

# 2024 – 2025 Parent Guardian Handbook



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THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM IS HELPING CHILDREN BECOME ENTHUSIASTIC LEARNERS. THIS MEANS ENCOURAGING ACTIVE AND CREATIVE EXPLORATION, HELPING CHILDREN TRY OUT THEIR IDEAS AND THINK THEIR OWN THOUGHTS WITHOUT THE FEAR OF FAILING. WE ARE HELPING CHILDREN BECOME INDEPENDENT, CONFIDENT AND INQUISITIVE LEARNERS. WE’RE PROVIDING A FOUNDATION THAT INCLUDES GOOD HABITS AND ATTITUDES (PARTICULARLY A POSITIVE SENSE OF SELF) AND THE FOUNDATION FOR ACADEMIC OR “SCHOOL” LEARNING WHICH WILL PREPARE CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN KINDERGARTEN AND BEYOND. ....8

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Dear families,

We are honored that you have selected Educare Chicago as your child(ren)'s early learning and care provider. As a part of our mission, we aim to provide your child with the highest quality of early education, social service support and individualized care, to meet your family's unique needs. At Educare Chicago, we believe that you are your child's first – and primary – teacher. In partnership with you, our team of early childhood professionals will coordinate tailored services that will support your child's developmental growth, while also helping you establish and reach your family's overarching goals.

We look forward to engaging you in your child's learning journey and partnering with you to make Educare Chicago the best early learning school for all Early/Head Start children and their families. We highly encourage parents to become active participants in their child's educational experience and for you to use your voice and get involved in shared governance opportunities like Parent Committee and Policy Council.

This handbook provides important details about your rights and responsibilities, and our school's policies and procedures. Please take time to carefully read through the contents of this handbook. If you have any questions, any staff member can help you, or direct you to the proper person to answer your questions. Also, please do not hesitate to contact us at 773-924-2334 for assistance.

Welcome to Educare Chicago!

Danielle Jordan School Director

Christie Stinson-Steele Education Manager

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Education Coordinator

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Health and Nutrition Coordinator

Mary Warren-Butler  
Program Operations Manager

Donna Quiroz  
Family Engagement Supervisor

Benjamin Holmes Facilities Coordinator

# Parent / Guardian Responsibilities

Educare recognizes that, as a parent or guardian, you are the most important partner in your child's education. Your involvement is essential to your child's educational success.

As a parent or guardian, you are responsible for:

- Communicating to your child that education is important.
- Ensuring your child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Providing reasons for absences and tardiness to your child's teacher or family support specialist(s) (FSS).
- Informing the school of changes in your address or telephone number. Ensuring the school has current emergency contact information for persons listed as emergency contacts.
- Ensuring that your child has all required well child/well baby check-ups and immunizations within the required timeframes.
- Attending parent conferences.
- Participating in parent committee, home visits, and activities at the school.
- Knowing the discipline guidelines as stated in this handbook, as well as the behavioral expectations of your child's classroom, and discussing them with your child's assigned teachers.
- Conducting yourself in a respectful manner, modeling appropriate behaviors for your child(ren).
- Completing family home activities, collaborating with your child's teacher to complete the Ages and Stages questionnaire, and establishing Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) goals for your child.
- Partnering with your FFS to establish and make progress toward your Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) goals.
- Communicating your child and family's needs and sharing concerns in a professional manner.

## Our Program

### Welcome

Welcome to Educare Chicago! Educare Chicago is a directly operated program of Start Early. We are glad that you are here, and we want to make you and your child feel comfortable in our school. The Parent Handbook covers program opportunities, policies, and procedures. Keep it in a convenient place so that you can refer to it easily throughout the year. We look forward to your suggestions and encourage you to ask questions about any program area.

### Mission

Start Early advances quality early learning for families with children, before birth through their earliest years, to close the opportunity gap.

### Vision

Every child has an equitable opportunity to reach their full potential to thrive in school and in life.





## The Educare Model

Our program is part of the Educare Learning Network, which currently has 25 Educare schools in operation throughout the country. The Educare model, is a state-of-the-art approach to early education, promoting consistent, quality, outcome-based classroom learning environments for children from birth to five years old. Educare's model extends beyond the classroom to provide additional support helping children, families and communities thrive.

The Educare model is based on research from early childhood development, education, social work and other allied fields, and is composed of four core features or practice areas:

- Data utilization
- Embedded professional development
- Quality teaching practices
- Intensive family engagement

Strong school leadership supports the implementation of this model and develops a culture of quality early childhood education and family support services. Community linkages help provide access to resources for children, families and staff, such as health and mental health services. Together, these core features lead to positive child and family outcomes including strong parent-child relationships, where the full family supports their child's learning, and sustainable school and family partnerships.

To support teachers and the family support team in meeting the needs of your child and family, you will be asked to participate in the Educare Implementation Study. Through the Implementation Study, information will be collected on the developmental progress of your child, and you will be asked to participate in various surveys regarding your needs and the services you have been provided. This information is used for program improvements and individual supports for your family. If you have any questions, or would like more information about the Educare Model or Educare Learning Network, feel free to contact our school director, or visit our Educare Learning Network site at <https://www.educareschools.org/> to learn more.

## Our Curriculum

Our primary curriculum is *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos and Preschool*, developed by Teaching Strategies, LLC. Educare has also integrated the studies that were developed for two-year-old classrooms.

The philosophy behind our curriculum approach is that young children learn best by doing. Learning isn't just repeating what someone else says; it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn firsthand about the world we live in. For children in our birth-to-three programs, this learning occurs through exploring many different materials and participating in carefully designed activities that build on each child's strengths and interests. In the three-to-five program (Pre-K) classrooms, this kind of exploration continues, but children will also learn through working on long-term studies on specific topics of interest such as dinosaurs, fruits and vegetables, or architecture. These studies enable the learning of math, science, reading, writing, and more, in ways that are connected to real life experiences. This makes learning more fun and meaningful. The new integrated studies for our two-year-old students are designed as an introduction to our preschool curriculum, integrating developmental concepts within the core content areas.

Children learn best when they are in an environment where they feel safe, emotionally secure and have a sense of belonging. This is best achieved by ensuring that the children in our program interact with teachers and staff that establish and maintain secure, nurturing relationships with each child. Establishing and maintaining positive, secure relationships is extremely important to children's school and life success. Our curriculum is implemented in collaboration with our families. We seek family input and encourage the sharing of ideas that will enhance your child's learning within their current classroom. We also welcome parent classroom visits and offer opportunities for facilitating learning experiences should you be interested.

Educare also utilizes the social-emotional curriculum, *Conscious Discipline*. *Conscious Discipline* utilizes a strength-based approach, looking at challenging behaviors as teaching opportunities where children can build skills that they are missing. The curriculum also supports classroom staff in establishing routines and rituals that foster self-awareness, problem solving, compassion, and contribution within a positive school and classroom community.

Educare has also implemented two initiatives, one focusing on the content areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math, also known as STEAM, and one focusing on Black history, also known as Black History 365. Educare is exploring STEAM through a curriculum integration approach. Through inquiry and critical thinking, we are enhancing each of these

content areas across the curriculum. As we are highlighting each of the content areas individually, we will begin seeing how they differ and intersect, providing young learners a hands-on interactive experience of these lessons. Through our Black History 365, we will be focusing on celebrating Black history all year round, versus only in the month of February. As a part of this initiative, we have convened a committee that develops monthly activities that encourage and promote the participation of children and their families in these culturally enriching experiences specific to Black history. Through this work, we are providing our children with another avenue for learning about each other and themselves, growing their pride, and building a stronger sense of community. It is important to note that Educare Chicago firmly supports the inclusivity of all cultures and has opportunities throughout the year to explore those focuses as well.

## Continuity of Care

Because we recognize the importance of relationships and attachments in the first years of life, we incorporate Continuity of Care into our programming. Continuity of Care in our program means that children and families stay with the same teachers and FSS for a maximum of three years in Early Head Start and a maximum of two years in Head Start.

## Our Curriculum Goals

The most important goal of our early childhood curriculum is helping children become enthusiastic learners. This means encouraging active and creative exploration, helping children try out their ideas and think their own thoughts without the fear of failing. We are helping children become independent, confident and inquisitive learners. We're providing a foundation that includes good habits and attitudes (particularly a positive sense of self) and the foundation for academic or "school" learning which will prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond.

### Our Curriculum Goals and Objectives for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos are:

- To learn about themselves and others (trusts, regulates own behavior, responds to others' feelings...)
- To learn about moving (gross and fine motor skills)
- To learn about the world (understands how objects can be used, sustains attention, cause and effect)
- To learn about communicating (develops language, enjoys books, participates in conversations...)

### Our Curriculum Goals and Objectives for Preschool are:

- Developing a Sense of Self
- Responsibility for Themselves and Others
- Prosocial Behavior
- Physical Development
- Learning and Problem Solving
- Logical Thinking
- Listening and Speaking
- Reading and Writing
- Representation and Symbolic Thinking



## School Readiness Goals

In collaboration with parents representing our school on the Policy Council, Educare has established school readiness goals that align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS) for preschool and the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) for children birth to age three. These standards tell parents, early childhood professionals, and the community what children at various stages should learn and be able to accomplish at various age levels. We monitor children's progress toward accomplishing school readiness goals three times each year. Information on our school's progress is shared with families at Parent Committee Meetings.

### Our School Readiness Goals are:

- *Approaches to Learning:* Children will show an interest in varied topics and activities, an eagerness to learn, creativity and independence in their interactions with activities and materials. (Behavioral, Emotional, Cognitive)



- *Social and Emotional:* Children will demonstrate the ability to identify and express emotions.
- *Cognitive:* Children will build skills related to attentiveness, perseverance, problem solving, memory, and flexibility as they interact with their environment.
- *Physical:* Children will develop control of large and small muscles for movement and manipulation of materials.
- *Language and Literacy:* Children will demonstrate developmentally appropriate receptive and expressive language skills, as well as communication and literacy strategies in their home language(s) (may be English or another/other language(s)). English language learners will increase their use and comprehension of English.
- *Family Engagement:* Families will be actively engaged in the program and their child's development.

## Phase-in Process

We want to make sure your child(ren)'s transition into our school setting is as smooth and joyful as possible. For this reason, we ask that you, or someone who is a secondary caregiver or an important figure in your child's life, attend for a few hours of the first day – or days – of school if possible. We encourage this phase-in process so that you can observe and experience the activities your child will be doing with their teachers and provide helpful feedback to your child(ren)'s teachers on things your child may need from them, easing your child(ren)'s transition into this new setting. If a letter to your employer would be helpful in planning and scheduling this important beginning, we would be happy to provide you with one. We would also suggest that you consider bringing items from home, such as a picture of you and a small age-appropriate toy. Finally, we ask that you provide our team with a picture of each person who will be dropping off/picking up your child, so that we can get to know you and your family and so that we can easily identify family members during drop off/pickup.

## Screenings and Child Assessments

Educare screens children 45 days after their initial enrollment and annually to ensure we are accurately serving your child's needs as they grow and develop. Early Head Start children are screened more frequently according to guidance from the screening tools we use. These screenings are conducted in collaboration with parents and the results of the screenings are shared in writing.

Children birth-to-three receive a developmental screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3). Additionally, behavioral screening is conducted using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (ASQ:SE). Preschool children are also screened using the ASQ:SE, and the developmental screening is the Early Screening Inventory (ESI-R).

These results are also shared with parents in writing. Children's hearing screenings who are birth-to-three are conducted using the OAE (Otocoustic emission equipment) and for vision screenings are conducted using the Developmental Milestone (children zero-to-12 months) and PlusOptix for children 13 months to three years and for those with development delays or disabilities (ages four-to-five years) that impair their ability to follow instructions. Children in our Head Start program (ages three-to-five years) hearing and vision screenings are conducted by a certified screener by Illinois Department of Public Health. Parents sign consent for all child screenings as part of the enrollment packet process.



Educare's primary assessment tool is *Teaching Strategies Gold* (TSG). This assessment tool is aligned with our curriculum and our state's early learning standards. This assessment has key objectives for learning and development that follow an age-appropriate developmental continuum. Teachers use this assessment threetimes per year. Results of the assessment are shared with families during parent/staff conferences and parents are also provided a progress report. What is unique about this assessment is that the teachers collect information on your child(ren)'s developmental accomplishments and load the information into a portfolio that documents your child(ren)'s developmental accomplishments. As a parent, you can also access this portfolio to see how your child is doing socially and academically.

Another component of child assessments and teacher coaching practices involves the use of recording classroom interactions via the Swivl video recording system. The video recordings are used for teacher coaching feedback and to

evaluate classrooms interactions and are kept confidential for staff development purposes only.

Educare National Evaluation

As mentioned earlier in the Educare Model section, Educare Chicago is a model for early childhood services, and we participate in a national evaluation that seeks to exemplify research-based practices and data-driven decision-making for improving quality and child outcomes in early childhood education. We collect data on staff, families, classroom effectiveness, classroom quality and child outcomes that are included in a study of the 25 Educare schools. Educare Chicago has a local evaluation team that assists with data collection, data sharing and utilization, to inform services for children and families.

Additional assessments that are used as measures of social or academic progress are:

- eDECA
- Preschool Language Scale
- Bracken
- Step
- Measures Social Emotional
- Measures Language Skills
- Measures School Readiness
- Phonological Awareness
- 6 months preschool
- Twos - Preschool
- Kindergarten Bound

Inclusion

Implementing Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individualized Education Programs (IEP) are part of effective teaching for children identified with diverse learning needs or disabilities. By creating inclusive environments, we are supporting all children’s positive outcomes by ensuring effective lesson and education access for children with disabilities and/or other diverse learning needs across all the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework domains.

If your child’s developmental or social emotional evaluation determines additional support may be beneficial, your family will work together with the disabilities & mental health supervisor, teaching staff and FSS, on next steps that will help ensure your child’s needs are met. If you have questions about development, inclusion, or how we serve children with disabilities and/or diverse learning needs, please ask your child(ren)’s teachers or reach out to our disabilities & mental health supervisor for further details.

The Arts

What is art? Art is music, creative writing, visual arts, theater, pretend play, dance and sculpture. We utilize art in the classroom as a means of enriching academics and further engaging children in the process of learning. Throughout the year, resident artists provide rich experiences for your child(ren) in the areas of drawing/painting, dance, music, and storytelling. The art experience also extends to your family as well. During the year you, along with your child, may experience the following:

- Live on-site performances
- An artistic environment
- Children engaged in activities in the classroom that include artistic expression



## Outdoor Play

Being outside is a big part of what we do each day within our curriculum approach. We believe that being outdoors provides your child(ren) an important additional learning perspective and that outside time contributes to their overall development.

We take children outdoors every day so they can crawl and explore, run, jump, swing, climb and use all the gross motor skills. We also talk about the things children see, hear, touch and feel so they become aware of changes in their outdoor environment. Going outside particularly benefits your child(ren)'s health. Fresh air and physical activity help strengthen children's immune systems and lessen their chances of getting contagious viruses. Remember that viruses share the indoor climate with us. These are reasons why we stress outdoor play. If your child cannot participate in outdoor activities, a doctor's statement would need to be provided.



All children will need to have clothes for all weather settings. For example, if it is snowing, your child will need boots, gloves or mittens, scarves and hats. Please know that your child's safety is always primary. We will not go outdoors if it is dangerous or if it is below 25 degrees, or if the heat index is above 90 degrees.

## Naptime

After a busy morning of play, all children must rest. In the zero-to-three classrooms, nap is defined by you, the parent or guardian, and what the child shows us they need at the center. Most babies (under six months) sleep on and off all day; older infants (six-to-15 months) usually sleep twice a day before their second birthday and then begin to take only one nap after lunch.



In the three-to-five classrooms, children lay down on their cots after lunch and are required to be on their cots for at least one hour. After that, if they are not sleeping, they may get up and do quiet activities until the remainder of their classmates wake up. Soft, soothing music may be played, and teachers may help children fall asleep by sitting near them or rubbing their back.

All children have their own cot/crib, which is labeled and cleaned weekly with bleach and water solution. Linens are sanitized and laundered at least once a week for preschool and twice a week for infants/toddlers by a professional service. We practice safe sleep in our infant classrooms, where children are placed on their backs for sleeping. The use of blankets, pillows, bumper pads and equipment that restricts movement is prohibited per the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing regulations. If your child requires an alternate sleep position, we require a signed note from your child's health care provider.

## SIDS Policy

In order to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), we always place children on their backs to sleep. Special plans and attention are given to those children who need a little more help getting used to sleeping on their back. In the event your child requires an alternate sleep position, Educare will need written authorization by your child's health care provider.

## Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of the curriculum for three-to-five-year-old classrooms and are used to enhance the learning experiences.

Children learn the most from field trips when the trips are connected to something specific, they are studying in their classrooms. For example, when children are studying fruits and vegetables, besides growing them in their classrooms and in the garden, field trips to the supermarket and a local farmers market will help them learn not only about how food grows, but how it gets from the garden or farm to their homes. Because field trips are determined by the course of study in the classroom, each classroom team will research, plan and schedule their classroom's trip(s). The number of trips per classroom will vary based on what is necessary for each study. You will receive written notification about the field trip destination prior to the trip. We welcome your input on ideas for field trips related to classroom study. It is important that parent/other volunteers who come with us on field trips adhere to the following, "Golden Rules for Field Trips." These will ensure that field trips are a positive experience for the children, families and staff, along with ensuring the health and safety of each child.

### Golden Rules for Field Trips

To ensure maximum safety...

- Our program provides lunch (which includes a beverage) for every child and adult who goes on the field trip.
- Parents/volunteers may not buy meals, snacks, drinks or other items for their child or other children. We also ask that all adults participating in the field trip eat the lunch that is provided.
- We ask that parents/volunteers refrain from using offensive language and smoking while on the field trip.
- Due to DCFS licensing standards and safety concerns, we are unable to allow parents/caregivers/volunteers to bring additional children (siblings or friends) on field trips.
- Parents/volunteers attending the field trip are assigned to small groups of children. These groups will need to remain with the classroom staff during the entire field trip. Parents/volunteers must always be responsible and attentive to the children.
- Children and parents/volunteers cannot be dropped off at the field trip location. All parents/volunteers and children will depart for trips from the center.
- Cell phones can be used for emergencies only.

## Nutrition and Mealtime

Educare Chicago participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). During the school day, the children are served breakfast, lunch and a snack, which is catered by EAT Enterprises/Lunch at Hand. We also serve an additional in-house snack to all children who are still in programming from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Meals and snacks are served in a family-style atmosphere. Children are encouraged to have conversations and to try new foods. Our daily menus are posted in your child's classroom and copies are provided to you as well, so that you will always know what is served to your child. Menus are reviewed and approved quarterly by Educare Chicago's certified dietician consultant. We are considered a fish and

peanut/nut-free zone. Due to the sensitivity of fish and peanut/nut allergies within our student body and staff, we have become a peanut-free zone, meaning that we will not have any fish, nut or peanut products in our building.

*Educare no longer offers almond milk as a milk substitute. Our current milk substitutes offered are soy, oat milk, lactose-free and coconut. Our dietician consultant is available to create special menus for children with specific dietary needs.*

Please inform your child's teacher and FSS immediately if your child is allergic to any food or has a special dietary need so that we can make the necessary arrangements for their health and nutrition.

The program provides formula and baby food for infants and toddlers. We use Enfamil formula, Gerber cereals/jar food and Earth's Best jar food. If your child uses a different brand of food, we will try our best to make reasonable accommodations. Children in the Early Head Start program are fed according to what the child shows us they need and the USDA infant meal pattern. Children's need for food and milk are individualized in the Early Head Start program. An infant's intake is written down after each meal. As children can sit up, they are placed at the table in a highchair so they may eat with their friends. As toddlers get older, they are introduced to eating with a spoon and drinking from a cup with no lid.

#### Mealtimes for Children 3-5 are:

- Breakfast served at 8:30 a.m.
- Lunch served at 11:00 a.m. & 11:30 a.m.
- Snack served at 2:30 p.m.
- Late Snack served after 4:00 p.m.

#### Mealtimes for Children 0-3 are:

- Breakfast served 8:30 a.m.
- Lunch served at 11:00 a.m.
- Snack served at 2:30 p.m.
- Late Snack served after 4:00 p.m.

If your child arrives outside of these times, they will be provided with a meal from the menu or food with the same nutritional equivalent. Approved late arrival notices (i.e., for doctor appointments, Early Intervention services, CPS attendance, etc.) are shared with the food aides so that meals can be provided to those children at a different time than the scheduled mealtime.

## Breastfeeding Friendly Environment

Educare is a breastfeeding friendly environment. We support nursing mothers or parents by providing an on-site lactation room located in room 131. Breast milk is incorporated into your child's diet by bottle and mixed in infant cereal. A breast milk storage and handling policy is in place and states:

*Non-frozen breast milk should be brought in a container/bottle that will be used to feed your child. The container should be labeled with your child's name and the date the milk was expressed. We will keep the milk refrigerated. The unused milk left in the container will be returned to you at the end of the day.*

*Frozen human milk must be transported in a single use plastic bag labeled with the child's name and date. The frozen milk will be stored in a freezer and allowed to thaw using warm running water.*

## Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices and employees and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. Mail:  
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410  
2. Fax: (202) 690-7442; or  
3. Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## Program Services

Educare strives to provide the very best services to children and their families. We realize that children and families enrolling at our center may face challenges that require specialized services. Listed below are the program services available to you and your child(ren).

Head Start/Early Head Start Mental Health Consultants: Our mental health consultant works within the classroom with teachers and parents to understand how to help children with developmental differences when needed. Some issues that would be considered are exposure to violence, losses, family stress and other social-emotional factors that affect overall development. Each consultant provides both classroom-level and individualized observations and consultations, to provide feedback and suggestions on how to best meet the social-emotional needs of children and families. Consultants are available to meet with parents one-on-one and provide group-based activities. Any parent interested in consultation services should contact the disabilities & wellness supervisor or their FSS.

Registered Nurse: A registered nurse is available at Educare, Monday-through-Friday to consult with staff and families on health-related issues. Our nurse supports parents by communicating with healthcare providers, providing education to staff and families, creating individual health plans for children with chronic conditions, developing dental treatment plans, monitoring immunizations as well as providing various other on-site services.

Nutrition Consultant: Our nutrition consultant will advise parents and teachers on strategies they can use to encourage proper eating habits as well as planning for special dietary requirements. The nutrition consultant completes classroom observations for picky eaters, creates special menus for children with dietary needs and trains staff.

Inclusion Aide: Some children need additional support while they are learning and growing. At Educare, teachers, parents and FSS work together to ensure every child's needs are met. Whether it's an internal support like our "sensory room" or our "playgroup," or a connection to external resources such as Early Intervention or CPS's Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services, we are here to support your child's specific needs. Our disabilities & wellness supervisor makes sure the referral process goes smoothly and works with teaching staff and the inclusion team to incorporate inclusive practices into the classrooms.

Chicago Public Schools (CPS)/ Community Based Operations (CBO) Pilot: Educare has partnered with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to implement the CPS/CBO Pilot Program for children diagnosed as diverse learners with special needs. CPS will determine if a student is eligible for the CPS/CBO pilot in the following categories intellectual disability, hearing impairment, speech or language impairment, or visual impairment. Once a diverse learner is eligible, they must have a total of 275 minutes (about 4 and a half hours) to be a part of the CPS/CBO pilot. The CPS/CBO pilot has two itinerant teachers, as well as specialty providers who cover a range of services including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy, who assist children who are eligible for the pilot.

Musician & Library Consultant: Our musician & library consultant provides in-person library and music programming. The programming includes monthly music and literacy experiences for children and families, book drives and a music initiative with two cohorts of parents (The Lullaby Project in collaboration with Carnegie Hall). The consultant also manages the parent librarian, providing meaningful project ideas and guidance that furthers our goal of engaging children and families in our library services.

## Parent Engagement

Educare and Start Early offer many ways for you to get involved and play a meaningful role in partnering with staff to support your child's growth and development. While we recognize the busy schedules of many families, we expect that all families can be involved in some or all the activities listed below. Ongoing communication between home and our program is an important part of making you and your child's experience at Educare a successful one. The areas listed below are ways we partner with families in our program:

## Home Visits

Home visits provide great opportunities to make connections between the home and the program setting. They offer a chance for parents and staff to get to know one another and for staff to give individualized attention to family strengths, interests and goals. The Office of Head Start requires two home visits per year for all enrolled children/families. The first home visit must take place prior to enrollment or within 15 days of your start date. The second home visit will take place in the spring. Your education team and FSS will work with you to arrange the most convenient times for these visits.

## Family Partnership Agreements

Head Start requires that we partner with parents/guardians of the children in our program to, “Establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths and necessary services and other supports.” (*Head Start Performance Standards*). We do this by working with you to complete your Family Partnership Goals (FPA). Your FSS will work with you on understanding your family’s strengths, goals and any areas in which we can help you receive the support necessary to reach those goals. Your FSS will review your FPA goals with you throughout the program year to see if your needs have changed or what – if any – additional support you need in achieving the goals you have set. Anytime we can be of assistance to you in finding services or resources, please feel free to talk to your FSS.

## Educare Family Store

Educare has a free family store that all enrolled parents/guardians can visit once per month. During your visit you may select three items you may need. Items include diapers, pull-ups, laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, hygiene products and even clothing. Items vary month to month depending on the donations received. Additionally, if you participate in any family engagement opportunity, you will receive one additional item from the store that month. If you have more than one enrolled child, you will receive one additional item for each enrolled child.

## Parent - Staff Conferences

Parent conferences are held two times per year. The Office of Head Start requires that programs meet with families at least twice per year to discuss your child(ren)’s progress and your progress in setting and updating goals. These are scheduled meetings, but you can request a personal meeting any time during the year. The conference is a time to share information, talk about goals and report on what is going on in our classrooms.

## Family Volunteers

We welcome the involvement of all family members and are always interested in hearing your suggestions, concerns or thoughts. Parents or other close family members are strongly encouraged to participate in the classroom, go on field trips, and attend workshops and/or trainings at our center. City regulations require that all volunteering in close contact with children need a current physical with TB results on file. Please ask your FSS team member for the necessary forms.

When a family member volunteers at Educare Chicago, they will be required to record their hours of volunteer time on an “In-Kind” form. It is a requirement for all Head Start programs to keep track of the number of volunteer hours completed each year and report that information.

## Parent Committee Meetings

All parents of enrolled children are automatically members of our Parent Committee. Parent Committee meetings are regularly scheduled meetings where parents/guardians of currently enrolled children can learn more about program activities and actively partner with program staff to improve services for all Head Start and Early Head Start children and their families. The goal of the Parent Committee is to foster shared leadership, uplifting the parent voice on key issues that impact children within our program. Parents attending Parent Committee will be directly involved in informing decisions, seeing program data and hearing important information about school operations. Each year in October, Educare Chicago elects the following leaders:

### President

- Formally opens, facilitates and closes the meeting out.
- Leads meeting discussions.

- Assists Educare Chicago leadership staff in developing the meeting agenda.
- Requests assistance or information from staff when there are concerns that need resolution.
- Assists in recruiting volunteers for center activities.

#### **Vice President**

- Fulfills the duties of the president in their absence.
- Assists the president of the Parent Committee and Educare Chicago leadership in organizing the meeting agenda.
- Assists in recruiting volunteers for center activities.
- Organizes and decorates parent bulletin board.

#### **Secretary**

- Works with administrative staff on creating flyers.
- Records and reads the minutes of the meeting.
- Posts agenda and minutes in the center.
- Assists in organizing meeting agenda.
- Creates flyers for parent meetings.

### **Policy Council**

The Policy Council shares responsibility with Early/Head Start staff for overseeing the delivery of quality services to children and families. Through the Policy Council and Parent Committee, parents and other community representatives are empowered to actively participate in the shared decision-making process. Serving on the Policy Council provides an opportunity for parents to develop valuable team building, communication and leadership skills. Council members are nominated and elected annually by currently enrolled parents. Once elected, you can begin to be a part of a unique experience that will thoroughly enrich your life.

*Educare Chicago elects two Early Head Start and two Head Start Policy Council Representatives each school year.*

[See Appendix I for more information.](#)

#### **Policy Council Requirements**

- Be parent/guardian of a child that is currently enrolled in an Early/Head Start program that is sponsored by Start Early.
- Attendance of Policy Council meetings.
- Participation on the Policy Council subcommittees and attendance of subcommittee meetings.
- The sharing of your concerns and ideas.
- The attendance and dissemination of information at Parent Committee meetings with other parents regarding Policy Council meetings.

#### **Roles & Responsibilities of a Policy Council Representative**

- Collaborating with program staff to guide programming for Early/Head Start children and families.
- Making key decisions involving program budgets, federal grants, enrollment and selection criteria.
- Supporting the self-assessment process.
- Assisting with employee interviews and make decisions on the hiring and termination of key Early/Head Start staff.
- Ongoing monitoring of results data on school readiness goals and other information, ensuring compliance and organizational growth.

#### **Policy Council Required Events:**

- Monthly Policy Council meetings.
- Policy Council kickoff event.
- Parent appreciation dinner.
- Subcommittee meetings.
- Health Service Advisory Council.
- Policy Council meetings:

- Policy Council meets on the first Wednesday of every month. Policy Council members also receive a stipend for each meeting attended.

## Classroom Activity Events

Classroom activity events provide parents meeting opportunities with teachers and their assigned FSS. As a part of these events, we invite parents to discuss in-depth age-appropriate developmental expectations along with other questions they may have about their child's learning and development plan. This is also an opportunity for parents to share any ideas they may have to further facilitate learning and enhance the curriculum.

## Male Involvement

Educare Chicago hosts a Male Involvement Breakfast Club for all male-identifying people that are important and active in the lives of the children enrolled in our program. It is an opportunity for fathers and father figures to share their parenting experiences as well as goals for their children, their families and themselves with other males in the program. The Male Involvement Breakfast Club is also an opportunity to engage and incorporate the male parental figure point of view into the program, so that male figures feel welcomed and engaged in their children's educational process in a meaningful way.

## Parent University

Our Parent University offers various workshops and other parent engagement activities. Each year in the enrollment packet, Educare Chicago asks parents to complete a survey on parent interests in training, learning opportunities and other activities in the program. This information is used to create a series of sessions specifically for our parents. Past activities have included: credit building, finances, co-parenting, CPR, navigating the IEP process in Chicago Public Schools, wellness, vision board planning and summer activities for parents and their family.

## Celebrations

### Religious and Cultural Observations

Our program is not affiliated with any religious institution and therefore does not include any type of religious instruction or observances. Our staff respects each family's individual beliefs and faith systems and will never impose personal beliefs on your child or family. We ask that you share with us during enrollment any instructions regarding special traditions or beliefs that your family observes. In the hope that all children will share stories and thoughts freely with each other, children will be hearing about different beliefs and holiday celebrations. Staff will use these differences as educational experiences, integrating these ideas into themes of understanding and respecting diversity. For this reason, specific holidays are not observed.

### Birthdays

In lieu of birthday celebrations, we will have a celebration of learning once a month, commemorating all the accomplishments and milestones that children have achieved throughout the month. As children learn and progress, it is important to honor all of their hard work while encouraging self-confidence and purpose. Celebrations of learning highlight the importance of community and relationships in learning, and help children create lifetime memories around their learning experiences.

## Transitions

We utilize a transition process in our school to support timely continuity of services and to also provide children and their families the appropriate level of assistance while they adjust to changes or new environments.

Transitions must include events and activities that identify and address the changes occurring, promote the growth and development of children and their families, while also leaving space for advocacy, whether on behalf of your child and/or your family.

Some examples of transitions included our daily "Hellos and Goodbyes," moving from lunch to nap time, and getting children prepared for winter and summer breaks from school. For children under the age of five years, making it through any transition (big and small) successfully is an important accomplishment filled sometimes with both excitement and fear. From a young child's perspective, transitioning to a new room with new teachers or leaving Educare Chicago for a brand-new school is a lot of change to take in and manage.

The following are some of the activities/events Educare uses to ensure successful transitions from Early Head Start to Head

Start:

- At 30 months of age, the Early Head Start (EHS) staff will help you determine whether your child should transition to Head Start or another early childhood program when they turn three. You can also opt to keep your child in EHS until they can transition into Head Start or another early childhood program.
- As a part of this process, our team will help you compare preschool options and get you information about how to apply.
- With our staff, you will review your child's health records and discuss what exams, immunizations or other healthcare must be provided to be deemed up to date.
- You will take your child to the doctor to get all required exams, immunizations and other healthcare documents such as Action Plans for chronic conditions and up to date medication orders from your child's medical provider.
- You will be invited to attend Educare's Welcome to Head Start meeting to learn about your child's new classroom placement and the differences between our Early Head Start and Head Start programs.
- Your child will visit their new Educare Head Start classroom.
- You will meet your child's Head Start teacher and FSS.
- Teachers will read books with your child about preschool and Head Start.

The following are some of the activities/events Educare uses to ensure successful transitions from Head Start to kindergarten:

- Your FSS will introduce you to the kindergarten selection process.
- You can attend Educare's GOCPS presentation to learn about where your child can go to kindergarten and how to apply.
- You will be given information to compare grade schools and decide which one is the best fit for your child.
- Educare will host a charter school resource event so you will have the opportunity to meet representatives from area charter schools to ask questions and/or apply for enrollment.
- You will have the opportunity to discuss the transition process during your initial home visit, at your parent conferences, during the spring home visit as well as other times throughout the year, to ensure that you and your child(ren) can successfully transition to your next school experience.
- Kindergarten-bound children will participate in Kindergarten Corner, where – in small groups, for at least three days per week – children will learn what to expect in kindergarten. The topics of focus will be mainly on kindergarten readiness skills.
- Your child will also learn how to maintain their schoolwork in folders, conduct different classroom jobs, work on letter recognition and early reading skills reading, as well as additional skillsets that will ready them for entering kindergarten.
- A kindergarten bound luncheon will be held for you and your child to celebrate your child's transition to kindergarten.

The following are some of the activities/events Educare uses to ensure successful transitions for children with IFSP/IEPs:

- You will be informed of your child's rights, advocacy strategies and the referral process.
- You and your child's teachers will participate in an IEP meeting.
- You and your child's teachers will meet with the new teacher to discuss your child's strengths, challenges and IEP implementation.
- We will ensure you have a copy of your child's most current IEP prior to exiting Head Start.
- We will work with you to determine and secure a kindergarten placement that meets the needs of your child's IEP.
- Educare Chicago has a partnership with Children Family Connections (CFC) and Early Intervention (EI) to support our diverse learners from ages 6 weeks - to three years in receiving Early Intervention services, and who may be eligible to transition to receive services through the Chicago Public Schools at the age of three years.
- We will help you determine where your child is at developmentally during the time of the transition and provide a recommendation on if your child needs to continue services.
- If deemed necessary, a disabilities coordinator will monitor the progress of the transition by maintaining communication with you, the CFC and the Local Education Agency (LEA).

## Transition Ceremony

While we know many families may prefer a formal graduation ceremony, with what we know about children's development, we understand that such ceremonies can be stressful and scary for children so young. For this



reason, rather than treat these big end-of-the-year transitions as a formal graduation ceremony, we welcome them as an opportunity to celebrate our relationship with your child(ren) and with you. This approach is more low-key and less formal, but in the long run we believe it will be more meaningful because the focus is on the experiences and accomplishments of each of your children. The teachers collaborate and create a song, poem or skit to represent their classroom. The ceremony is only an hour long and it's typically held after program hours.

## Our Policies & Rules

### Violence-Free and Smoke/Drug-Free Environment

Start Early programs promote safe and healthy environments for all children and families enrolled. To ensure that our environment remains safe and comfortable for families, children and staff, we ask that you adhere to the following policies:

- All center staff and participants must understand that Start Early programs are violence-free zones for children and adults.
- All families, visitors and staff, must refrain from using offensive language or threats of abuse at the center.
- There is to be no verbal, physical or written abuse displayed toward any child or adult within the center or surrounding property.
- Any display of inappropriate behavior by a parent, guardian or visiting adult will be addressed immediately.
- All members of the center staff are mandated reporters. Any sign of physical or mental abuse by a parent, caregiver or visiting adult upon any child must, by law, be reported to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Whenever possible, we will contact you first. (See our policy listed under *Mandated Reporting Act/Abuse and Neglect Policy* for further information).
- Weapons of any kind are prohibited from the center, classrooms and the grounds. This includes those carried by police or security officers. The presence of any weapons will result in notification of the police.
- Smoking and the use of drugs or alcohol is prohibited on school grounds and during school sponsored activities like field trips. This rule includes the parking lot.
- Please be mindful that secondhand smoking (non-smoking person inhaling the smoke) and thirdhand smoke (odor of smoke on the smoker's clothes/body, car, home being inhaled by others) impacts everyone's respiratory system, especially those with chronic illnesses such as eczema, asthma and allergies. Exposure to second and thirdhand smoke can cause flare-ups, allergy triggers and/or asthma attacks and can affect children of all ages, staff and other families, whether it is cigarette or marijuana smoke.

### Summary of Illinois Law

The Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act and the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Program Act regulate the possession, consumption and storage of recreational and medical cannabis. The Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act was amended, effective January 1, 2020, to permit the recreational use of cannabis in Illinois.

These Acts also contain limitations on the possession, consumption and storage of recreational and medical cannabis in or near licensed and unlicensed childcare facilities, vehicles and in the presence of persons under 21 years of age.

These Acts allow for an individual to use any type of cannabis and continue to be eligible for initial or renewal of licensure for any type of childcare facility; this includes unlicensed relative foster homes and employees of any licensed and unlicensed childcare facility.

**These Acts provide numerous limitations on the use and possession of cannabis (which includes cannabis-infused products) as it relates to childcare. For example, the Acts DO NOT PERMIT:**

Undertaking any task under the influence of cannabis when doing so would constitute negligence, professional malpractice or professional misconduct;

- Possessing cannabis in a private residence that is used at any time to provide licensed or unlicensed childcare (day care and foster care) or other similar social service care on the premises;
- Using cannabis in a private residence that is used at any time to provide licensed or unlicensed childcare (day care and foster care) or other similar social service care on the premises;
- Using cannabis in any public place;
- Using cannabis knowingly in close physical proximity to anyone under 21 years of age who is not a registered medical cannabis patient under the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Pilot Program Act;

- Smoking cannabis in any place where smoking is prohibited under the Smoke Free Illinois Act;
- Facilitating the use of cannabis by any person who is not allowed to use cannabis under either the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act or the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Program Act;
- Using cannabis in any motor vehicle; or
- Possessing (driver or passenger) cannabis in a motor vehicle except in a sealed, odor-proof, child-resistant cannabis container.

Any violation of these laws may subject the violator to civil or criminal penalties.

## Confidentiality Statement

We recognize that, as you participate in our program, you share very confidential and private information with us. All forms and information on you, your child(ren) and your family are considered confidential and can only be viewed by appropriate Start Early staff and designated external consultants and reviewers. Other persons will not be given access to this information without your written consent unless it becomes necessary to ensure you or your child(ren)'s safety and welfare. These records are secured both in locked file cabinets and our Management Information System.

## Media Releases:

Each year in your enrollment packet, parents agree and acknowledge the following regarding photos that are taken at Educare. Parents sign a release for themselves as well as for the child enrolled at Educare. Parents are not required to sign the release. Parents of foster children cannot approve or sign the media release.

By signing the media release, parents grant permission to Start Early and its licensees, employees, successors, assigns and those acting with its authority to use your and your child(ren)'s name, image, statements, and video

and audio recordings ("Images") for any lawful purpose, including to promote Start Early and early childhood education. While Start Early attempts to retire Images after five years from the date the Image was captured, the permission granted on this form is indefinite (meaning forever) and cannot be terminated. Therefore, Start Early and those acting under its authority reserve the right to use Images at any time.

Start Early may:

Modify, reproduce or edit the Images;

- Use the Images (including as modified in any way) as part of other materials or print or electronic media (e.g. videos, marketing materials, newsletters, websites, advertisements) (the "Materials");
- Use the minor's name in connection with the Images and Materials; and
- Display, distribute, broadcast, or publicly perform the Images or any of the Materials.

I understand and agree that all copyrights and other intellectual property rights in the Images and Materials are the exclusive property of Start Early. I waive all rights that I or the minor may have to:

- Review, inspect or approve the Images or the Materials;
- Receive royalties or other compensation related to the Images or the Materials; and
- Receive notice of Start Early's use of the Images.

I release Start Early from any claim, demand or cause of action, whether now known or unknown, for compensation, defamation, invasion of right to privacy, publicity or personality or any similar matter, or based upon or related to the publication or use of the Images or the Materials. I make this waiver for myself and the minor.

A copy of the media release in its entirety can be provided to you by your FSS.

## School & Classroom Video Surveillance

Educare has video surveillance cameras which are located on the outside of the Educare facility and inside the Educare facility, including the classrooms. The purpose of the video cameras is for your child's safety, as well as the safety of Early Head Start and Head Start teachers, staff and parents. We take pride in providing the safest school environment for our staff and families. All classrooms have a minimum of two (2) cameras; larger classrooms have three (3). The Early Head Start and Head Start programs have posted video surveillance signs to inform the general public of the video cameras. Extreme care is enforced in safeguarding the surveillance media against unauthorized use.

Video surveillance cameras will never be used in areas where staff, children, parents and visitors would have an expectation of privacy, such as the restrooms.

The use of the video surveillance cameras will be conducted in a professional, ethical and legal manner and any diversion of the use of these cameras for other purposes is prohibited.

## Technology Enhanced Parent Communications

In the enrollment packet that parents complete each year, Educare requests consent from parents to include your information in our communications database(s). This consent will allow you to receive reminders of Educare meetings and events. If you consent to be included in the email and/or text groups, you will begin to receive e- mails and/or text messages from Educare. These communication methods will not be used to reach you in the event of an emergency concerning your child.

Please complete a consent form for any parent wishing to be included in our regular communications. You have the right to stop or unsubscribe to messages at any time.

## Mandated Reporting Act / Abuse and Neglect Policy

All staff members of Start Early's Educare Chicago School are legally mandated by the State of Illinois to report suspected child abuse and neglect. If we have reason to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred or is occurring, we are required BY LAW to report it to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). For this reason, we will ask you about all serious bumps, bruises, burns, injuries, or observed neglect of a child's health or safety needs. If a call needs to be placed because of suspected child abuse and neglect, you will be asked to join a special meeting where we make the call and can discuss a plan for implementing a potential safety plan. Please let us know if your child has had an accident outside of the program.

## Guidance & Discipline Policy

Guidance and discipline are viewed as learning opportunities and the joint responsibility of staff and family. In our program, developmentally appropriate activities and a daily schedule will be provided to engage your child mentally and physically. Only people who have a relationship with your child will set and follow through with the limits and consequences we outline, keeping in consideration your child(ren)'s different levels of ability to control their own behavior. The final goal of this policy is to promote self-control, which is one element of social emotional development that enables children to form friendships, communicate effectively, and use others as resources for problem solving and gaining social competence.

### Procedures

1. Adults will use positive techniques to help children develop self-control, such as modeling expected behavior, redirecting children to acceptable activities, and intervening to implement consequences for unacceptable or harmful behavior.
2. A process of observing, anticipating and redirecting will be utilized to guide behavior.
3. Limits and consequences shall be clear and understandable to the child, consistently implemented, and explained to the child at their level of understanding before and as part of the consequence.
4. Guidance and consequences shall be developmentally appropriate, logically related to the child's act and will be proportional in relation to unacceptable behavior. The child shall be made aware of the relationship between the act and the consequences. Firm positive statements about behaviors or redirection of behaviors shall be the accepted techniques for use with infants and toddlers.
5. Direct service staff will develop consistent and clear rules, involving children, wherever possible, in the development of those rules.
6. Direct service staff will assist children to develop age-appropriate problem-solving skills by guiding them and by modeling how to solve problems and to resolve differences.
7. Direct service staff will use books, stories, puppets and other experiences to reinforce positive social behaviors.
8. Direct service staff will utilize other resources (current curriculum books and supervisors) to develop plans for guidance and discipline specific to preschool children, infants and toddlers.
9. Preschool children shall have reasonable opportunity to resolve their own conflicts.
10. If a child needs to be away from the group or activity to regain control, the child will be redirected to another space with adult supervision, with the opportunity to engage in an alternate activity. The child will be given the opportunity to re-engage in the original activity/group with the support of the teaching staff.
11. Teaching staff will talk with parents to develop an approach that supports the child and bridges the home and program environments to provide consistency for the child.

12. Specific behavior management plans may be developed to support the needs of a child. These specific plans will be developed with the family, teaching staff, FSS, appropriate management staff and our mental health/developmental consultant. Plans may include individualized play experiences to promote emotional regulation, planned breaks away from the group and consultation with additional specialists (with parent consent). This must be documented in the child's file. All staff working with the child shall receive training on implementing the plan and cooperate in its implementation.

The following behaviors are prohibited by any adults in the center, including staff, parents and visitors:

- Time out of any kind.
- Corporal punishment including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching and other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear.
- Threats regarding or the actual withdrawal of food, rest, use of the bathroom or activities.
- Children shall not be disciplined for toilet accidents.
- Abusive or profane language.
- Any form of public or private humiliation including threats of physical punishment.
- Any form of emotional abuse including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing and/or isolating a child.

Head Start Performance Standards severely limit or prohibit suspension and expulsion of children due to a child's behavior.

## Program Eligibility Requirements

### Early/Head Start

Educare Chicago is an Early/Head Start program and receives federal funding from the Office of Head Start to provide comprehensive services for children and families. We provide center-based early childhood education to children aged six weeks to five years old, as well as comprehensive case management to their families. Enrollment is prioritized based on a families' needs.

#### Eligibility:

- What determines Early/Head Start Eligibility?
  - Age
  - Income, Public Assistance, SNAP Recipient, Homelessness, Foster Child

#### Some documents that are needed to verify eligibility:

- Birth Certificate (enrolling child)
- Identification (proof of residency)
- W2 (last 12 months of income)
- Medical card
- Evidence of SNAP, TANF or SSI
- Placement letter or other government issued document
- Interview with ERSEA staff

#### Other documents needed prior to enrollment

- Current physical (well child exam) on a Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) form
- Health Action Plans for any chronic condition (asthma, eczema, heart murmur, etc)
- IFSP/IEP
- Evaluations from medical doctor, local school or Early Intervention

### IDHS Childcare Assistance Program Eligibility

*Also known as Childcare Initiatives or Action for Children*

Educare Chicago also receives funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

To qualify for the program and receive full-day childcare, an applicant must:

- Live in Illinois
- Be employed and/or participating in an eligible educational activity (High school, trade school, undergraduate college...)

- Have children younger than 13 that need care while you are working or going to school
- Children with documented disabilities or diverse learning needs who may be eligible up to the age of 19  
<http://intranet.dhs.illinois.gov/oneweb/page.aspx?item=118093>
- Have family income below allowable limits (see 01.02.01 - Income Guidelines, 2021-07-01 by family size)

A more complete explanation of CCAP eligibility can be found in the **[Child Care Assistance Program \(CCAP\) Policy Manual](#)**

Use the Child Care Eligibility Calculator to see if you qualify:

<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/applications/ChildCareEligCalc/eligcalc.html>

If a family receives the childcare subsidy, you qualify for a full-day program and are responsible for paying the monthly copayment, which is determined by your family income and family size. To maintain full-day services, parents must maintain eligibility for CCAP.

## IDHS Child Care Eligibility Change of Information

In order **to avoid overpayments** to the State of Illinois, and to continuously receive the childcare subsidy, parents **must report changes to their eligibility** immediately and/or within **five days** of the change. Changes include:

- Job change/new job/second job/job loss
- Increase or decrease in work hours/schedule/shift changes
- Increase or decrease in wages
- Beginning/stopping attending school
- Semester/training program break
- Increase in family size
- Newly married
- Maternity/medical leave
- Change in custody
- Address change

Educare ERSEA staff will notify the state on your behalf. Failure to report changes can sometimes result in an overpayment that you will have to repay to the state.

## Copayment Procedures for IDHS Child Care Assistance Program

We are able to provide full-day services to children and families through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). We are required by that contract to assess and collect fees, or copayments, from parents for childcare services. You will receive an invoice from Educare that states your copayment, as determined by the state of Illinois. Your copayment amount will also appear on your approval letter that is mailed to you from the state of Illinois. Educare copayment statements are issued on the fifth of each month and copayments are due by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Copayments must be paid by money order made payable to Start Early or through our new electronic payment system: [Educare Pay Now \(payerexpress.com\)](http://payerexpress.com). We are unable to accept cash for payment towards your copayment. In the event you are unable to pay your monthly copay, you will need to make payment arrangements with the family support & community engagement manager, site administrator or school director.

## Educare Copayment Attendance Incentive:

If your child maintains 85% attendance and you are current in paying your copay, Educare Chicago will cut your payment in half if the state issued copayment amount is \$40 or more. We will eliminate your copayment, if you maintain 85% attendance and are current in paying your copay if your copay is less than \$40. Contact someone from our ERSEA Team for more information.

## DFSS Prevention Initiative (PI) and Preschool For All (PFA) Enrollment for Educare Students

Educare Chicago, in partnership with Chicago Public School (CPS) and the Department of Family & Support Services



(DFSS) receives funding as a community-based Preschool and Early Learning Program. Through this programming, we provide a wide range of support for families called the Prevention Initiative (PI) and Preschool for All (PFA). At initial enrollment, all Educare Chicago families will need to complete a current school year enrollment application. After completing the first application, Educare will update your enrollment each year. If you are unable to complete the enrollment application, the ERSEA staff at Educare will support you too. If you have additional questions, please let us know.

[Community-Based | Chicago Early Learning](#) or [CPS | SchoolMint Enroll](#)

## Attendance/Absentee Policy

Regular attendance is important for your child to establish and maintain a consistent relationship with their teachers and classmates. Consistent attendance also helps with your child's development and feeling comfortable in a school setting, which ultimately helps them gain the important skills necessary for kindergarten readiness. Therefore, it is critical that children be present and on time every day. We recognize that some circumstances make it necessary for a child to miss school but encourage you to limit absences as much as possible.

Excused absences are defined as the following:

- Family Emergency
- Planned vacation (up to 2 weeks)
- Illness (children absent for 3 consecutive days need to submit a doctor's note to return)
- Medical appointments (for the child)

School attendance is monitored regularly. If your child's attendance falls below 85%, your FSS and your child's teacher will schedule a meeting with you to discuss strategies to help increase your child's attendance rate. If your child's attendance continues to fall below 85%, you will be placed on an Attendance Success Plan to assist you in finding resources and documenting strategies to ensure your child's attendance improves. Some strategies may include locating other programs that align better with your child care needs.

Educare values consistent and on time attendance. As part of our "Keeping it 100 Attendance Campaign," each month children with 90% or more attendance will be celebrated with certificates, prizes and/or special activities. When possible, parents will also receive an incentive as well.

### Consecutive Absences

When there are two or more consecutive unexplained absences and your FSS or classroom teachers have been unable to contact the family, the FSS (along with classroom teachers or another FSS) will perform a home visit or use other methods of direct contact, including reaching out to your emergency contacts. At this time, FSS will discuss the importance of regular attendance and develop an Attendance Success Plan with the family. This information must be documented, and a copy of the attendance plan will be placed in the child's file. After the meeting/home visit, the child is then expected to return to the program the next day unless the staff and the parent have reached a mutually agreeable return date. If the family is unable to maintain consistent attendance, the FSS will work with the family to find a program more aligned with the family's needs.

If your child is absent for 3 consecutive days due to illness, as noted above, you must speak with a member of the health team and submit a doctor's note before your child returns to Educare.

## Parent-School Attendance Check-in Procedure

To ensure you and your child(ren) are safe when they do not arrive at school on time, Educare, in partnership with Head Start, has implemented a parent-school attendance check-in time. Each day, if your child has not arrived at school by **9:00 a.m.**, someone from the school will call the enrolling parent to check on the safety and attendance of your child(ren). If you know in advance that your child will be absent, please inform your classroom teacher and your FSS, so the program will know when to expect your child. If your phone number changes at any time, please notify your classroom teacher and your FSS. Please proactively partner with us to ensure your child(ren) are receiving the best education at Educare.

### Easy things to remember regarding the policy:

1. Inform your child's teacher, FSS or the front office admin if your child will be absent. Contact us at 773- 924-2334.
2. If you must leave a voicemail, please state your child's name, room number, and whether your child will be absent and the date(s) of the absence.
3. Always keep your contact information and emergency contact information current.
4. Strive to bring your child on time to school every day.
5. Let us know how we can support you.

### Educare will:

1. Call you each day when your child has not arrived at school by 9 a.m. if we haven't already been informed of the absence.
2. If we are unable to reach you, we may call the emergency contacts to ensure you and your child(ren) are okay.

If you have questions regarding the Head Start requirement, please contact your FSS.



### Arrival and Departure

All parents and children are expected to enter the center through the front entrance at 5044 S. Wabash Avenue. Please park responsibly by the Wabash entrance, as parking space is very limited. Do not double park on Wabash or leave your car unattended with minor children or pets inside unsupervised. If a parent, grandparent or legal guardian is attending a school sponsored event that is scheduled after the school day (4 p.m. or after) such as Parent Committee, Policy Council or a community meeting, they may park in the parking lot on State Street and use the back State Street entrance. If you need temporary or special accommodation to enter through the back entrance, you must make a request to our school director or site administrator. In the event a parent/legal guardian or individual authorized to pick up or drop off a child, has a disability and a handicap

sticker, accommodations will be made to allow parking in a handicap designated space in the State Street parking lot and use of the back entrance. If approved, the security guard will be informed of the special accommodation.



### Arrival

To ensure that we meet both your goals and ours, it is extremely important for your child to arrive at school on time. For parents with current child care subsidy approval, full-day childcare ranges between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. For parents that do not have child care subsidy approval, the school day is 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m, Monday through Friday. All children will complete a daily health check with the teaching team.

Our program is structured so that each learning activity builds upon the one before and leads to the one that follows. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to have your child at school on time daily and avoid arriving after 8:30 a.m. As a reminder, Educare highly encourages a 9:00 a.m. cutoff time.

### Departure

**All children must be picked up no later than their scheduled pick-up time.** We understand that emergencies may arise that could delay you, so please call the school if you cannot make it on time.

For safety reasons, children enrolled in the program cannot be released to children under the age of 14. Your child will only be released to individuals you have designated on the pick-up form. They will need to show some form of picture identification such as a driver's license, state ID, school ID, military ID or passport. Additionally, staff will never release your child to anyone who appears to be intoxicated or incapacitated.

We understand that, on rare occasions, your child may arrive or be picked up late due to unforeseen circumstances. However, if a pattern of lateness develops, your FSS will contact you to address the issue. If the pattern continues to occur, your pick-up or drop-off times may be adjusted or your FSS may make suggestions on programs more convenient for your schedule.

### Late Pick-up

**Educare closes at 5:00 p.m. for families receiving the childcare subsidy.** Children are expected to be picked up prior to closing or at their assigned pick-up time. **In the event you are running late (past your child's scheduled pick-up time), or you arrive after 5:00 p.m., you must contact the school and inform the school that you will be late and provide**

**the approximate time of your arrival.** A late fee is applied to all children even when the parent has called to inform the school of the late pick up. **Parents picking up after their scheduled pick-up time will be charged \$1.00 per minute per child.** This charge begins five minutes after your scheduled pick-up time. Upon picking up your child, you will be asked to sign your child out and sign the Late Pick-Up Slip. Late pick-up fees should be paid at the time of the late pick up. In the event the fee is not paid, the late pick-up fee will be added to your monthly copayment statement. **You will be expected to pay all fees by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.** In the event you are challenged with paying your monthly copayment, payment arrangements can be made or you may volunteer at Educare in lieu of payment.

If a parent is late and has not contacted the center, and we are unable to reach you or any of your designated pick-up persons by 5:30 p.m., we will contact the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)/Chicago Police Department and report that your child has not been picked up, in accordance with DCFS licensing standards.

### Grace Period for Late Pick-up

Parents will receive three late pick-up warnings prior to being issued a late pick-up fee. Fees will accrue one minute after your pick-up time or at 5:01 p.m. if you receive the childcare subsidy. Excessive late pick-up may result in a change of your pick-up time.

## Site Entrance and Visiting Policy

Our school is a special protected place for children. It is a place where children learn and grow. It should be a safe and predictable environment for them. For this reason, we must be careful and mindful of the activity and traffic in the center. Our policy for site entrance and visiting is the following:

- For the safety of our program, all parents, children and visitors are expected to enter the center through the front entrance at 5044 S. Wabash Avenue or our back entrance at 5025 S. State Street.
- All parents or designated pick-up person(s) entering the center will be asked to show a picture ID to security, which will be checked against the child's approved pick-up list.
- All children must be signed in and out each day, indicating the time of the drop-off and pick-up.
- Parents, or designated drop-off persons, must also swipe in/out in the child's classroom.
- Parents/guardians, please remember that your child will only be released to people listed on your release form. We cannot release children to people who are not on the list. We will have to call you if someone shows up to pick up your child and we don't have them listed. If you are having someone pick up your child, who has never done pick-up before and they will not be a regular pick-up person, you must provide us with that permission in writing or you must call the teacher to inform us of the change in pick-up. That person will need to show photo identification in order for us to release the child.
- Parents/guardians and individuals on the pick-up list are allowed to go to the classroom without an escort. All other visitors or unauthorized persons must wait for an escort.
- No more than one adult should go to the classroom to pick up a child unless both parents have arrived for pick-up.
- Parents who bring other children to the center should always be sure to supervise them.
- To ensure the safety of all the children, please do not allow your child(ren) to run in the hallways of the center.
- Please do not use cell phones, including earpieces, in any classroom. Please complete your conversation prior to entering the classroom.

## Transportation

Educare does not provide transportation services. We do, however, charter school buses for family outings and classroom field trips. You can access Educare via public transportation. The closest Red Line stop is located at 47th and Dan Ryan/State Street. The closest Green Line stop is at 51st and Prairie. Bus #15 Jeffery Local runs east-west on 51st. Bus #29 runs north-south on State St. Visit [www.metrarail.com/maps-schedules](http://www.metrarail.com/maps-schedules) to find out additional information regarding Metra routes, schedules, and fees.

In cases of an emergency or extreme hardship, Educare provides Ventra passes on a limited basis.

### Chicago Public School Transportation

If your child is found eligible for transportation through CPS regarding receiving services offsite through their IEP or IFSP, their assigned school can provide them with the appropriate transportation. The form must be completed and signed by the parent or guardian and signed by the associated school principal.

## Emergency Contact Information

Periodically, we will ask you to update your child enrollment form so that we can ensure accuracy in our records. Please notify us of any change in your address, telephone (work/home) numbers, emergency contact persons or telephone changes for them. It is critical that we be able to reach someone in case of illness or emergency with your child.

## Personal Belongings

The center's overall policy is that children do not bring personal belongings (toys, games, stuffed animals, etc.) to the center unless they are requested. This is to prevent the loss of these precious items.

If your child is wearing diapers or pull-ups, the program will provide diapers or pull-ups as well as bottles and pacifiers. The program will also provide infant formula. If you want your child to use a specific brand of diaper, bottle, pacifier or formula different from what we provide, you will have to bring them in at your own cost.

The following items should not be brought to school:

### Money

- Medication (unless it is by prescription and given to the teachers)
- Toys (unless requested by the teachers for special occasions)
- Valuable or breakable items
- Sharp objects
- Candy, gum or food

## Clothing and Jewelry

Our primary goal is to ensure a happy, safe and healthy start for the children in our care. For this reason, we ask that all children not wear any dangling jewelry, hoop earrings or necklaces that can get snagged or caught on something. We also cannot take responsibility for any lost jewelry. Please do not send your children to school with any jewelry. During play these items can easily fall off and be lost or cause injury. Beads on shoestrings are also not allowed for this reason.

In addition to the items listed above, children in the Early Head Start (0-3) program cannot wear barrettes, beads, or any ball-bearing accessories (like pony-tail holders with colored balls on the ends or ribbons for bows.) Again, these items can fall off and quickly end up in the mouth of a young child and are considered choking hazards.

Due to messy play with materials such as paint and water as well as possible spills from food, your child's clothing may need to be changed during the course of the day. Therefore, we need a change of clothing (shirts, pants, underwear and socks) to be always kept in your child's personal cubby. Clothing should be clearly labeled with your child's name. We also ask that you check the clothes periodically to adjust for seasonal and size changes.

Remember, we go outside every day if the weather permits, so please dress your child accordingly. For example, if it is cold, your child will need boots, gloves or mittens, a scarf and hat.

## Your Gifts to Us

Parents/caregivers can best show their appreciation to staff and volunteers through kind words (written or spoken). There is no better gift than for you to allow us to share in the life of your child and family. Please note that staff and volunteers cannot accept gifts or money from parents/caregivers. It would be our pleasure to accept letters, drawings and/or photos!

## Accidents or Injuries to Children in the Center

As always, safety is our first priority at Educare Chicago. However, sometimes during normal development such as a toddler learning to walk or a preschooler learning through exploration, accidents and/or injuries will occur. In the event your child sustains a minor injury at school, we will provide basic first aid. Basic first aid consists of cleaning the area with soap and water, use of band-aid, and/or applying an ice pack if needed. Parents will be notified of injury either at pick-up or via phone call.

Accident/injury reports will be written whenever a child is injured or when a mark on a child's body has occurred while in our care. Some examples of accident reporting would be falls, bumps, scratches, scrapes, bites from another child or any other injury resulting in medical attention or a call to 911. If the injury is serious, a supervisor will be contacted immediately. If it is



determined that the child requires immediate medical care, staff will call 911 and a staff person will accompany the child to the emergency room until the parent arrives.

The parent will be called when there is an accident/injury with their child which requires medical attention. If other children were involved (i.e., Child A was bitten by Child B, and Child A is injured), the other child's name will not be mentioned in the accident report form to protect the confidentiality of all families. The accident/injury form will be given to the parent at pick-up. If staff are unable to reach the parent during the day, staff will explain the accident or injury to the person picking up the child.

## Health Guidelines

To ensure that your child is healthy enough to attend school, a teaching staff member will conduct a daily health check to identify signs and symptoms of illness in order to intervene early. Daily Health Checks must be done with the teacher, parent and child present. If there are any symptoms, we will ask you to take your child home for the day. At home, if you notice any symptoms listed in our Medical Exclusion Procedure, please do not bring your child to school until the symptoms subside and please call each day of your child's absence to notify us that your child will be missing school. [See Appendix II for more specific information about our Medical Exclusion Policy.](#)

If a determination is made that your child is too ill to remain at school during the daily health check process or during the rest of the day, the parent or the emergency contact person will be notified. For the comfort of the child and prevention of spreading illness, **sick children should be picked up within an hour or less after the parents are notified of the illness.** It is important that all parents provide their updated cell phone number as well as emergency contact information. Until you arrive to pick up your ill child, they will be under the care of the health team in the isolation room, located in the health office.

If it is determined that the child requires immediate medical care, staff will call 911 and a staff person will accompany the child to the emergency room until the parent arrives.

## Medication

To ensure that proper medication is being given to children, we will only give medication with written authorization from your child's physician, and you, the parent. Whenever changes are made to your child's medication or treatment plan, updated information must be provided to Educare's health team. As a part of this process of confirming medications, you must complete the "Medication Permission Packet." Medication will be given only as prescribed by a medical professional.

- The label of prescribed medication must include:
- A full pharmacy label
- The child's first and last name
- The date the prescription was filled
- Name of the health care provider who wrote the prescription
- The medication's expiration date – Expired medication will be sent home or not accepted
- Administration, storage and disposal instructions
- *All information on the label must be legible*
- *Medications must be in the original container as given out by the pharmacist*
- *Medications must be designated for your child*
- *Over-the-counter medication with doctor's orders should also be in the original container*

Over-the-counter medications and products that are used to treat a disease or illness cannot be administered without the written approval of your healthcare provider. Examples of these are: cough, cold and fever medications, and skin ointments and creams. Over-the-counter products such as insect repellents and sunscreens are exceptions and need written approval from the parent. For the safety of the children, they are not allowed to self-medicate without written consent from your healthcare provider

## Health Requirements

In order for children to participate in group care, both the Office of Head Start & Illinois DCFS, along with the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend routine visits to a healthcare provider. Routine visits include but are not limited to Well Child exams, immunizations and lab tests. We are required to maintain compliance with Early/Head Start and the City of Chicago day care licensing regulations. [The schedule can be viewed in Appendix III.](#) In addition, all children ages 12-months and older must have a submitted dental exam as part of their health requirements. Visits to the dentist for an exam, cleaning and fluoride treatment should occur every 6 months. Any treatment recommendations from the dentist should be followed.



**Children with chronic health conditions MUST have their current action/ treatment plans along with medication submitted to your assigned FSS or a member of the health team.** If we do not receive this documentation, staff will follow up with you to ensure that we remain in compliance. Children that require rescue medication (i.e., asthma inhaler, Epi-Pen, seizure medication), or medication that provides relief (i.e medication that provides relief from symptoms or conditions like an eczema cream) cannot participate in the program without their prescribed medication.

All health requirements for children should be current during the time of enrollment for new and returning students. Any health requirements that expire during the school year must be updated as soon as possible and submitted to Educare's health team or your assigned FSS. Families will be engaged in a timely manner regarding their children's upcoming health needs. We strive to provide a minimum of 60 days prior notification, regarding well child checkups, dentist appointments and/or any other necessary health check needs.

### **Brushing Teeth**

Practicing good oral care begins at birth. All children must have a dental exam and cleaning at the ages of 12- months and older, and copies can be submitted to your assigned FSS or a member of the health team. As a best practice, your child's teacher will wipe the inside of your child's mouth with a wet cloth after eating. As your child gets teeth, teachers will begin teaching your child how to brush teeth. As your child grows, teachers will support your child to become independent to brush their own teeth. Educare supplies toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Toothbrushes are changed every three months. We use fluoridated toothpaste.

### **Handwashing**

To cut down on the spread of germs, your child will be taught how to properly wash their hands. Children and parents will be expected to wash their hands upon entering the building, before and after eating, after using the bathroom, after cleaning their nose and before and after playing with the sensory table.

### **Toilet Training**

When developmentally appropriate, your child's classroom team will collaborate with you to support your child in learning to use the toilet. Some signs that your child is ready to be toilet trained are:

- Child has the communication knowledge to inform you that they need to use the bathroom.
- Child has the self-help skills to pull their pants up and down.
- Child stays dry for long periods of time.

### **School Closings**

Educare will be closed on the following days:

- Labor Day (September 2)
- Staff Professional Development Days (2/25, 4/18, 6/13, 8/4-8/15)
- Thanksgiving and the Day After Thanksgiving (November 28 & 29)
- Winter Break (December 24-through January 3)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (January 20)
- Presidents Day (February 17)
- Memorial Day (May 26)
- Juneteenth (June 19)
- Summer Break (July 28-August 1)

Please Note: there are times when the center may need to close on days that are not listed. The program will notify parents of all closings in advance (when possible) via email, flyer or posting on ClassDojo.

### **Weather Related Closings**

Whenever Chicago Public Schools close due to inclement weather, Educare also closes. Weather-related closings will be sent out via text & email blast and will be posted on our Facebook page, Class Dojo as well as the Emergency Closing Center website (<https://www.emergencyclosingcenter.com/index.html>).

### Emergency Closings

As always, our primary concern is the health and safety of the children. If at any time we cannot operate safely, the center will be closed. Parents/caregivers will be called and asked to come and pick up their children as soon as possible. If the school closes for an emergency, you will be contacted via text and email. This information will also be posted on our Facebook page and Class Dojo.

### School Maintenance and Safety

We are honored that you have chosen Educare and are entrusting us with your child. You have read that safety is always our primary concern. Part of providing a safe environment is ensuring that our building is clean and secure. Educare has maintenance staff on-site to perform cleaning throughout the day and in the evening, along with minor repairs. We conduct regular checks to make sure the classrooms, play areas and other rooms are free of hazardous materials. We also have regular fire, tornado, lockdown and bus drills so that children and staff will be familiar with what to do in case of an emergency. If you have any questions or concerns about the upkeep of the school or our safety practices, please contact our facilities coordinator, program operations manager, site administrator or the school director.

### School Evacuations

In the event Educare needs to evacuate the school, children and staff will walk to:

- DuSable/Bronzeville Scholastic Institute High School located at 4934 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, IL 60615; the schools phone number is (773) 535-1150
- Greater Harvest Baptist Church, located at 5141 S State St, Chicago, IL 60609; the church's phone number is 773-924-7766.

### Environmental Assessments

Educare performs a variety of facility assessments to ensure our school is safe for children. Radon tests are performed every three years. We also perform lead in water testing. The results of our most recent lead in water test and full mitigation plan are posted at the front security desk. As part of our health services, children are monitored for lead levels. In the event your child has elevated levels, our health team will provide you with resources to help address your child's health needs.

### Grievance

Educare's goal is to partner with you to ensure your child and family are reaching their optimal potential. We are thankful you have entrusted the staff at Educare as your partner to prepare your child for school. Your input is always welcome. In the case there is a concern or complaint about any aspect of the program, please follow these steps:

- Complete a written complaint form (see FSS or management team member). Written concerns should include a description of the problem, date of occurrence, names of people involved and possible solutions.
- The written concern form will be completed by the individual(s) involved and given to the Educare school director within 10 working days. A meeting will be scheduled to discuss the situation.
- A written response will be prepared by the school director outlining action taken and given to parent/community members within 10 working days of the meeting.
- If the parent/community member is not satisfied with the action taken by the school director, the parent/community member can request a formal meeting with all participants involved in the concern along with the Executive Committee of the Policy Council. A request for a formal meeting will be made in writing and given to the chair of the Policy Council.
- A written resolution will be provided to the parent/community member within 10 days after the formal meeting.
- If the complaint/concern is still not resolved, the parent/community member can request a meeting with the senior vice president of programs. The request to meet will be made in writing. A face-to-face meeting will be scheduled. The vice president of programs will provide a written resolution within 10 days of the meeting. The vice president of programs' resolution is the final resolution.

## Educare Chicago Contact Information

Name	Position	Phone Number	Email Address	Office Room Location
Danielle Jordan	School Director	773-924-2334 ext. 5221	djordan@startearly.org	108
Lauren Matsuo	Site Administrator	773-924-2334 ext. 5639	lmatsuo@startearly.org	FC 209
Michelle Morris	ERSEA Manager	773-924-2334 ext. 5633	mmorris@startearly.org	FC 208
Keoka Bias	Education Coordinator	773-924-2234 ext. 5237	kbias@startearly.org	126
Annaliese Newmeyer	Education Coordinator	773-924-2334 ext. 5126	Anewmeyer@startearly.org	126
Monique King	Education Coordinator	773-924-2334 ext. 5105	Mking@startearly.org	126
Christie Stinson-Steele	Education Manager	773-924-2334 ext. 5009	cmoore@startearly.org	126
Danielle Drain	Disabilities & Mental Health Supervisor	773-924-2334 ext. 5242	ddrain@startearly.org	112
Alicia Daniel	Family Support Specialist	773-924-2334 ext. 5643	adaniels@startearly.org	FC
Yugunda Jeffries- Streeter	Family Support Specialist	773-924-2334 ext. 5640	yjeffries@startearly.org	FC
Angela Nelson	Family Support Specialist	773-924-2334 ext. 5632	ajimerson@startearly.org	FC
Lorrie Ray	Family Support Specialist	773-924-2334 ext. 5630	lray@startearly.org	FC
Maxine Chiestder	Family Support Specialist	773-924-2334 ext. 5644	Mchiestder@startearly.org	FC
Teresa Bennett	Health and Nutrition Coordinator	773-924-2334 ext. 5631	tbennett@startearly.org	103
Jennifer House	ERSEA Coordinator	773-924-2334 ext. 5637	jhouse@startearly.org	FC
Joe'l Thomas	ERSEA Specialist	773-924-2334 ext. 5642	jthomas@startearly.org	FC

Benjamin Holmes	Facilities Supervisor	773-924-2334 ext. 5645	Bholmes@startearly.org	116
Mary Warren-Butler	Program Operations Manager	773-924-2334 ext. 5104	<a href="mailto:Mwarrenbutler@startearly.org">Mwarrenbutler@startearly.org</a>	131

## Classrooms

Classroom	Phone Number
105	773-924-2334 ext. 5113
106	773-924-2334 ext. 5114
107	773-924-2334 ext. 5115
113	773-924-2334 ext. 5123
114	773-924-2334 ext. 5124
115	773-924-2334 ext. 5125

Classroom	Phone Number
121	773-924-2334 ext. 5131
122	773-924-2334 ext. 5132
123	773-924-2334 ext. 5133
124	773-924-2334 ext. 5134
128	773-924-2334 ext. 5139
129	773-924-2334 ext. 5140
130	773-924-2334 ext. 5141

## Environmental Assessments

Educare performs a variety of facility assessments to ensure our school is safe for children. Radon tests are performed every three years. We also perform lead in water testing. The results of our most recent lead in water test and full mitigation plan are posted at the front Security Desk.

As part of our Health Services, children are monitored for lead levels. In the event your child has elevated levels, our Health Team will provide you with resources to help address your child's health needs.

## Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM)

Educare Chicago's IPM focuses on long-term prevention or suppression of pests. This plan focuses on accurately identifying pests, monitoring for pest presence, applying appropriate action levels, and making the habitat less conducive to pests using sanitation and mechanical and physical controls. Pesticides that are effective will be used in a manner that minimizes risks to people, property, and the environment, and only after other options have been shown to be ineffective.

Our pest management objectives are to:

- Reduce overall use of pesticides
- Manage immediate needs
- Focus on long-term pest prevention

Please review the annual Integrated Pest Management Notification Letter below. A copy of this letter has also been included in the annual enrollment packet.

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We would like to inform you that an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach for controlling insects, rodents, and weeds will be used at Educare Chicago. The IPM approach we will be using focuses on making the school buildings and grounds an unfavorable place for pests to live and breed. Through maintenance and cleaning, we will reduce or eliminate available food and water sources and hiding places for the pests. We will also routinely monitor the school area to detect pest problems and prevent the pests from becoming established. Some IPM techniques we will employ include monitoring, increased sanitation, sealing entry points, physically removing the pest, and modifying storage practices.

From time to time, it may be necessary to use chemicals to control a pest problem. Chemicals will only be used when necessary and will not be routinely applied. When chemicals must be used, the school will try to use the least toxic products when possible. Access to treated areas will be secured against unauthorized access for the period specified on the pesticide label. Notices will be posted at application sites and will remain there until the posted safe re-entry time is met. For your information, we have a list of pesticides and material safety and data sheets (MSDS) that may be used inside the school this school year. This list may be obtained by contacting the IPM coordinator at 773-924-2334.

If a chemical application must be made to control an emergency pest problem, notice will be provided as soon as possible after the application. Exemptions to this notification include cleaners (disinfectants), pesticides formulated as baits or gels, and any EPA exempt pesticide.

If you have any questions, please contact the IPM Coordinator.



## APPENDIX I

### Introduction to the Policy Council

The Policy Council serves as a link to the Policy Committee, parent committees, grantee agency, governing boards, subcommittees and the larger communities that provide Head Start services. All program options are represented on the Policy Council. Parents participate in establishing policy and shared decision-making through the Policy Council and/or parent committees.

The Policy Council works with management staff and the governing body to develop, review and approve or disapprove:

- Funding applications
- Procedures for shared decision-making about long- and short-range program goals
- The composition of the Policy Council and selection process
- The annual and on-going self-assessment process
- Criteria for recruitment and enrollment of children
- Personnel policies
- Decisions for hiring or terminating staff

The Policy Council also establishes procedures to work with the agency in resolving community complaints about the Head Start program. The Council assists parent committees in planning, organizing and coordinating program activities for parents with the assistance of staff and ensures that funds are asked for from program budgets to support parent activities.

### Exclusion Policy

Children will be screened upon arrival daily for any obvious signs of illness via Daily Health Checks. If symptoms of illness are present, a member of the health team or a manager will provide the family with a determination for exclusion. If children become sick during the school day, the teaching staff will notify a member of the health team. Determination regarding the child staying in the classroom or needing to be isolated will occur. If isolation is needed, the child will be isolated and cared for in the health team's isolation area, and the parent will be contacted for pick-up. Parents will be notified of any developing symptoms whether they warrant exclusion or not via phone and health notice. Pick-up should occur within an hour or less from the time called. Parents will be provided an exclusion notification that outlines when the child can return or if medical clearance is needed prior to return.

Educare will maintain a clean, safe environment to keep the spread of illness to a minimum by implementing routine cleaning and sanitation, daily health checks, observations and open communication with parents.

Procedure:

1. Caregivers must be informed, in writing prior to enrollment, of the exclusion procedures or illness.
2. If symptoms of illness are present, the childcare staff shall determine whether they are able to care for the child safely, based on the apparent degree of illness, other children present and facilities available to care for the ill child.
3. A member of the health team will be onsite to determine if exclusion is necessary for the ill child. When a member of the health team is not available, a member of Educare's management team will be available. Staff will consult with this person to determine whether to contact the parent and to make the final determination of exclusion.
4. Contact should be direct (not voicemail) with either the child's parent or another person on the child's emergency contact information form.
5. Space shall be provided for a child who becomes ill at the center. The space shall be ventilated and heated, within sight and hearing of an adult and equipped with a cot and materials that can be easily cleaned and sanitized.
6. There are infections that do not require exclusion, which a medical professional will determine for the child. Documentation of these situations must be provided.
7. Children may attend with a minor illness unless any of the symptoms or conditions noted below are present.
8. For DCFS licensed childcare centers, children need not be excluded for a minor illness unless any of the following exists, in which case exclusion from the day care center is required:
  - a. Children with diarrhea and those with a rash combined with fever (oral temperature of 101° F or higher or under the arm temperature of 100° F or higher) shall not be admitted to the day care center while those symptoms persist and shall be removed as soon as possible should these symptoms develop while the child is in care.
  - b. Illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities;
  - c. Illness that calls for greater care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children;
  - d. Fever with behavior change or symptoms of illness;
  - e. Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing or other signs of possible severe illness;
  - f. Diarrhea;
  - g. Vomiting two or more times in the previous 24 hours, unless the vomiting is determined to be due to a noncommunicable condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration;

- h. Mouth sores associated with the child's inability to control his or her saliva, until the child's physician or the local health department states that the child is noninfectious;
  - i. Rash with fever or behavior change, unless a physician has determined the illness to be noncommunicable;
  - j. Purulent conjunctivitis, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated;
  - k. Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated;
  - l. Strep throat (streptococcal pharyngitis), until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated and until the child has been without fever for 24 hours;
  - m. Head lice, until the morning after the first treatment;
  - n. Scabies, until the morning after the first treatment;
  - o. Chicken pox (varicella), until at least 6 days after onset of rash;
  - p. Whooping cough (pertussis), until 5 days of antibiotic treatment have been completed;
  - q. Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling;
  - r. Measles, until 4 days after disappearance of the rash; or
  - s. Symptoms that may be indicative of one of the serious, communicable diseases identified in the Illinois Department of Public Health Control of Communicable Diseases Code (77 Ill. Adm. Code 690).
9. The center shall report any known or suspected case or carrier of communicable disease to local health authorities and comply with the Illinois Department of Public Health's Control of Communicable Diseases Code (77 Ill. Adm. Code 690). The center shall maintain a file of reported illnesses that may indicate possible infectious disease.
  10. Readmission to our program after exclusion:
    - a. A note from a medical provider is required for re-admission following three days or more of absences due to illness.
    - b. The child may be readmitted when the risk of transmission is determined to no longer be present and medical clearance is provided.
  11. In case contagious illness is confirmed by a physician, other caregivers in the program must be notified. All communication will be done in a manner that is informative, but also protects the confidentiality.

## Immunization and Well-Child Schedule

### 2023 Recommended Immunizations for Children from Birth Through 6 Years Old

VACCINE	Birth	1 MONTH	2 MONTHS	4 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS	15 MONTHS	18 MONTHS	19-23 MONTHS	2-3 YEARS	4-6 YEARS
<b>HepB</b> Hepatitis B	HepB	HepB			HepB						
<b>RV*</b> Rotavirus			RV	RV	RV*						
<b>DTaP</b> Diphtheria, Pertussis, & Tetanus			DTaP	DTaP	DTaP		DTaP				DTaP
<b>Hib*</b> Haemophilus influenzae type b			Hib	Hib	Hib*	Hib					
<b>PCV13, PCV15</b> Pneumococcal disease			PCV	PCV	PCV	PCV					
<b>IPV</b> Polio			IPV	IPV	IPV	IPV					IPV
<b>COVID-19**</b> Coronavirus disease 2019					COVID-19**						
<b>Flu†</b> Influenza					Flu (One or Two Doses Yearly)†						
<b>MMR</b> Measles, Mumps, & Rubella					MMR						MMR
<b>Varicella</b> Chickenpox					Varicella						Varicella
<b>HepA*</b> Hepatitis A					HepA*		HepA*				

## FOOTNOTES

**RV\*** **Hib\***  
Administering a third dose at age 6 months depends on your child's age and type of vaccine.

**COVID-19\*\*** Number of doses recommended depends on your child's age and type of vaccine.

**Flu†** Two doses given at least 4 weeks apart are recommended for children age 6 months through 8 years of age.

**HepA\*** Two doses of Hep A vaccine are needed for lasting protection. The 2 doses should be given between age 12 and 23 months. Both doses should be given as separate shots.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. If your child misses a shot recommended for their age, talk to your child's doctor as soon as possible.

2. If your child has any medical conditions that put them at risk for infection (e.g., sickle cell, HIV infection, cochlear implants), talk to your child's doctor about any shots.

Talk with your child's doctor if you have questions about any shot.

## Vaccine-Preventable Diseases and the Vaccines that Prevent Them

Disease	Vaccine	Disease spread by	Disease symptoms	Disease complications
<b>Chickenpox</b>	Varicella vaccine protects against chickenpox.	Air, direct contact	Rash, tiredness, headache, fever	Infected blisters, bleeding disorders, encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in the lungs)
<b>Diphtheria</b>	DTaP* vaccine protects against diphtheria.	Air, direct contact	Sore throat, mild fever, weakness, swollen glands in neck	Swelling of the heart muscle, heart failure, coma, paralysis, death
<b>Hib</b>	Hib vaccine protects against <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b.	Air, direct contact	May be no symptoms unless bacteria enter the blood	Meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), intellectual disability, epiglottitis (life-threatening infection that can block the windpipe and lead to serious breathing problems), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
<b>Hepatitis A</b>	HepA vaccine protects against hepatitis A.	Direct contact, contaminated food or water	May be no symptoms, fever, stomach pain, loss of appetite, fatigue, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), dark urine	Liver failure, arthralgia (joint pain), kidney, pancreatic and blood disorders
<b>Hepatitis B</b>	HepB vaccine protects against hepatitis B.	Contact with blood or body fluids	May be no symptoms, fever, headache, weakness, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), joint pain	Chronic liver infection, liver failure, liver cancer
<b>Influenza (Flu)</b>	Flu vaccine protects against influenza.	Air, direct contact	Fever, muscle pain, sore throat, cough, extreme fatigue	Pneumonia (infection in the lungs)
<b>Measles</b>	MMR** vaccine protects against measles.	Air, direct contact	Rash, fever, cough, runny nose, pink eye	Encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
<b>Mumps</b>	MMR** vaccine protects against mumps.	Air, direct contact	Swollen salivary glands (under the jaw), fever, headache, tiredness, muscle pain	Meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), encephalitis (brain swelling), inflammation of testicles or ovaries, deafness
<b>Pertussis</b>	DTaP* vaccine protects against pertussis (whooping cough).	Air, direct contact	Severe cough, runny nose, apnea (a pause in breathing in infants)	Pneumonia (infection in the lungs), death
<b>Polio</b>	IPV vaccine protects against polio.	Air, direct contact, through the mouth	May be no symptoms, sore throat, fever, nausea, headache	Paralysis, death
<b>Pneumococcal</b>	PCV13 vaccine protects against pneumococcus.	Air, direct contact	May be no symptoms, pneumonia (infection in the lungs)	Bacteremia (blood infection), meningitis (infection of the covering around the brain and spinal cord), death
<b>Rotavirus</b>	RV vaccine protects against rotavirus.	Through the mouth	Diarrhea, fever, vomiting	Severe diarrhea, dehydration
<b>Rubella</b>	MMR** vaccine protects against rubella.	Air, direct contact	Sometimes rash, fever, swollen lymph nodes	Very serious in pregnant women—can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, birth defects
<b>Tetanus</b>	DTaP* vaccine protects against tetanus.	Exposure through cuts in skin	Stiffness in neck and abdominal muscles, difficulty swallowing, muscle spasms, fever	Broken bones, breathing difficulty, death

\* DTaP combines protection against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis.

\*\* MMR combines protection against measles, mumps, and rubella.

Last updated February 2021 - CS32225 7-A



## APPENDIX IV

### Statement from IDHS Bureau of Child Care and Development

According to the State of Illinois' Department of Human Services (DHS) – Bureau of Child Care and Development:

You are responsible for notifying Start Early's Educare Chicago school within 10 days if you change providers, stop working or change jobs, stop attending school or training, change family size, change income, change address, stop receiving TANF, have maternity/medical leave or have any other changes that may affect your eligibility. Failure to do so in a timely manner may result in payback of overpayments (childcare subsidy you were not eligible to receive) and/or loss of childcare benefits. Also, report these changes to your DHS local office caseworker if you are receiving other benefits from DHS.

Start Early's Educare Chicago school would like to remind and inform parents/guardians that we are required by the State of Illinois to report any suspected fraudulent information received by our agency in reference to applying for or redetermining childcare cases. According to the Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Program Manual (07.05.01), "All cases of suspected intentional program violations must be referred to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Child Care and Development, Program Integrity and Quality Assurance Unit for further investigation." In addition, if fraudulent information is provided by either deliberate omission and/or submission of false or misleading information, Start Early's Educare Chicago school reserves the right to terminate your child/ren's enrollment in the program at any time.

If you are having challenges or have concerns regarding your eligibility, please speak with a representative from Eligibility and/or your Family Support Specialist. We are here to help you and to provide assistance to you at all times.

Our goal is to make sure you understand the process and continue your child/ren's enrollment in our program.

## Confirmation of Review

You will be signing that you have read this Parent/Guardian Handbook and had an opportunity to ask additional questions. Please see your classroom teacher, family advocate or a member of the school leadership team if you have additional questions or concerns. This handbook will be reviewed through the Parent Committee and Policy Council. Please help us keep this handbook updated and join our meetings!

Start Early

CHILD AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

EDUCARE PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print name) have received a copy of the Parent/Guardian Handbook. In each case, my questions have been answered, and I understand the policies as written. Specifically, I have reviewed the Guidance and Discipline Policy. I also understand that failure to adhere will constitute grounds for dismissal from the program.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print name) have also received a copy of the DCFS publication "Summary of Licensing Standards for Daycare Centers."

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Educare Chicago

5044 South Wabash Avenue Chicago, IL 60615

773-924-2334

[educarechicago.org](http://educarechicago.org)



### Child and Family Administrative Services Office at Start Early

33 West Monroe, Suite 1200 Chicago, IL 60603

312-922-3863

[startearly.org](http://startearly.org)

