

FAMILIES TOGETHER PRESCHOOL

Parent Handbook

2023-2024

Welcome to **Families Together Preschool!**
We are a therapeutic program that provides a nurturing environment for preschool-aged children who may need extra support to prepare for Kindergarten. In addition to our classrooms, we also offer on-site therapy services and home visiting.

We look forward to partnering with you as we work together to help your child grow.



**Lutheran
Social Service**
of Minnesota

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About Us

Families Together Therapeutic Preschool uses a team approach to support the development and growth of children three through five years old. We partner with parents, caregivers, teachers and therapists to develop an individualized plan for building cognitive, developmental and social-emotional skills.

What Makes Us Different

- ✓ Smaller class sizes and extra teachers in the classroom allow us to provide more one-on-one interactions and partner with children in self-regulation and problem-solving
- ✓ Teachers are trained in therapeutic language and interventions, and specialize in creating individualized strategies to meet the specific needs of each child
- ✓ Therapists provide on-site therapy services during the school day and communicate with teachers and share streamlined interventions with classroom
- ✓ Caregivers receive extra support with connecting to additional resources, and navigating school systems



Program Expectations

Families Together Preschool is funded largely by Early Learning Scholarships. Families Together staff will work with caregivers to apply for these scholarships. As part of our program, we ask that parents/guardians agree to the following:

- Participate in the program by sending your student to school each day *, consent to student screening for qualifying therapy services, agreeing to monthly home visits, and maintaining current well-child exams.
- **If your child will not be in school:**
 - For expected absences please inform your classroom teacher as soon as possible, via text or phone call.
 - For unexpected absences due to illness or other situations please notify your teacher, via text, before 7:45 am.
 - If the absence is longer than two weeks, staff will connect with caregivers about continued enrollment at

Accidents happen and we want to make sure your student is as comfortable as possible. If you are able, please send a change of clothes to school in case of a spill or bathroom accident.

We request that all students keep toys from home at home.

If your child brings a toy from home, it will stay on the bus for the day, and they will get it back during the bus ride home. Teachers are not responsible if a home toy is lost or broken.

Child Assessment Plan



Families Together staff members are trained in providing high quality assessments for your child that will help both you and your child's teachers better understand and meet the needs of your student.

All children are assessed upon enrollment in cognitive development using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and social-emotional development using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE). Families Together Preschool Teachers will use the DECA-P2 social emotional screening tool, focusing on resiliency, and they will also utilize Teaching Strategies Gold to track each child's on-going progress in key areas of developmental growth. That information will be used to create a development report to be shared with families at conferences, which are held twice in the year.

All children are screened by therapists to identify possible areas of need. Teachers and therapists will notify parents of identified needs and caregivers have the option to opt out of therapy services.

Families are encouraged to talk to their child's teacher if they have any questions or concerns about assessment methods, and how their child's needs will be met.

Families Together Preschool annual report is available for review by request

School Safety Policies



Secured Entrances

For the safety of both staff and children, Families Together has installed secure entrances to the preschool. Caregivers and visitors must be accompanied by a staff member while in the preschool area at all times. Classroom doors are secured on both sides, so that children are kept safely in the classroom.

Playground Area

Our outside playground area is secured on all sides by a 7-foot fence. Children will be supervised by a staff member at all times while in the playground area.

Supervision

Preschool staff maintain a minimum teacher-child ratio of 1:4 at all times. Children who receive therapy services will be supervised by the therapist at all times when outside of the classroom area. Staff will hold each child's hand when transitioning to and from the bus, and any time we leave the classroom area.

Transportation



Families Together Preschool provides transportation to homes within our busing zone. Licensing requires us to keep bus routes under one hour, which limits us to parts of Frogtown and East St. Paul. Our 14 passenger LSS buses use SafeGuard STAR® 5-point safety harnesses, and all staff are certified in proper car seat usage.

Pick Up

Our school buses will come directly to your home or daycare to pick up your child. Pick up order is determined by location and teachers will communicate daily with parents about times, as they may occasionally vary slightly. When the bus arrives to the address, your child needs to load quickly and safely to ensure all students are to school in a timely manner. The bus can stop on the street in front of the provided address. The bus cannot drive into parking lots to stop at individual buildings for pick up.

Drop Off

The bus will bring your child home or to daycare after school. Families can also pick their child up from school. Staff can only drop off a child if there is an adult present or an authorized individual listed on the Authorized Caregiver Form unless the caregiver has communicated a change to staff. If we attempt to drop off a child and neither an adult nor a designated responsible caregiver is home, staff will call the parent/guardian, and then attempt to reach a designated emergency contact. If the bus staff cannot connect with a parent/guardian or the designated emergency contact, the student will stay on the bus and return to school where families will come and pick them up. The address of the school is 709 University Ave. W., St. Paul 55104.

Picking Up Your Child from School

Families may pick up or drop off their child at school as needed. Staff will only release a student to a parent, guardian, designated emergency contact, or authorized caregiver and have the right to ask to see a form of identification. To reduce air pollution and emissions on site, when possible, please turn off your vehicles when parked in the lot. *If transportation*

Policy on Observing the Classroom

Parents/guardians may pick up their child at any time. While we want family members to be actively involved in their child's learning, we ask that parents and guardians of students who wish to observe set up an appointment with the teacher ahead of time. This will ensure that there is a staff member available to accompany a visitor, and that the visit is scheduled at an appropriate time of day that will not disrupt the classroom.



How to Get Involved:

- ✓ Attend our school-sponsored Family Parties throughout the school year
- ✓ Join your child's class on field trips throughout the year
- ✓ Share with teachers your family culture and practices to integrate in the classroom.
- ✓ Volunteer to prepare materials for class.
- ✓ Collaborating with teachers in planning school events.

When to Keep Your Child Home



Licensing Guidelines for Exclusion of Sick Children

A child with any of the following conditions or behaviors is a sick child and may not come to school:

- ✓ 100 degrees F. or higher temperature before fever reducing medication is given.
- ✓ vomiting two or more times within that day
- ✓ ongoing diarrhea
- ✓ contagious conjunctivitis or pus draining from the eye
- ✓ lice, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated and contagious to others
- ✓ open and draining skin sores
- ✓ unknown or unfamiliar rash

Your child may be sent home from school if he or she has any of the above conditions. If your child has ongoing diarrhea or vomiting, they must remain at home 24 hours symptom free before returning to school. Children who have a possibly contagious rash or skin sores may be required to have a doctor's note before returning to school.

If children are under immunized at the time of enrollment, caregivers are expected to begin the booster series of shots and have their child stay on track for the completion of these shots.

In the case of measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis, polio, or diphtheria, children who are inadequately or incompletely immunized will be excluded through the incubation period of the last reported case of the disease. This precaution will be taken to limit the spread of illness.

If Your Child is Sick or Injured at School

In the situation of a child becoming sick or injured in the center:

1. If the situation is an emergency, the paramedics are called (911). Any necessary first aid procedures are performed by first aid certified teaching staff. For non-life-threatening situations the child is separated from the other children in a quiet soft space.
2. If indicated, the parent or guardian is contacted. If they cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be called.
3. The child is then:
 - a) Picked up by the parent or caregiver or brought home by a bus driver (if an authorized caregiver is there to receive them and the situation warrants it), or
 - b) Brought to the home of an emergency contact (if an authorized caregiver is not home and this person is willing to care for the child), or
 - c) Kept in the center until the close of the session, when the caregiver picks up the child or the bus driver or teacher brings the child home.
 - d) In the case of accidents and injuries, the teaching staff then fills out a report documenting the situation and circumstance. Copies are kept on site.
4. The staff will contact the parent/guardian (when appropriate) to determine the outcome of the injury or illness. Occasionally the child will be kept out of the center until the caregiver has brought the child to the doctor, and staff has received some verification of the doctor's consent for the child to return to school.
5. Caregivers are required to inform staff within 24 hours when a child is diagnosed as having a contagious reportable disease of lice, scabies, impetigo, ringworm or chicken pox.
6. Disease notices will be sent to families on the same day if diagnosed illness is communicable—and reported within 24 hours to the Dept. of Health if illness mandates reporting.

If Your Child Needs Medications at School



Licensing Guidelines for Medications

Written instruction from the child's physician and written authorization from the caregiver must be received before Families Together staff will give any medication to a child.

- ✓ Medication will be given only as prescribed, and all medicine will be kept in the original container. Standard measuring devices will be used for dispensing. Medicine will not be given beyond the expiration date.
- ✓ All prescription medication must be labeled with the child's first and last name, the dates that the prescription was filled, the name of the licensed health care provider, the expiration date of the medication or the period of use of the medicine, the manufacturer's instructions that details the name and strength of the medication, and instructions on how to administer and store it.
- ✓ All medications will be stored properly and will be kept in a place that is inaccessible to children. Family will be notified of any adverse reactions to the medication. All unused medication will be returned to the parent.
- ✓ The administration of medication must be documented on the medication sheet, which includes: the child's name, the physician, the medication date, time, dosage, name and signature of the person who dispensed the medication. This record is available to parents and is kept in the child's file.

In Case of Emergency



Licensing Guidelines for Emergency Procedures

The following is our policy on illness and emergency care, accidents, first aid, and exclusion of sick children:

The first step in providing emergency care is to assure that the parent or guardian has signed the Emergency Permission Form and Health History Form during intake, which gives the following emergency information:

- Names and phone numbers of emergency contacts
- Name of preferred hospital and source of regular medical care
- Allergy and health conditions information

This information is kept in the child's main file, in an emergency book in the classroom, and on the buses. Please let us know if this information changes so our records can be updated.

Complete physical and immunization records also are kept on all children in their main file. Documentation of any accidents, illness, etc. is kept in the appropriate log and file.

All classroom staff are trained in first aid and CPR so that they can provide any necessary care before other assistance arrives. (Paramedic station is located next door to organization). Emergency procedures are posted in the classrooms. These cover fire, tornadoes, medical emergency, poisoning, & choking.

The program's complete Child Care Emergency Plan is available to parents upon request.

Child Care Program Plan

Classroom



Staffing –

Each class has an educational staff consisting of at least one lead teacher and up to two supporting instructors. A speech/language pathologist, occupational therapist, and child psychologist and/or licensed mental health worker also are part of the classroom team providing services as needed. If there are concerns about the child's language, motor, or social emotional development, therapists will evaluate the child and provide direct therapy or consultation as needed.

Daily Routine –

A typical morning schedule includes, breakfast, free choice time from learning centers, structured group time, snack, outdoor play, and lunch. Families Together Preschool participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). *This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

Curriculum and Lesson Plans –

Individual and class goals, objectives, and activities for children are designed to help both staff and parents promote the physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of children in a manner consistent with the child's cultural background. They reflect National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice and give special attention to promoting emotional and social growth and well-being.

Screenings –

To promote the greatest level of development and learning for each child, they receives a developmental screening at the time of enrollment. Caregivers will also be asked to complete a routine social emotional screen for their child, as part of our requirements. Information from these screens will help staff and families decide what services the child should receive and set individual goals for him or her.

Individualized Goals –

Goals and activities established for each child promote the social and emotional, physical, cognitive, and language literacy development of each child in a manner consistent with the child's cultural background. The progress of each child is assessed by teachers throughout the year in the classroom setting and shared with parents during two annual conferences. Family observations and input are encouraged on an ongoing basis. Staff will share assessment information during parent teacher conferences and monthly home visits. Caregivers are encouraged to share their observations about their child's process and set goals for their child's progress.

Home Visiting

In addition to the classroom program, we provide extra support to care givers in their home, community, or at the school. Caregivers work together on goals identified by the family. These include but are not limited to positive parenting strategies, stress management, healthy coping skills, and connecting to community resources and health care.

Therapy Services

Children who receive on-site therapy services will work with therapists 1-3 times/week during class time. Progress reports are written every 60 days and reviewed by the child's physician. Therapy services are billed through the child's medical insurance. Parents are not financially responsible for therapy billing.

Food Program



The Families Together Program participates in the **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**, a federal program that provides healthy meals and snacks to children receiving day care. Children are provided with breakfast, snack, and lunch each day.

Food and menus are prepared by a contracted caterer who follows all CACFP guidelines. Menus are posted monthly in the classroom. Your child will be provided with breakfast, lunch, and one additional snack. Food storage and preparation/service is monitored at each meal to ensure that temperatures (both hot and cold) meet requirements as set by CACFP. All food preparation and dining surfaces in the classroom are cleaned before and after use with a recommended disinfectant solution. Reusable utensils and dishes are washed and sanitized after each meal. Disposable utensils and dishes are placed in covered waste containers and tossed daily.

Children who are on a medically prescribed diet are provided with acceptable alternatives when medically related diet restrictions are verified by physician's signature. All diet orders are maintained in the center and staff are informed of the child's special needs.

Documentation of a child's food allergies is maintained in the center and is posted in a prominent location in the food service area. All preschool staff are informed of the special dietary needs of the child. Water is obtained from approved city water systems. Drinking water is available to the children throughout the day.

Children may not bring outside food into the facility unless necessary due to a special diet requirement.

In accordance with federal civil rights laws and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, nation of origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf> from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to the USDA by:

1. Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights
1400 Independence AVE, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Guidance and Disciplinary Policy

Children sometimes need additional support when they are at school. They will practice interacting in the classroom in ways that are best for them and the other children. Behavior guidance techniques are important tools and supports that staff will utilize to help your student. Some of the techniques used in the classroom include:

- ✓ **Positive modeling**
 - Staff will always model acceptable behavior that is consistent with the behavior expected from the children. For example, if children are expected to use a quiet voice, the teacher will not yell to get the children's attention, and instead will use a firm, quiet voice.
- ✓ **Limit setting**
 - Staff will use limit-setting techniques that are developmentally appropriate for the children they work with, including limits around safety, personal space, and other school rules.
- ✓ **Appropriate supervision**
 - Teacher supervision is important in avoiding conflict and mistaken student behavior in the classroom. Classroom staff maintains a high adult to child ratio and strategically position teachers in the classroom to provide student support. Teachers aim to be aware of potential conflicts and help children resolve the issues before conflict can escalate. Teachers will use developmentally appropriate techniques to coach children towards solutions.
- ✓ **Acceptable alternatives**
 - Staff will use techniques to teach children how to use acceptable alternatives in situations where guidance is needed.

If undesirable behavior persists teachers will document the behavior, including an observation report that states what the behavior is and what the staff response has been. Teachers will bring observations to the team of therapists and teachers to discuss additional strategies for the child. An action plan will be developed for center and home if appropriate. Appropriate staff will meet with caregivers to solicit their input and alter the plan as necessary.

At no time will staff use any of the following actions to discipline children:

- Physical punishment (e.g. Shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time)
- Psychological abuse (e.g. shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection, seclusion)
- Coercion (Rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); physical restraint (e.g. forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down) except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up)
- Punishment for lapses in toilet habits
- Withholding food, light, warmth, clothing or medical care
- Physical or mechanical restraint
- Separation from the group, except when separation is necessary to protect the child or others from harm.

Staff that use any of these prohibited actions or direct another person to use said actions will be subject to disciplinary action including termination.

Safety of Children and Staff (Separation)

Protecting the safety of children and staff is of the utmost importance. If other less intrusive methods of guiding the child's behavior threatens their own well-being or that of other children, separation from the group may be used. Separation must meet the following guidelines:

- The child must be in a visible/accessible part of the classroom where they can be seen and heard continuously by a staff person
- The child's return to the group must be contingent upon the child stopping or bringing under control the behavior in questions
- The child must be returned to the group as soon as the behavior stops or lessens to a degree that the child no longer poses a threat to themselves or others
- Any separation must be noted in a daily log. The child's name staff person's name, time, date, what less intrusive methods were tried and how the child's behavior threatened their own well-being or that of the other children must be documented in this log.
- If a child is separated 3 or more times in one day, the child's parent/guardian will be notified, and notation of this will be included in the log
- If a child is separated 5 or more times in one week or 8 or more times in 2 weeks, the exclusion policy will be reviewed.

Use of Containing Techniques

Use of any restraint techniques other than to physically hold a child if he/she is in danger of harming herself or others is prohibited. *Please see section about Exclusion Policies on the following page.*

Conflict Resolution

Parents and guardians are encouraged to speak with their child's teacher first about negotiating difficulties and differences in interactions between families and program staff. If the teacher is unable to help resolve the conflict, the following steps will be taken:

1. The program Director and Assistant Director will offer an in-person meeting with the parent/caregiver to discuss the problem and work towards a solution.
2. If they are unable to resolve the conflict, parents will be directed to follow the Conflict Resolution Policy as stated in our Grievance Procedures in the FFTP Policy Handbook.

If a staff member should harm a child at school, whether accidental or not, we will make a report to DHS Childcare Licensing (651) 432-6500.

Program Exclusion Policies

Families Together Preschool is designed to help children who may have greater needs for social-emotional and behavioral support. Our goal is to work with staff and caregivers to find regulating strategies that work for your child that can help them function as a part of the classroom.

Exclusionary measures are not considered until all other possible interventions have been exhausted, and staff agree that exclusion is in the best interest of the child. We reserve the right to decide if a child needs more support than what our program can offer and may discontinue enrollment.

Children may be excluded from the program in the following circumstances:

- **Child Requires Constant Individual Support** – Since we are not in the public school district, we do not have access to paraprofessionals to assist in our classrooms and are limited to our 1:4 teacher-child ratio. All children require some assistance and redirection from teachers, but if a child requires constant 1:1 adult support to keep him/herself safe, or to keep others in the classroom safe, we reserve the right to discontinue enrollment.
- **Threats Made by Adults** – If a threat is made to Families Together staff or the school by an adult related to the child, or if inappropriate language or behaviors occur towards any staff member, we reserve the right to discontinue enrollment.
- **Poor Attendance** – Families Together Preschool is funded largely in part by the Early Learning Scholarship. Due to regulation policies, if a child misses 10 or more days of class in any 30 day period, they may be disenrolled from the program.
- **Expired Physicals and Immunizations**– Minnesota Departments of Human Services required us to keep current immunization records and well-child exams on file for each child. If we do not receive current physical records within 90 days past the expiration date, we may exclude the child from school until we receive proof of a current well-child.

Before exclusionary measures are considered, our staff will communicate the issue with caregivers. Teachers and therapists will work together with administrative staff to discuss and implement new strategies to implement in the classroom setting and examine what accommodations we can make to help that child succeed. If exclusionary measures must be taken, we will offer assistance in connecting the family to an alternative placement.

Families Together Preschool acknowledges and complies with federal and state civil rights laws. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, marital status, national origin, age, color, religion, ancestry, status with regard to public assistance, sexual or affectional orientation, familial status, or disability.

Contact Information

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Thank you for participating in Families Together Therapeutic Preschool!