



# HEAD START PROGRAM

PARENT HANDBOOK  
2017/2018

# Welcome!

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On behalf of Norwood Child & Family Resource Centre, we would like to extend a warm welcome to you and your family.

It is important to read this Parent Handbook and keep it in a safe place so you can refer to it when needed. It covers important information like attendance information, illness guidelines, family support, and important phone numbers.

Please feel free to meet with any program staff or Family Support Worker to discuss program activities, the progress of your child's learning, or if you have any questions or concerns/issues.

We look forward to your participation, input and feedback during your time with us.

## ***Program Philosophy***

*The Head Start Program offers a learning through play approach for children 3.5 - 5 years old and follows the theories and practices from the Early Learning and Child Care field. The Alberta Curriculum Framework (Play, Participation, and Possibilities) is integrated as part of daily programming. The Program follows policies, procedures, and standards as set out by Alberta Education, Alberta Education Annual Operating Plan, Interagency Head Start Network (IHSN), and Environmental Health and Safety, and Fire Prevention.*

*The program provides family-centered education to families meaning children develop within the context of each family and culture and staff are responsible to involve family members in their child's learning opportunities. Parents or caregivers are respected as the primary educators and nurturers of their children*

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# Head Start Staff

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**Program Manager:** Meagan Hight

**Program Coordinator:** Ashley Card

**Family Support Workers:** Carola Johnson-Vervoorst  
Tiffany Lodoen  
Aeris Osborne  
Ivana Hrushowy

**Speech Language Pathologist:** Carin Broome

**Occupational Therapist:** John Walker

## Norwood

**Teacher:** Christie Harty

**Early Childhood Educators:** Renuka Pattnaik  
Reema Virk  
Deborah Finlay

## Head Start Northeast

**Teacher:** Rosa Capozzi

**Early Childhood Educators:** Miljana Karacic  
Ellen Zhao  
Vina Tinani

# Contact Information

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**Norwood:** 9516 114 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5G 0K7  
780-471-3737

**Head Start NE:** DECSA  
11515 71 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5B 1W1  
780-231-6781

# Program Goals

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- Children will achieve greater independence and increased school readiness.
- Parents have an increased understanding of their child's developmental progress and ways to assist them in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- Families experience increased supports and have better access to resources.

## Confidentiality of Information

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The information gathered on your child's registration form is used for individual planning, statistics and in parent/staff meetings. All information is kept confidential within the agency. As a parent volunteer in the classroom you may see or hear things of a private or confidential nature. Incidents or conversations can be overheard at anytime and we ask that they not be repeated. Comments or remarks made casually about children can be destructive for a child or family.

If you have a concern about something, please bring it to the attention of the Program Coordinator or Manager.

## Parent Involvement

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Parent participation is a very important part of our program and is highly encouraged. Parents are always welcome so please let us know if you would like to volunteer.

### **Parent activities include:**

- Interacting with and assisting children
- Field trips
- Preparing materials and program setup
- Cooking experiences
- Sharing your culture and/or skills
- Classroom cleaning at the end of the year

# Groups and Workshops

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A variety of groups and workshops are offered by Norwood. We regularly ask for input and feedback from parents regarding Head Start as well as on topics of interest.

## **Some groups we offer include:**

- Literacy
- Parent/Child Playgroups
- Parent Education
- Parent Advisory Committee

These offer an opportunity to have fun, meet new people, make friends and learn from one another.

# Family Support

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Family Support Workers provide support services for parents with children enrolled in our programs. We meet with each family according to the families individual needs. We enjoy getting to know families and learning how we can meet their needs.

Some of the supports provided include regular home visits, referrals to various resources within the community and advocating on behalf of, or with families.

# Family Oriented Sessions

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Children who qualify for Program Unit Funding will receive Family Oriented Sessions from members of the program team.

These visits are ongoing throughout the school year and are based on the child's individual needs. Team members will provide new activity ideas for your family and offer suggestions around ways to continue strengthening your child's skills through everyday moments.

This is a great time for staff and families to work together! **5**

# Attendance/Absences

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Regular attendance is strongly encouraged. It helps children adjust better, build strong relationships, feel socially part of the class, and strengthen developmental goals.

Please notify staff if your child will be absent for any reason in person or by phone.

**Norwood: 780-471-3737**

**Head Start NE (DECSA): 780-231-6781**

**If your child uses the bus service, please contact Southland to let them know of your child's absence.**

## Bus Information

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If you have questions regarding the bus service for your child please contact:

**Southland Transportation: 780-466-9696**

**If you request a bus change for your child, please contact your Family Support Worker.**

**Norwood Centre: 780-471-3737**

## Parent/Emergency Contacts

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We must have a phone number to be able to contact you in the event of an emergency. Please inform us ***immediately*** if your phone numbers or the phone numbers of your emergency contacts change at any time.

We must have at least one name, phone number, and address for an emergency contact **who could be reached during program hours, and have the means to pick up your child if required.**

# Authorized Pick Up

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**Children will only be released to:**

- Parents/Guardians
- Emergency Contacts
- Authorized Persons

**Photo Identification is required for anyone who may be picking up your child.**

**Staff must have advance notification if someone other than yourself is picking up your child.**

Be sure to arrive promptly at the end of the session to pick up your child. Program Staff are not available to care for children after the session has finished.

- If we have not heard from you within 15 minutes after the session ends, your emergency contact will be phoned.
- If your emergency contact is unable to pick up your child, Children's Services will be notified.

**After Hours Children's Services Number is 780-427-3390**

It is your responsibility to inform staff of any changes regarding:

- Emergency contact information
- Phone number

## Duty to Report

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Children depend on others for their safety and well-being. They have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect.

Anyone who has reason to believe, that a child has been, or there is substantial risk that he or she will be abused or neglected by a parent/guardian, has a legal duty under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* to promptly report the matter to a case worker.

# Program Times

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**Morning Class: 9:30am - 12:15pm**

**Afternoon Class: 1:15pm - 4:00pm**

- Please arrive ready at **9:30 a.m.** for the morning session and at **1:15 p.m.** for the afternoon session.
- When picking up your child at the end of class, **please feel free to join us or wait outside the classroom**
- **Pick up** times are **12:15 p.m.** for the morning class and **4:00 p.m.** for the afternoon class.

## Siblings in the Classroom

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Siblings that are not registered in Head Start are not permitted to stay in the classroom or go on fieldtrips because of staff-child ratios and safety guidelines.

## Program Closures

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Our program is closed on Mondays to accommodate program meetings, room set up, and cleaning.

Winter break, spring break and statutory holidays follow the Edmonton Public School Board schedule.

**Closure dates will be marked on newsletters, our website, and Facebook page.**

## Newsletter

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Monthly newsletters are available with the following month's groups, workshops and activities. Please keep this in a visible place for quick reference (i.e., the fridge door).

Every three months you will receive a Program and Services Guide highlighting all programs, events and activities taking place at various locations for the following three months.

# Things to Bring

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- Comfortable, washable, play clothing that is okay to get messy.
- One pair of indoor shoes that will remain at school for the year. Shoes will be sent home at the end of the year or if your child outgrows them. Boots are not suitable, and stocking feet or bare feet are not safe. We practice fire drills regularly and children, parents, and staff must always be ready to go outside without stopping to put on shoes.
- A backpack to take home their art, newsletter, and notes to parents. Backpacks should be brought to school every day. **Please remember to check your child's backpack for important information every day.**
- An extra change of clothing in case your child has an accident or gets wet.
- Outdoor activities are a daily part of our program.  
**In the Winter**, please have children wear boots, snow pants, a winter jacket, mittens, and a hat.  
**In the summer**, please send a hat, and if your child is using special sun block or bug repellent, feel free to send that as well. There is a consent form to sign for bug spray and sun block.

**Please label all belongings to avoid loss and confusion.**

# Things Not to Bring

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- For safety reasons, we ask that small and breakable items, glass bottles, hard candies, money, gum, small toys and medications are not kept in the children's backpacks.

# Program Activities

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Our primary focus is on social, physical, intellectual, communication, creative and emotional development of children.

We follow a learn through play philosophy.

## **Types of Activity Centers:**

All activities within activity centers are selected and directed by the child.

Our program activities include:

- Dramatic play
- Literacy and music
- Loose parts and Manipulatives
- Blocks and floor play
- Sand, water and sensory play
- Math, science, discovery and exploration
- Gross motor (gym and outdoors)
- Writing
- Art

## **Reggio Approach**

- Sees children as competent, resourceful, curious, imaginative, and inventive individuals.
- Based on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community.
- Children learn through interactions with others, including parents, staff, and peers in a friendly learning environment.
- Parents are viewed as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children. Educators respect parents as each child's first teacher.
- Aesthetic beauty (the way the program looks) is an important part of respecting the children and their learning environment

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## **Individual Program Plan (IPP) Individual Service Plan (ISP)**

Individual Program Plans (IPP's) and Individual Service Plans (ISP's) are a set of goals determined with the parent/family for the child(ren). Staff implement activities and/or strategies within the program based on each goal. Staff may also provide strategies and/or activities to families to meet the goals at home.

## **S.P.E.A.K. Program**

Safe Preschoolers Education and Awareness Kit (S.P.E.A.K.) is specifically designed to help give your child personal safety strategies. Children are taught language to describe feelings, concepts of respect, anatomically correct terms for body parts, assertive skills, and how to ask for help. This program includes 12 sessions and is implemented by a trained program staff member.

## **Cultural Activities**

Sharing our cultures gives us the opportunity to discover more about one another. Parents and family members are welcome and encouraged to come in and share artifacts, music, pictures, stories, cooking experiences etc. to help us construct and shape learning experiences.

## **Library**

We believe literacy is a foundational block for healthy families.

- Visits are planned for children to go to the community library and listen to stories, watch finger plays and puppet shows, and do art activities.
- The librarian joins the program once a month to support increased literacy skills.

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## **Field Trips**

Please see the newsletter for field trip information.

We always appreciate parent's help during our field trips!

**Please note that on full day field trips, parent's must attend.**

**Children will not be able to attend the field trip if you have not provided consent.**

## **Birthdays and Parties**

We celebrate every child's birthday during the school year.

The celebration is simple but the goal is to make the child feel special.

**Please do not bring food from home.**

If you plan to have a home party, please do not send invitations to the class unless **all children** are invited.

## **Additional Services**

The Head Start team works collaboratively with partnership organizations and service providers in order to offer high quality programming to the children and to support their individual needs and strengthen their overall development.

Some of these services include speech and language, occupational therapy, literacy, recreational, and health services.

For more information regarding these services and the other services we provide, please contact the Head Start staff or your Family Support Worker.

# Parent Advisory Committee

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- All Parents are invited to come together with agency staff and talk about what is new in the agency and community.
- Suggestions are encouraged.
- There is an opportunity for parents to take a role as a chair person and secretary.
- The group meets once a month, about eight times a year and is currently hosted at Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre AND Norwood NE (DECSA).

## Concern/Complaint Resolution Process

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If parents are dissatisfied with a particular component of their child's program, they will take the following steps:

- Talk with the Program Staff directly involved
- Talk with the Children's Program Coordinator
- Talk with the Children's Program Manager
- Talk with the Program Director
- Submit a written complaint to the Executive Director and the Board of Directors

# Child Guidance

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Preschool children are learning very valuable lessons about playing together, turn-taking, sharing and making friends. To help this skill development, we use these guidelines when a situation occurs.

**No matter what method of discipline parents use at home, we ensure that these guidelines be followed by every adult in the classroom.**

## **When two children are fighting:**

We focus on the children's emotions; the feelings that led up to the fight. An opening question would be "you must have been really angry to hit, is that right? tell me what made you so mad?" This conversation will continue until the cause of the fight is discovered (children don't usually fight without a reason). The program staff will then help the children find a better, age appropriate way of solving the problem.

## **When a child "breaks a rule" (ie. deliberately throws sand):**

The program staff will remind the child why it is important not to throw sand - it could get in someone's eyes, someone could slip and fall. The child will then be supported to clean up the sand, with the staff's help if necessary and reminded that they may need to choose another space to play if it happens again. The child will be given another opportunity to continue playing with the sand. If the child does continue to throw sand, he/she will be asked to choose another center. The program staff will attempt to find out what the reason was that the child continued to throw the sand.

# Child Guidance

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## **When a child is too upset to talk:**

Sometimes children are not able to talk, especially if they are feeling very emotional or think they may be “in trouble”. In this case, staff might encourage the child to find a place to calm down until he/she is able/ready to talk, or, they may offer the child a hug. The child is reminded that when he/she is ready to talk they can find a staff member. Staff will talk with the child about the problem/situation/what was going on before the child goes back to play.

We don't label children as “good” or “bad”. We also make every effort to be proactive rather than reactive. If staff intervention is necessary, we redirect children in a positive way. Striking a child, name-calling, or shaming are not acceptable.

# Illness

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**Please Do Not send your child to class if he/she has the following:**

- bad cold
- contagious disease
- diarrhea
- fever
- yellow or green mucus
- any discharge from their eyes
- or if he/she is vomiting
- head lice

**A child cannot return to the program until he/she is free of those symptoms for 24 hours.**

Your child must feel well enough to participate in all indoor and outdoor activities each day. If your child becomes ill during class, we will notify you to come and pick up your child. If we cannot contact you, we will call the emergency contact person on your registration form.

## **Communicable Diseases:**

You must notify the Staff *immediately* if your child has a communicable disease like measles, mumps, or chicken pox. If your child is on medication for a contagious condition he/she must remain at home until they have been on the medication for 24 hours.

## **Head Lice:**

Head lice may occur from time to time when large numbers of children play together. Children with head lice or live nits (eggs) will be sent home from the program. They are able to return to the program as soon as they have received treatment and all nits (eggs) are gone.

**Staff will need to check the child's hair prior to coming back into the program.**

# Immunization

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We strongly recommend that all children have up-to-date immunizations.

If you are opposed to immunization, please be informed that in the event of an communicable disease outbreak, your child/children will not be allowed to attend classes until the danger of getting the disease has passed.

We work in close partnership with Alberta Health Services, so if you have any questions about immunization feel free to ask, and we will connect you to our Community Health Nurse.

# Medications

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- If your child is on medication, the program staff will administer it if it is a prescribed medication.
- Medication must be in the original packaging.
- A medication chart must be signed and filled in with a staff member.
- Please do not leave medications in your child's bag.
- All medication will be placed in a locked box by staff in the program.

# Emergencies

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If your child has an accident we will follow first aid Procedures. If needed, we will contact 911.

- Program Staff trained will administer first aid
- Contact parent or designated emergency contact
- Call 911

# Personal Property

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**\*\*The program is not responsible for lost or stolen items. Please label all belongings to avoid loss and confusion\*\***

Due to fire regulations we need to keep hallways clear. Please ask staff where to put strollers, car seats, or any other property you or your child may bring to the program.

# Nutrition

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Nutrition is an important part of the daily program. We emphasize on natural foods, fresh fruit, vegetables, and on providing the children with a wide experience to new and different foods, including foods that are culturally diverse.

Weekly menus are posted in the classrooms.

**Please notify staff of any food allergies your child/ children may have or any foods they are not allowed to eat for religious or cultural reasons.** Allergy and food restriction lists are posted discretely.

Public Health regulations state that **food cooked off the premises cannot be brought into** childcare settings due to allergy, health and safety reasons.

# Smoking

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Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre and Norwood NE are non-smoking buildings. At Norwood, there is a smoking area located outside on the north-west corner of the building. We ask that all smokers use the ashtray at the front of the building and keep the area clean of butts.

At Head Start NE (DECSA), you must abide by their postings.

# Fire Regulations & Evacuation

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According to regulations, we must have fire drills regularly. When the fire bell rings, **EVERYONE MUST VACATE IMMEDIATELY** without stopping for coats or boots. Fire Drill/Emergency Evacuation procedures are posted next to the door inside the classroom. Staff will wait for permission to re-enter the building.

**If the building is not safe to enter, everyone will be evacuated and moved to a designated evacuation site.**

Parents or emergency contacts will be notified to come pick up the children from that site in case of emergency.

# Notes

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**Updated & Printed**  
August 2017