled objects.
- Prescription and non-prescription medication may be accepted only in its original container. The center must maintain a record of the dates, times administered, dosages, prescription number (if applicable) and the name of the person administering the medication.
- Medication must be kept in locked cabinets or other containers that are inaccessible to children.

## Nutrition and Meals

- Menus must be posted.
- Meals and snacks must meet nutritional guidelines and shall be prepared so as to moderate fat and sodium content.
- Children in care two to five hours must be served a snack. Children in care five to 10 hours must be served a meal and two snacks or two meals and one snack. Children in care more than 10 hours must be served two meals and two snacks or one meal and three snacks.

## Napping and Sleeping

- Children under six years of age who remain five or more hours must have the opportunity to rest or nap.
- Infants must sleep in safe, sturdy, freestanding cribs or portable cribs.
- Toddlers may use either stacking cots or full-size cribs.

A cot or bed must be provided for each toddler or preschool child in attendance five or more hours. Each cot, bed or crib must be labeled with the name of the child.

### Physical Space

- Infants and toddlers must be housed and cared for at ground level unless special approval has been granted from the Department.
- Indoor space must provide a safe, comfortable environment for the children. Floors and floor coverings must be washable and free from drafts and dampness.
- Toilets and lavatories must be readily accessible to the children.
- Hot and cold running water must be provided.
- Hazardous items must be inaccessible to children.
- Parents must be notified before pesticides are applied.

- Lead paint or asbestos removal must be in accordance with public health standards and statute.
- Exits must be unlocked and clear of equipment and debris.
- Drills for fire and tornado must be conducted. A floor plan must be posted in every room indicating the areas providing the most safety in the case of a tornado and the primary and secondary exit routes in case of fire.
- Smoking or the use of tobacco products in any form is prohibited in the child care center or in the presence of children while on the playground or on trips away from the center.
- The facility must test for radon at least every 3 years and post the results in an area visible to parents, along with an informative notice about the effects of radon.
- Play materials must be durable and free from hazardous characteristics.
- The facility may not use or have on the premises any unsafe children's product as described in the Children's Product Safety Act. Lists of unsafe children's products and recalls from 1989 forward are available at: <http://srs.dph.illinois.gov/webapp/SRSApp/pages/>.

The facility must be cleaned daily and kept in sanitary condition at all times.

- First-aid kits must be maintained and readily available for use.

## Outdoor Play Area

- Play space must be fenced or otherwise enclosed or protected from traffic and other hazards. There must be a shaded area in summer to protect children from excessive sun exposure.
- All areas of the outdoor play space must be visible to staff at all times.
- Equipment must be free of sharp points or corners, splinters, protruding nails or bolts, loose or rusty parts, the potential for entrapment and/or other hazards.
- Protective surfaces must be provided under equipment from which a child might fall.
- All swimming pools must be fenced or otherwise inaccessible to children.
- During hours of operation and at all times that children are present there must be a means for parents of enrolled children to have direct telephone contact with a center staff person.

*This summary has been developed to assist parents in monitoring the care provided by the day care center. Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers may be accessed through the DCFS website: **[www.DCFS.illinois.gov](http://www.DCFS.illinois.gov)**. You may also contact your nearest DCFS office for assistance. Locations of DCFS offices are also available on the DCFS website. Locations of DCFS offices are available on the DCFS website.*

