

# Concordia Place Early Learning and Preschool Parent Manual

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## Concordia Place General Information Early Learning and Preschool Programs

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Year round: September–August | Days: Monday–Friday  
Standard Program Hours: 7:00 am – 6:00 pm

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<b>Children's ages:</b>	6 weeks – 5 years of age	2–5 years of age	6 weeks – 5 years of age	6 weeks – 5 years of age
<b>Program Capacity:</b>	144 children	93 children	67 children	67 children
<b>License &amp; Accreditations:</b>	Licensed by the Illinois Dept. of Children and Family Services and the City of Chicago  Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)  Gold Circle of Quality Program through ExceleRate Illinois	Licensed by the Illinois Dept. of Children and Family Services and the City of Chicago  Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)  Gold Circle of Quality Program through ExceleRate Illinois	Licensed by the Illinois Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the City of Chicago  Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)  Gold Circle of Quality Program through ExceleRate Illinois	Licensed by the Illinois Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the City of Chicago  Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

### Memberships and Affiliations

Member, Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children  
Member, Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children  
Member, National Association for the Education of Young Children  
Member, Illinois Action for Children  
Member, Lutheran Services in America

## Table of Contents

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<b>Welcome to Concordia Place .....</b>	<b>5</b>
The Three Barbaras and Our History .....	5
Faith-Inspired.....	6
Relationship with Concordia Church - Concordia Ministries.....	6
A Place for All .....	7
Concordia Place Funding and Fundraising.....	7
Ages Served.....	7
Program Operations .....	8
Transitioning Into Our Program.....	8
<b>About Our Program .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Program Goals and Philosophy .....	10
Program Objectives: Early Learning (ages 6 weeks – 3 years).....	10
Program Objectives: Preschool (ages 3-5 years).....	12
Curriculum.....	13
Daily Schedule .....	14
Team Qualifications .....	15
Communications .....	15
Parent Involvement.....	16
Family Support .....	16
Child Assessments .....	17
Transitioning Between Classrooms.....	18
Common Challenging Behaviors.....	19
Guidance Philosophy.....	19
Anti-Bullying Policy .....	20
Termination/Dismissal .....	20
<b>Health and Safety .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Smoking Policy .....	22
Weapon-Free Workplace Policy .....	22
Food.....	22
Pick-Up Policy .....	23
Mandated Reporting .....	25
Health and Medical .....	25
Medical Emergencies.....	26

Emergency Closings ..... 26

Emergency Evacuation ..... 26

Safety and Building Security ..... 27

Pest Control Policy ..... 28

Toy Donation Policy ..... 28

Non-Solicitation ..... 29

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Document Retention ..... 29

Program Oversight and Governance ..... 30

**Enrollment and Tuition Policies ..... 31**

    Eligibility and Enrollment ..... 31

    Tuition ..... 32

    Withdrawals ..... 33

    IDHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)/Action for Children ..... 33

    Cooperation for Outside Funding ..... 34

**Parent Manual Agreement ..... 36**

## Welcome to Concordia Place

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Concordia Place is a dynamic nonprofit organization with a proven track record of successful mission growth. Concordia Place is at the intersection of learning and care for young children, youth, teens and their families. Concordia programs promote a path for self-sufficiency and independence that proactively address systemic causes of social inequalities.

As a “Place for All,” Concordia Place uniquely provides access to education, enrichment, growth and opportunity regardless of a person’s socioeconomic status. As a result, Concordia Place creates a rich multifaceted diversity of race and ethnicity, economic levels, faiths, etc. that benefits the children, the classrooms, and the whole community.

### Our Vision:

Inspired by faith, Concordia Place envisions bigger and better tomorrows where rich diversity strengthens learning and growth for all.

### Our Mission:

Concordia Place disrupts social inequities through access to top-quality education, enrichment, and hands-on experiences that includes all children, teens, and families—together.

Concordia Place also has five Guiding Principles to define *who* we are, not just *what* we do. We use these to evaluate our actions as an organization and as individuals. Our Guiding Principles remain constant, regardless of changes in goals, strategies, type of work, and even leadership. Our Guiding Principles define our character and culture. They fundamentally strengthen our organization. See the Appendix for more detail on these.

- Faith in Action
- A Place of Yes
- A Place for All
- A Place of One
- A Place of Excellence

## The Three Barbaras and Our History

In 1981, Concordia Church founded what is today Concordia Place out of the belief that the urban church is rooted in its service to the community. The story of the three Barbara’s demonstrates the guiding principle “a Place of Yes.”

The Reverend Nicholas J. Zook was called as pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church in Chicago in 1981, right after his ordination. Just days later, three single mothers (all named Barbara!) approached him needing after-school care for their children.

The list of reasons to say “no” was long. Like many urban churches at that time, Concordia was financially struggling and facing closure. The church had never done anything like this before. The families were not members of the church and had little financial means.

Yet, Concordia Church said “yes.” It created an after-school program to serve the needs of the community—beyond the walls of its members.

Today, Concordia Place is a vibrant social ministry serving nearly 700 people each year. Some milestones in its history include:

- 1981 The three Barbaras and the church create Concordia Child Care Center at 3855 N Seeley.
- 1989 Concordia adds a full-day preschool for children ages three to five years old.
- 2001 Concordia Church purchases a vacant church and school at 3300 N Whipple St to expand to serve the Avondale community.
- 2002 Concordia Avondale Campus is created as a separate nonprofit.
- 2006 Concordia on Whipple opens with early childhood for infants through preschool, out-of-school time, teen leadership, senior wellness, and adult enrichment programs.
- 2009 Concordia Avondale Campus name changes to Concordia Place.
- 2015 Feeling the tenuous nature of public funding, Concordia Place boldly launches a social enterprise experiment to support the Concordia Place mission.
  - Concordia Day on Ravenswood opens in Chicago's Ravenswood community; initially it was licensed for 47 children 6 weeks to 3 years old. (After demand grew, it added preschool for 20 children 3–5 years old.)
- 2018 Concordia Day on Milwaukee opens in Chicago's Old Irving Park community for 67 children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old.
- 2020 During the COVID-19 pandemic, Concordia Place responds as a Place of Yes.
  - During the early shutdown, Concordia operates two emergency child care centers the children of essential workers.
  - On the first day Restore Illinois allowed, all Concordia centers open for in-person care and learning for all children.
  - While area schools offer remote learning, School-Age 365 pivots to full-day, in-person virtual learning support so children can keep learning and parents can keep working.
- 2021 Concordia Day centers convert into the Concordia Place model to serve more financially under-resourced families; the Concordia Day brand retires.
- 2022 Concordia Day on Ravenswood and Concordia Day on Milwaukee All achieve accreditation by National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Now all Concordia Place centers are NAEYC accredited.

## **Faith-Inspired**

Many ask if Concordia Place is a religious organization. Concordia Place is faith-inspired.

Concordia Place is Concordia Church's faith in action: it is one way that Concordia Church lives out of Christ's commandment to "Love thy Neighbor."

Yet, Concordia Place's mission to serve is not based on a need to evangelize the Church's faith; the need of our neighbor is justification enough. Concordia Place believes all people deserve to reach their full potential. It lives out its guiding principle of "a Place for All," and serves everyone—regardless of faith, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

## **Relationship with Concordia Church - Concordia Ministries**

Concordia Church is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and governed by a church council consisting of members of the church. Concordia Place is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation governed by a volunteer board of directors.

While Concordia Church and Concordia Place are separate corporations with independent governing bodies and financial operations, they are together in the community—each serving their own missions.

Concordia Church and Concordia Place created a concept of Concordia Ministries to represent the whole of Concordia. Inspired by Christ to live out God's love and grace, Concordia Ministries links, strengthens, and amplifies the capacities of its family of ministries. Each ministry benefits from the other, and each grows and thrives from the collaboration. Concordia Ministries is not a legal entity, but rather a mindset of how Concordia Church and Concordia Place work together. The bylaws of each organization contain a Memorandum of Understanding that outline how this concept works. You can learn more about the relationships between our family of missions and organizations by visiting [concordiaministries.org](http://concordiaministries.org)

## A Place for All

We believe that all children should have access to quality learning. We provide our programs without regard to race, gender, or religious affiliation.

We work to keep our programs affordable so that we can serve families of all income levels. We respond in different ways based on the specific funding dynamics available for each center. Some of our centers can leverage different public and private funding sources to provide scholarships, a sliding tuition scale, or emergency scholarship assistance. If you are seeking financial tuition assistance, speak with center leadership or Concordia Place accounts receivable to work with you on what resources are available.

## Concordia Place Funding and Fundraising

Your tuition payments do not cover the full cost of our programs. Individual contributions, in-kind donations, public funding, as well as grants from private foundations allow us to provide growth and opportunity to all those we serve.

We ask that all program participants join the individuals, team members, and other donors by participating in our fundraising efforts. There are numerous opportunities: attending fundraising events, selling raffle tickets, donating needed items, and making a contribution to our annual fundraising campaign. You may also add a gift to each tuition payment with a note of intent. We need your help to support our mission to provide high-quality programs to families of all economic levels.

Concordia Place is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and donations are tax deductible to the full extent of IRS regulations. Please let us know if your employer has a matching gift program or is looking for group volunteer projects.

## Ages Served

Concordia Place Early Childhood serves children 6 weeks to 5 years of age. Each center determines the ages to serve, class size, and child-teacher ratios based on a number of factors including community need, physical room constraints, funding requirements, and other regulatory bodies and best practices. Concordia Place always meets or exceeds the minimum licensing requirements.

Group	Age	Ratio Children : Teachers
<b>Concordia on Milwaukee</b>		
Infants	6 weeks – 15 months	8:2
Toddlers	15 – 24 months	15:3
Twos	24 – 36 months	16:2
Preschool	3–5 years	20:2
<b>Concordia on Ravenswood</b>		
Infants	6 weeks – 15 months	8:2
Toddlers	15 – 24 months	15:3
Twos	24 – 36 months	16:2
Preschool	3–5 years	20:2
<b>Concordia on Seeley</b>		
Twos	24 – 36 months	12:2
Preschool	3–5 years	20:2
<b>Concordia on Whipple*</b>		
Infants	6 weeks – 15 months	8:2
Toddlers	15 – 24 months	12:3
Twos	24 – 36 months	12:2
Preschool	3–5 years	20:2

\* See the section on Continuity of Relationships for Concordia on Whipple

## Program Operations

Our program hours are set to accommodate working parents, children's learning, and classroom operations. Please make sure that either your child arrives by 9:00 am or that you have informed the teachers that your child will arrive late. We plan our staffing schedule and teachers plan their schedule of activities geared for learning. Latecomers can disrupt the group. Please follow sign-in procedures when you drop off your child. If your child will not attend school, please let us know through Procure.

Concordia Place closes for these holidays (the observation date may differ from the holiday):

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

One day per quarter, the center is closed for in-service, which includes team member training, program assessment, and other operational needs. We publish these dates on our annual calendar. You must make other arrangements for your child on the days Concordia is closed.

## Transitioning Into Our Program

Joining an early childhood program is a big change for any family, whether it is your first time or you are transitioning from another center. Our goal is to make this transition as smooth as possible, and we create a plan that meets your family's unique needs. Before enrollment, you may tour the center and are welcome to bring along your child.

Once enrollment is finalized (see more in the Enrollment & Tuition Policies section), we offer play dates. During play dates, you stay with your child in the classroom for a few hours while your child gets to know the teachers and the other children. It also helps them familiarize themselves with the environment. At this visit, there will be time for you to meet with program staff and teachers about what this transition will be like and how Concordia Place staff can help with the adjustment. On your child's first day, we encourage you to support your child's transition by spending some time in the classroom. When you are ready to depart, teachers will help ease the separation.

## Starting Checklist

Use this checklist to help prepare for a great learning experience! Please remember to:

- ✓ Label all personal items with your child's name
- ✓ Pack a blanket and a small travel sized pillow for rest time (Pillows are not permitted for infants.)
- ✓ Pack a tooth brush
- ✓ Pack a water bottle or sippy cup for your child's cubby
- ✓ Pack at least one extra set of season appropriate clothing to keep at Concordia (Two sets for children under 3 years old)
- ✓ Pack non-aerosol sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) labeled with your child's name to keep at the center for use during April through September
- ✓ Submit all enrollment forms
- ✓ Pay your registration fee, 1<sup>st</sup> tuition payment, and tuition deposit.

## Additional Supplies Needed from Home for Children Under 3 years:

- ✓ Disposable or cloth diapers: Cloth diapers must have an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material



- ✓ Diapering Ointment
- ✓ Baby Wipes
- ✓ Appropriate number of bottles (with formula or breast milk) labeled with child's name and date

### **Other Important Information**

Some additional information that may be useful for you:

- Each child is given a cubby for his/her coat, boots, and personal possessions.
- The program is very active. Children should wear clothing that is casual and not restricting. Gym shoes are preferable; we strongly discourage flip flops and dress shoes. We provide smocks for art and water activities, but occasionally clothing becomes soiled.
- Avoid sending your child in jewelry or other small fashion accessories; these items can get misplaced, broken, or become a choking hazard.
- Do not bring any toys from home unless your child's teacher requests it for a classroom activity.

## About Our Program

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### **Program Goals and Philosophy**

Concordia knows that young children are constantly learning and operates its children's programs year-round. Our curriculum continues even during the summer. In other words, we do not offer preschool or early learning September through June and just child care during July and August. Children develop and learn all year. Our year-round program also provides the consistency from which young children benefit. The program goals that guide our program curriculum and teaching methodology are to:

- Provide a safe, nurturing, and relaxed environment for each child's physical, emotional, and social wellbeing.
- Encourage children to develop a positive self-image, self-reliance, and a sense of their own independence.
- Teach children social skills: the ability to take turns, work together, communicate effectively, and respect one another.
- Provide structured and unstructured time for children to spend in a variety of activities and satisfying learning experiences.
- Provide children with the skills and techniques that allow them to gain control over their environment and competence in their abilities.
- Encourage active curiosity about the world and to promote enthusiasm for learning.
- Help children develop self-discipline by providing an environment with reasonable limits and expectations.
- Encourage good stewardship of our world: to care for their belongings, to show respect for the belongings of others, and to appreciate the world in which we live.

### **Program Objectives: Early Learning (ages 6 weeks – 3 years)**

The program is designed for optimum individual development at the child's natural pace. Teachers base lesson plans and activities on the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines, which is a set of general statements that describe what children should know and be able to do by the time they are three.

#### **Self-Regulation: Foundation of Development**

- **Physiological Regulation:** Children demonstrate the emerging ability to regulate their physical processes in order to meet both their internal needs and external demands in accordance with social and cultural contexts.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Children demonstrate the emerging ability to identify and manage the expression of emotion in accordance with social and cultural contexts.
- **Attention Regulation:** Children demonstrate the emerging ability to process stimuli, focus and sustain attention, and maintain engagement in accordance with social and cultural contexts.
- **Behavior Regulation:** Children demonstrate the emerging ability to manage and adjust behaviors in accordance with social and cultural contexts.

#### **Social and Emotional Development**

- **Attachment Relationships:** Children form secure attachment relationships with caregivers who are emotionally available, responsive, and consistent in meeting their needs.
- **Emotional Expression:** Children demonstrate an awareness of and the ability to identify and express emotions.
- **Relationship with Adults:** Children demonstrate the desire and develop the ability to engage, interact, and build relationships with familiar adults.
- **Self-Concept:** Children develop identity of self.

- Relationship with Peers: Children demonstrate the desire and develop the ability to engage and interact with other children.
- Empathy: Children demonstrate an emerging ability to understand someone else's feelings and to share in the emotional experiences of others.

### **Physical Development and Health**

- Gross Motor: Children demonstrate strength, coordination, and controlled use of large muscles.
- Fine Motor: Children demonstrate the ability to coordinate their small muscles in order to move and control objects.
- Perceptual: Children demonstrate the ability to distinguish, process, and respond to sensory stimuli in their environment.
- Self-Care: Children demonstrate the desire and ability to participate in and practice self-care routines.

### **Language Development, Communication, and Literacy**

- Social Communication: Children demonstrate the ability to engage with and maintain communication with others.
- Receptive Communication: Children demonstrate the ability to comprehend both verbal and nonverbal expression.
- Expressive Communication: Children demonstrate the ability to understand and convey thoughts through both nonverbal and verbal expression.
- Early Literacy: Children demonstrate interest in and comprehension of printed materials.

### **Cognitive Development**

- Concept Development: Children demonstrate the ability to connect pieces of information in understanding objects, ideas, and relationships.
- Memory: Children demonstrate the ability to acquire, store, recall, and apply past experiences.
- Spatial Relationships: Children demonstrate an awareness of how objects and people move and fit in space.
- Symbolic Thought: Children demonstrate the understanding of concepts, experiences, and ideas through symbolic representation.
- Creative Expression: Children demonstrate the ability to convey ideas and emotions through creative expression.
- Logic and Reasoning: Children demonstrate the ability to use knowledge, previous experiences, and trial and error to make sense of and impact their world.
- Quantity and Numbers: Children demonstrate awareness of quantity, counting, and numeric competencies.
- Science Concepts and Exploration: Children demonstrate a basic awareness of and use of scientific concepts.
- Safety and Well-Being: Children demonstrate the emerging ability to recognize risky situations and respond accordingly.

### **Approaches to Learning**

- Curiosity and Initiative: Children demonstrate interest and eagerness in learning about their world.
- Problem Solving: Children attempt a variety of strategies to accomplish tasks, overcome obstacles, and find solutions to tasks, questions, and challenges.
- Confidence and Risk-Taking: Children demonstrate a willingness to participate in new experiences and confidently engage in risk-taking.
- Persistence, Effort, and Attentiveness: Children demonstrate the ability to remain engaged in experiences and develop a sense of purpose and follow-through.

## **Program Objectives: Preschool (ages 3-5 years)**

For preschoolers, we use the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, which were created to guide teachers to prepare children for kindergarten. These standards align with achievement goals set for children in elementary school. The following objectives are used to plan our curriculum, class projects, and to guide our activities in formal and informal play:

### **Language Arts**

- Demonstrate increasing competence in oral communication (listening and speaking).
- Demonstrate understanding and enjoyment of literature.
- Demonstrate interest in and understanding of informational text.
- Demonstrate increasing awareness of and competence in emergent reading skills and abilities.
- Demonstrate increasing awareness of and competence in emergent writing skills and abilities.

### **Mathematics**

- Demonstrate and apply a knowledge and sense of numbers, including numeration and operations.
- Explore measurement of objects and quantities.
- Identify and describe common attributes, patterns, and relationships in objects.
- Explore concepts of geometry and spatial relations.
- Begin to make predictions and collect data information.

### **Science**

- Demonstrate curiosity about the world and begin to use the practices of science and engineering to answer questions and solve problems.
- Explore concepts and information about the physical, earth, and life sciences.
- Understand important connections and understandings in science and engineering.

### **Social Studies**

- Understand some concepts related to citizenship.
- Explore economic systems and human interdependence.
- Develop an awareness of the self and his or her uniqueness and individuality.
- Explore geography, the child's environment, and where people live, work, and play.
- Explore people and families and the unique cultural diversity of different types of family structures.

### **Physical Development and Health**

- Acquire movement skills and understand concepts needed to explore the environment, support learning, and engage in health-enhancing physical activity.
- Develop habits for lifelong fitness.
- Develop team-building skills by working with others through physical activity.
- Understand principles of health promotion and the prevention and treatment of illness and injury.
- Understand human body systems and factors that influence growth and development.
- Promote and enhance health and well-being using effective communication and decision-making skills.

### **The Arts**

- Gain exposure to and explore the arts.
- Understand that the arts can be used to communicate ideas and emotions.
- Understand the role of the arts in civilizations, past and present.

## Social/Emotional Development

- Develop self-management skills to achieve school and life success and develop positive relationships with others.
- Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships. Demonstrate decision-making skills and behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

## Curriculum

One of the ways we achieve our program goals is to integrate them into our daily curriculum. We use *Teaching Strategies Gold* for our early learning and preschool programs. *Teaching Strategies Gold* is a comprehensive curriculum for children's learning in all areas of development: social/emotional, physical, cognitive, language, mathematics, science, and the arts.

The objectives for development and learning serve as the guidelines for what children should accomplish in our program. The curriculum helps us structure activities and experiences. Our curriculum offers choices, encourages flexibility, and provides specific activities to reach the objectives for development and learning. It helps us to be intentional about the experiences we offer infants, toddlers, twos, and preschoolers, while still having the flexibility to respond to the changing interests and abilities of young children. *Teaching Strategies Gold* uses ongoing assessments to help us decide how to respond to each child and to plan appropriate experiences.

Our curriculum is dynamic and unique and allows our teaching teams the flexibility to incorporate the needs of the individual child and the classroom; as opposed to predefined, prescribed lesson plans.

Teachers develop weekly lesson plans, evaluate children's progress and observe children to recognize their individual needs. They use a wide range of teaching strategies that call for different levels of teacher involvement, which in turn, creates classroom communities where children learn how to work together and solve problems.

Our Assistant Directors provide guidance to develop weekly lesson plans, work with teachers to implement the curriculum, and evaluate children's academic progress and provide suggestions to each child's teacher.

## Special Programs and Field Trips

Special programs and field trips (whether off-site or in-house) are an important part of the educational program. We periodically invite guests to lead special activities at our centers or take children ages two and older to local areas of interest. We provide adequate, responsible adult supervision for these excursions through staff and adult volunteers. We use a licensed and insured bus company when transporting children. Each family is required to purchase a Concordia Place logo t-shirt to be worn on all off site-field trips.

If you are interested in accompanying us on a field trip, talk to the Director, Assistant Director, or your child's teacher to express your interest. We try to ensure that everyone who has expressed an interest can participate, but we may have to limit the number of volunteers. We determine the number of volunteers we need depending on the type of field trip or activity. We appreciate donations to help cover the costs for volunteers; however, Concordia will pay entrance fees for the number of volunteers that are needed. You need to arrange for your own meal if the trip or activity is over lunchtime. You may accompany the children on the bus if there is room, but sometimes circumstances require that you arrange your own transportation.

If you are interested in participating in an activity or field trip, but we have reached the number of required volunteers, speak with the Director or Assistant Director to see if the activity could accommodate more chaperones. You would be responsible for any transportation and entrance expenses.

## Daily Schedule

A planned, yet flexible schedule encourages children to develop cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically. We adjust schedules to be age appropriate and based on the needs and interests of each group.

For older children, we follow the schedule below. Specific classroom schedules may vary slightly due to the schedule of shared gross motor space, special activities, weather, etc.

Toddlers & Twos	Preschool	Activity
7:00	7:00	Children arrive and transition into the classroom with support from the teachers. Educational play opportunities such as table toys, dramatic play, blocks, writing table, or art, are offered as children are ready.
8:45	9:00	Snack is served at classroom tables, so children can share each other's company and teachers can engage them in conversation.
9:15	9:30	Circle time is planned for children to listen to books read aloud, have a group discussion, and sing songs. In Preschool, this is followed by time for children to engage in activities throughout the classroom, according to their interests. Teachers interact with children to scaffold learning.
9:30	10:30	Gross motor experiences are offered outside and/or indoor, so children can build skills like running, jumping, balancing, and climbing.
10:00	11:00	Children engage in activities throughout the classroom, according to their interests. Teachers interact with children during their play to scaffold learning.
11:00	11:30	Lunch is served family style, as children practice using utensils, pouring milk, and passing bowls. After lunch is clean up, bathroom trips and brushing teeth as age appropriate.
12:00	12:30	Naptime is prepared by laying out individual cots and children's blankets. Self-help skills are encouraged as children take off their shoes and prepare to rest. Children sleep and relax on their cots as soft music plays. Teachers comfort and soothe children as needed.
2:30	2:30	Wake up. Put cots away, put socks and shoes on. Snack preparation, brief finger plays or singing at the table for awake, non-bottle fed infants and all toddlers/two-year-olds.
3:00	3:00	Snack is served at classroom tables, so children can share each other's company and teachers can engage them in conversation.
3:30	3:30	Afternoon activities involve self-directed play and activity choices, such as art, sensory, and music in the classroom.
4:30	4:30	Gross motor experiences are offered outside and/or indoor, so children can build skills like running, jumping, balancing, and climbing.
5:00	5:00	Play continues in the classroom or large motor space, as children are picked up at the end of the day.

## Infant Schedule

In the infant room, the individual rhythms of eating, sleeping, and exploring are the basis for of the group schedule. Sleep schedules reflect each child's rhythm and input from parents. Bottle-feeding is also individualized to the child's needs and input from parents. Mothers who are nursing their babies are welcome at the center to feed their babies at any time of the day.

## Outdoor Play

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) requires that all children go outside daily when the conditions do not pose a safety risk. Weather that poses a significant health risk includes wind chill factor at or below 25°F and heat index at or above 90°F. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather.

## Sunscreen

Parent should bring a bottle of non-aerosol sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) labeled with their child's name. Parents should apply sunscreen to their child in the morning and Concordia staff will apply sunscreen on children as needed throughout the day for April through September.

## Rest Periods

Sleep is important for body and brain development and growth. All children have a daily naptime. Children who do not sleep are provided with a quiet activity on their cots until it is time to get up. You should bring a small blanket (and a travel-size pillow, if desired, except for infants) labeled with your child's name. These are kept at the center for naptime, taken home on Fridays for you to wash, and returned on Monday morning.

## Team Qualifications

Our teaching teams are selected for their professional qualifications and personal traits suited to meet the many needs of the children. We consider these qualifications:

- Academic requirements set by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Family Support Services and the National Association for the Education of Young Children
- Experience working with children
- Emotional maturity
- Commitment to Concordia's Mission & Guiding Principles
- Respect for children and adults
- Patience and flexibility
- Professionalism

## Communications

The bulletin board outside your child's classroom is a vital source of information for you: weekly lesson plans, articles, messages, and other information relevant to parents are made available for viewing. Please check the bulletin board daily. We also put individual communications about your child in your child's mail slot or cubby. Room Parents also are important part of the flow of information. Make sure we have your email address so you get these important communications about activities and information specific to your child's room.

You will also receive Concordia Place and Concordia Church newsletters monthly via email, but hard copies are also available. Other communications regarding Concordia Place information (closings, fundraisers, etc.) may be sent periodically throughout the month. Please make sure that [communications@concordiaplace.org](mailto:communications@concordiaplace.org) is on your safe email list. If you unsubscribe from this email, we cannot re-add your email address, and you will miss important information and notifications.

## Classroom Communication App

As a family member, you can use our classroom communication app (Procare) to check-in your child daily, enter morning drop-off notes, mark your child absent, and share other important information with your child's teacher. Detailed information about Procare will be shared with you during the enrollment process.

During the day, you are welcome to communicate with your child's teacher on the instant message feature. Please remember your child's safety and learning are our priority. You might not receive a reply until later in the day.

## Conferences

Formal parent-teacher conferences occur twice per year, in the fall and the spring. Informal conferences regarding your child's development can occur as needed throughout the year.

We are always happy to meet with parents. Please speak to your child's teacher, the Assistant Director, or the Director if you have a question or concern.

## Parent Feedback

Concordia benefits from parent input and we want to hear your thoughts, ideas, or concerns throughout the year. We conduct a formal survey each year to solicit parent input and include parents in our program improvement efforts. After we compile and thoughtfully review of the results, we share a summary along with any action items with parents.

## Parent Involvement

Parents and family members are always welcome to come and spend time at the program. You are welcome to come on field trips or participate in our other activities. Adult visitors and volunteers can share in the children's work and play.

Parent participation is an integral part of our program and a valued aspect of our effectiveness and quality. We ask parents to:

- Read and answer all correspondence from school
- Attend individual and group meetings
- Participate in fundraising activities
- Participate as a Room Parent. The goal of this Room Parents is to promote the mission and fundraising activities of Concordia Place to fellow parents. This group works closely with the Director of Advancement and center leadership to disseminate information to other parents.

## Family Support

At Concordia Place, we strive to put families first and build a strong, trusting relationship with each family and child we serve. Our Early Learning and Preschool program teams work closely with all of our families to ensure that every family feels supported, valued and a part of our community.

We believe that an important factor in the positive development and well-being of children is the relationship they have with their parents. One way we support the parent-child relationship is by utilizing a research-based parent curriculum, with the goal of nurturing healthy parent-child relationships in these critical early years. Included in the curriculum are center-based parent involvement activities, parenting newsletters geared specifically to the age of your child and topical handouts on parenting concerns such as toilet training, self-discipline, sibling rivalry, responding to nightmares and other topics.

Concordia on Whipple has a Family Support Specialist on site to help support your family's needs, and the Director or Assistant Director is available at our other centers. We work with families to assess their access to resources in the community and can make referrals to a variety of resources. We can work with you to develop a support plan that outlines goals you have for your child and for your family.



## Child Assessments

Teachers obtain useful information about children's knowledge, skills, and progress by observing, documenting, analyzing, and reviewing children's work over time. We use these assessments to support learning for the whole classroom, to identify any special needs for an individual child, for program evaluation and monitoring trends, and for program accountability.

Child assessment methods are consistent with program curriculum and philosophy because they assess the areas of cognitive, emotional, and physical development as well as social skills: the ability to work together and communicate effectively. Teachers determine the developmental progress and learning of the children through observations and assessment results. Teachers also use assessment results to align curriculum and teaching practices.

Teachers use My Teaching Strategies Family Online, a component of *Teaching Strategies Gold*, to track and communicate each child's developmental journey.

## Assessments Inform Curriculum

By observing and assessing the children, teachers identify interests the children share and use this information to plan their weekly curriculum using Creative Curriculum. Teachers may extend the topic based on the children's interest. Observations and assessment results also help the teachers determine the developmental progress and learning of the children.

## Program Improvement

We also use the cumulative assessment results to identify improvements to our programs, such as increasing teacher trainings or implementing special programming.

## Assessment Tools

Teaching teams are trained on how to use the following assessment tools and interpret their results through in-service trainings, outside workshops, and *Teaching Strategies Gold* resources.

- **Observations:** Teaching teams gather and document informal observations of the children continually within the school environment.
- **Work Sampling:** Teachers collect children's work in individual portfolios in order to track their progress over time. Portfolios may include artwork, writing samples, pictures, and anecdotes.
- **Developmental Screenings – Early Learning:** Within 45 days of your child's enrollment and annually thereafter, you and your child's teacher work together to complete two screening tools: the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social/Emotional (ASQ-SE). The scoring of these determines if children are within the normal range of development, if they need to be re-screened, or if they need to be referred to a specialist for further evaluation and support.
- **Developmental Screenings – Preschool:** Each fall and annually thereafter, trained Concordia Place staff administer the Early Screening Inventory – Revised (ESI-R) at our centers. If your child enters the program after the screenings have taken place, we screen your child within 45 days of enrollment and annually each fall.  
Within 60 days of a child's enrollment in preschool and annually thereafter, you and your child's teacher work together to complete the screening tool Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social/Emotional (ASQ-SE). The scoring of these two assessments (the ESI-R and the ASQ-SE) determines if children are within the normal range of development, if they need to be rescreened after a period, or if they need to be referred to a specialist for further evaluation and support.
- **Developmental Continuums:** Formal assessments using the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment System are completed four times per year, in the fall, winter, spring, and summer. Teachers use their observations and a variety of assessment tools to summarize children's progress towards developmental goals and milestones. Children's skills and abilities are measured along a continuum so that growth and improvement can be seen over time. Progress is measured in the areas of cognition,

social-emotional development, physical development, language and literacy, mathematics, social studies, art, science and technology, and English language acquisition (when applicable).

## Concerns and Referrals

If a teacher observes that a particular child has some difficulty in any of the learning objectives or developmental goals, he/she takes these steps to ensure that the concerns are addressed appropriately within the classroom and in partnership with the family:

1. Recognize a possible developmental delay or difficulty.
2. Keep daily observations on the child for two weeks.
3. Schedule a meeting with the parents and a program administrator to discuss the teacher's observations of the child.
4. If the parents are interested in receiving further support, our staff can suggest resources that could meet the child and family's needs. Among other resources, children in our Early Learning program may be eligible for support from Early Intervention services and children in our Preschool program may be eligible for support from Chicago Public Schools.

If we agree a referral is appropriate, we will ask for your signed permission.

## Transitioning Between Classrooms

### Concordia on Seeley, Ravenswood, and Milwaukee

We design our programs to maximize individual development at your child's natural pace. We consider multiple factors when determining the timing for a child to transition to the next class: your child's age, individual development, and needs; the dynamics in the classroom; and availability in the next classroom.

In addition, we view transitioning as a process. During the program day, we take children to visit their new classroom to spend time with their new teacher, meet their new friends, become familiar with their new surroundings, and learn the classroom routines. We inform you two weeks before transitioning your child into the next class. During the transition, you meet with and get to know your child's new teachers. They share more detailed information about the classroom, its schedule, and routines, and we encourage you to share information about your child and anything about your family that may help the transition and your child's learning experience overall.

*Due to the individualized nature of this process, please do not expect your child to transition to another room on his or her birthday.*

### Concordia on Whipple

At Concordia on Whipple, we practice Continuity of Relationships (COR). COR is an Early Learning program policy that supports the idea that children should have consistent caregivers from the time they enroll in an early learning program until they are ready for preschool. COR allows children to have close caring relationships, a sense of security and trust, and the confidence to explore and learn.

In Early Learning, children and their teachers move together into the next classroom in August or the first week of September. The infants and their teachers move into the toddler room; the toddlers and their teachers move into the two's room, and all children from the two's rooms move into preschool (with new preschool teachers). A child must be age-eligible for the next classroom by September 1st. For example, to enroll in a two's classroom, a child must turn two before September 1st of that enrollment year.

## **Common Challenging Behaviors**

Physical aggression, temper tantrums and biting are among the most common challenging behaviors exhibited in groups of young children. It is always upsetting and can be frightening for children, and even their parents. We focus our energies on prevention. We observe so that we can anticipate when a child might exhibit a challenging behavior and redirect the child to a more appropriate situation or behavior. Understanding the reasons for their behavior helps us use effective strategies to prevent the behavior. There are many reasons why a child may exhibit these behaviors including: teething, experimenting, exploring cause and effect, imitating behaviors, trying to approach or interact with another child, frustration (especially for non-verbal children), noise and confusion (especially during transitions), when they feel threatened (including when a toy is being grabbed from them) and when there has been a change in a routine or trusted caregiver.

Each child is different. If we begin to notice your child demonstrating a pattern of challenging behavior, we will call you to schedule a meeting to talk with you about our observations and questions. At this meeting we will brainstorm strategies and write a prevention plan with timelines. If the behavior continues or grows more intense, this may signal that the child needs special assistance, and we will set up a second meeting to discuss referrals to a community resource agency that specializes in the type of support that your child needs.

## **Guidance Philosophy**

Concordia Place follows a philosophy of proactive behavior guidance, rather than reactive behavior discipline.

### **Young Infants (0-8 months)**

Teachers focus on building the caregiver-child relationship with the utmost level of respect and compassion. Each child is a valued member of the classroom and their wants and needs are validated and respected. Our teams use proactive guidance strategies to protect the health and safety of young infants. For example, teachers remove objects that children should not handle, anticipate and move infants away from potential hazards, and separate children whose explorations of each other might cause harm.

### **Mobile Infants (8-18 months)**

Teachers use facial expression, body language, tone of voice, and “I” statements to communicate. An “I” statement (“I can see you are sad, maybe you are really missing Mommy today”) is very different than a “You” statement (“You have been crying all day”). “I” statements also describe to children what they are doing and what they might be feeling, rather than assuming how they feel and labeling their behavior as negative. Teachers encourage problem solving and independence; they may observe before stepping in to prevent a conflict to allow mobile infants an opportunity to become confident problem solvers.

### **Toddler (18-36 months)**

Teachers recognize the important developmental milestones of children needing some independence. Teachers proactively provide appropriate opportunities for children to say no, to assert their feelings, and to make their own choices and decisions. They anticipate potential problems and assist children in finding solutions. Teachers recognize that many toddler behaviors are efforts to communicate, so they model and provide children with the words they need to express themselves.

### **Preschooler (3-5 years)**

Teachers respect children’s growing independence and increasing ability to solve problems on their own. The teacher’s role in behavior guidance is to use natural and logical consequences to encourage self-control. Children work together to establish classroom rules for behavior that are stated positively, so that children understand the expectations, instead of just what not to do. As children are developing more social-emotional competencies, teachers wait before intervening in children’s conflicts to give them an opportunity to work through the situation on their own.

## Anti-Bullying Policy

Concordia Place recognizes that bullying is a serious form of violence that can hurt people in a way that can affect the rest of their lives. Bullying is the repeated physical or psychological intimidation which creates a pattern of harassment and abuse.

Solutions to bullying are multi-faceted, beginning with our policy that states clearly that bullying is not acceptable and is not tolerated by anyone regardless of age, gender or position. We incorporate anti-bullying into the curriculum and encourage you to speak with your child about bullying.

Children cannot handle acts of bullying on their own; they need the support of their teachers and parents. We strive to address bullying behavior in a fair, age-appropriate, and consistent manner. We monitor and speak up whenever we see bullying, and children are encouraged to tell an adult if they see or experience bullying. The child being bullied has a say as to how he or she would like to address the situation:

- Speak with the person doing the bullying, alone or in the presence of an adult
- Work with the Director or Assistant Director and the parties involved
- Work it out with the classroom teacher
- Involve parents

The child who is bullying is included in creating a plan to better manage his or her feelings.

## Termination/Dismissal

Concordia Place seeks to accommodate a wide range of individual children's differences, but on occasion our program is not equipped to handle the emotional or physical needs of a child or a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting. Some examples may include:

- A child appears to be a danger to themselves and other children at the center.
- Medical, psychological, or social service personnel working with the center determine that continued care at the center could be harmful or not in the best interest of the child.
- Accommodations required for the child's success and participation would place an unreasonable burden on center resources and finances, and removal is in the best interest of the child or center.

In the case of a child's unacceptable behavior, we work with the parents using these procedures:

1. Teacher documents a child's behavior in an incident report.
2. Teacher and Director discuss the situation.
3. Parents and program staff meet to discuss the situation in a positive manner.
4. Parents and program staff work together to devise an action plan.
5. Parents and program staff schedule a date to evaluate if the plan has been effective.
6. If the action plan has not been effective, Concordia Place staff will provide referrals to outside resources for child care and support that would better meet the child's needs.

Families must follow the policies outlined in this manual. In addition to the above situations, your child may be immediately dismissed from the program, at the discretion of the Director, if your family fails to comply with the regulations of the program, including:

- Payment of tuition and fees
- Timely pick-up of the child
- Failing to provide required documents or complete required forms, including but not limited to physical exam and birth certificate, in a timely manner

We expect our enrolled families to exercise good judgment, loyalty, honesty, respect, and integrity in all dealings with Concordia Place, its employees, and children, on or off premises. Any conduct that could be detrimental or harmful to Concordia Place, its facility, staff members, or others we serve, is unacceptable. Families may also be immediately dismissed from the program, at the discretion of the Director, should your family:

- Exhibit conduct that is inconsistent with the philosophy and goals of the program
- Exhibit aggressive, rude, or inappropriate behavior toward any children, staff or other visitors
- Exhibit behavior that endangers any center children, staff, or visitors
- Exhibit conduct that could be detrimental or harmful to Concordia Place, its employees, or children on or off premises, including electronic behavior
- Spread rumors or accusations about Concordia Place, its employees, administrators, families, and visitors through gossip or other means of communication, e.g., e-mail, text messaging and social media

## Health and Safety

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### Smoking Policy

Concordia Place is committed to protecting the safety and welfare of its team members, clients, and visitors.

No smoking of any kind is permitted within 15 feet of any entrance, exit, window, office or work area, restroom, classroom, or any other common area. Concordia fully complies with the Smoke Free Illinois Act (410 ILCS 82; Public Act 095-0017), which prohibits smoking within any area of a child care center. In addition, if you are an individual who smokes, you are required to smoke during your normally scheduled break time and must wash your hands upon reentry into the classroom.

The use of e-cigarettes and other tobacco products are prohibited on Concordia's premises.

This policy applies equally to team members, clients, and visitors.

### Weapon-Free Workplace Policy

To ensure that Concordia Place maintains a workplace safe and free of violence for all employees, the company prohibits the possession or use of any dangerous weapons on company property. The only exception in which a firearm is allowed on Concordia property is by any active member of the law enforcement community. A license to carry any firearm or weapon does not supersede company policies.

The policy applies equally to all employees, clients, visitors on company property. Any employee who fails to comply with this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to written warnings, suspensions, and possible termination of continued violations.

"Company Property" is defined as all company-owned or leased buildings and surrounding areas such as sidewalks, driveways and parking lots under the company's ownership or control.

"Dangerous Weapons" included, but not limited to, firearms, explosives, knives, and other weapons that might be considered dangerous or that could cause harm.

### Food

#### **Meals & Snacks**

Our program ensures children receive healthy snacks and meals. We offer a mid-morning snack, lunch, and mid-afternoon and evening snack with healthy foods, avoiding "junk" food and sweets. A catering company provides organic lunches each day. We purchase our own snack foods to prepare and serve the children. We do not serve any products that contain high fructose corn syrup, artificial flavors, or colors. We provide hormone free milk or water to drink at mealtimes; never juice.

Each month's menu for lunch and snack is sent via email or through Procure.

#### **Infant Foods & Formula**

Parents of infants will provide specific, written information on food and formula to their child's teacher. It is important that the teachers caring for your child have accurate information regarding formula changes, dietary restrictions, and new food introductions in order to provide the best care. Other than formula and breast milk, we must provide all food for your child. We cannot accept food from home unless accompanied by a physician's note. In addition, we do not offer solid foods to children younger than six months unless your child's health care provider recommends it.

## **Milk**

After one hour, we discard any formula or breast milk that has been served but has not been completely consumed after a feeding or has not been refrigerated.

We serve whole milk in the infant and toddler classrooms to children who are not on formula or breast milk. We serve 1% milk in our twos and preschool rooms. Parents may provide non-dairy milk only with a physician's note.

## **Outside Food Prohibited**

Concordia provides all meals for the children (other than breast milk and formula for bottle-fed children). Exceptions are considered for religious and medical reasons only. A physician's note must accompany all requests for dietary changes due to medical reasons. If an exception is permitted, you are responsible for following the Peanut Safe Policy and may not bring food that contains peanuts, peanut products, or that have been produced in a factory that processes peanuts or peanut products. If you have a doctor's note to bring outside food, you must provide nutritional food, which excludes "junk" food, sweets, desserts, sugary beverages, candy, or other food products lacking nutritional value.

You are permitted to bring a treat or snack for children in the classroom to celebrate a special occasion; we encourage healthy treats like fruit snacks and yogurt. All foods must be store-bought and in their original container with an ingredient label. Before it is served to the children, the Director or Assistant Director must first verify that the food follows this policy.

## **Celebration Policy**

As a part of our commitment to healthy lifestyles, we ask that you bring healthy snacks or non-food items to celebrate birthdays and holidays. Please speak to the Director or Assistant Director for a list of approved food and items to bring for that special celebration.

## **Peanut Safe**

Due to the prevalence and severity of some peanut allergies, Concordia has a peanut safe policy. Because peanut allergies can be serious and life threatening for some children, our food program avoids foods containing peanuts or peanut products.

Peanut safe environments can only be achieved if everyone does their part. We ask you to not bring any food into the center that contains peanuts, peanut products or that has been produced in a factory that processes peanuts or peanut products. Your help and cooperation are integral.

Although we strive to provide an environment safe of peanuts, we cannot guarantee a peanut-free environment.

## **Child and Adult Care Food Program**

Concordia Place receives financial support through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) that helps us provide nutritious meals and snacks for the children. All families are required to complete the CACFP enrollment form as part of Concordia's enrollment process. CCAFP is available to all eligible children without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap. Any person who believes that they have been discriminated against in any U.S.D.A.-related activity should write to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington D.C. 20250.

## **Pick-Up Policy**

### **Sign-Out of Child**

At the time of pick-up, your child must be signed out by a person on your authorized pick-up list. This policy is for the protection of you and your child. Failure to sign a child in or out will result in a \$5 penalty assessment. Multiple incidents of failure to sign out a child could result in dismissal from the program.

## Pick-Up Time

You may pick up your child at any time during the day, although we encourage you to plan around the classroom schedule so that your child can fully experience our program activities. If you need to pick up your child earlier than usual, please inform your child's teacher.

## Late Pick-Up

We ask you to strictly adhere to the 6:00 pm pick-up deadline. If for some reason you are delayed, please call the center to inform us. Calling the center to give an estimated time of arrival allows us to notify our staff and your child regarding the time that you will arrive; however, a phone call does not waive the late fee. While we understand that emergencies do arise, if you are delayed and unable to pick up your child before 6:00 pm, you are solely responsible to make other arrangements for pick up.

Children who are not picked up by 7:00 pm may be released into the custody of the Chicago Police Department. This is not our choice; it is the law.

We charge a late pick-up fee of \$10 for the first fifteen minutes plus one dollar each minute thereafter. This is payable with your next tuition payment. Repeated tardiness will necessitate that your child be withdrawn from the program.

## Authorized Pick-Up Person(s)

Only those persons authorized in writing by the legal guardian (on the Authorized People to Pick Up Section of the application) will be allowed to pick up your child. This policy is for the protection and safety of your child. Under no circumstances can we release your child to anyone who has not been properly authorized in writing by the legal guardian.

You should secure at least three (3) alternative persons who can pick up your child. Each person designated as an alternative pick-up person must meet all of these requirements:

- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Have a current photo ID to present at the time of pick up (driver's license or other recognized form of identification).
- Be available to pick up the child before 6:00 pm.
- Be authorized by you, in writing, as an alternative pick-up person on the Authorized People to Pick Up Section of the application.
- Have a current telephone number on the Authorized People to Pick Up section of the application.

Parents must understand that, unless a copy of a certified legal document to the contrary is on file at the center, both parents listed on the birth certificate will be acknowledged as legal guardians.

We adhere to the following provision stated in the Illinois Child Care Act. 225 ILCS 10/7.1. (from Ch. 23, par. 2217.1)

*Sec. 7.1. (a) (1) A facility described in Section 2.09, 2.10, or 2.18 shall retain on file a list provided by the legal guardian of each child under its care, designating persons to whom it may release custody of such child, including:*

*(A) a primary list containing the names of persons to whom the facility can expect to usually release custody of the child, and*

*(B) a contingency list containing the names of persons to whom the facility can expect to occasionally release custody of the child, and setting forth the manner in which such child may leave the facility in the custody of any such person.*

*(2) No such facility shall release custody of any child under its care in any manner not authorized by the child's guardian, or to any person who is not known to the operators of the facility as, or cannot present sufficient identification proving himself to be, an individual listed by the child's guardian as one to whom custody of the child may be released.*



Lastly, **you** are required to keep this information accurate and current **at all times**. It is not the responsibility of the center to verify that this information is up to date.

## **Mandated Reporting**

The State of Illinois, Department of Children and Family Services, requires that all staff members of day care institutions look for, and report evidence of any and all cases of suspected child abuse. When a child's health and safety is endangered, staff members are legally obligated to report their suspicions of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities by calling the state's DCFS hotline. In the process of investigating such reports, the authorities may have access to the child's records on file at the center.

## **Health and Medical**

As required by state law, every child enrolling in our programs must have a health form on file on which your doctor verifies that the child's immunizations are up to date. A physical examination, including a T.B. test and lead test, by your doctor is required. This form should be less than 6 months old when your child enrolls and must be updated every two years. We will notify you when an updated medical form is needed.

Before your child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program, when a child is overdue for any routine health services, you must provide evidence of an appointment for those services. The exception is for any immunization for which parents are using a religious exemption.

Do not bring your child to the program if he or she is suffering from any contagious or communicable diseases. We do not admit any child with these symptoms or conditions:

- Temperature of 100°F or greater (If under 101°F, fever must be accompanied by any of the symptoms of coughing, nasal discharge, fatigue, or sudden change in mood or disposition in order for your child to be excluded from the program.)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Chicken Pox
- Strep Throat
- Any unexplained rash
- Nasal discharge accompanied by any of the symptoms of coughing, fatigue, fever of 100°F or greater, a sudden change in mood or disposition
- Mucus producing cough
- Redness of eyes or discharge
- Signs of body pests, such as head lice and/or nits

In addition to these symptoms, we will also take into consideration your child's ability to participate fully in our program when determining whether or not they need to go home. This includes being well enough to go outdoors for play and being able to participate in the daily classroom routine.

If a child becomes ill while at Concordia, we will notify you, and you will be required to take your child home until fully recovered. If necessary, your child may be separated from the group to avoid infecting other children.

After your child is free of any symptoms for a period of 24 hours, your child may return to the program. A doctor's note stating that your child is no longer contagious is required whenever a child has been absent for five days or longer, or returns prior to 24 hours on medication prescribed by your doctor.

Immediately report to the office if your child has been exposed to any contagious disease, such as strep throat, viral infections, pneumonia, pink eye, scarlet fever, etc. Notification is important for the health of all the children in our program.

## Medications

We cannot administer over-the-counter medications to any child at any time. Prescription medication will be given to your child if the medication is in its original bottle with the date, child's name, and times of day it is to be administered. We also need a form from you and from the doctor to be completed stating the nature of the illness, type of medication, amount of medication to administer, and the times to be given. We will provide you with these forms upon request. Please hand the prescription to the Director, Assistant Director, or Head Teacher, with written instructions attached. We store medicine in a locked box in the refrigerator or in a locking cabinet in the Director's office. Medication is not permitted in the classroom.

## Incident Reports

Concordia staff prepares an incident report for any accident or injury to provide a detailed description of the incident. Parents sign the report to acknowledge receipt and receive a copy.

## Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency or of an accident, we will contact the child's parents. If Concordia Place staff determines the situation requires immediate medical attention, we will get your child immediately to closest hospital (listed below according to center). You should go directly to the hospital—not to Concordia Place. Concordia Place carries liability insurance for its operations. In the case of medical emergencies or accidents, your family's insurance is the primary coverage.

Concordia on Whipple	Illinois Masonic Hospital	836 W Wellington Ave
Concordia on Seeley	Illinois Masonic Hospital	836 W Wellington Ave
Concordia on Ravenswood	Swedish Covenant Hospital	5145 N California Ave
Concordia on Milwaukee	Kindred Chicago North	2544 W Montrose Ave

## Emergency Closings

The Concordia Place President/CEO makes the decision to close Concordia Place based on many factors, including temperature, amount of snow, road conditions, and the safety of our staff and those we serve. We communicate a closing as soon as possible via email, Procure, and posting on the Concordia Place website home page, and social media.

## Emergency Evacuation

Concordia has developed an Emergency response plan that helps us respond to many types of emergencies. Depending on the situation, we will use one of these protective actions:

- **Shelter In Place** – Sudden occurrences, weather or hazardous materials related, may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.
- **Modified Operation** – may include cancellation/postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building problems, such as utility disruptions, that make it unsafe for children but may be necessary in a variety of situations.
- **Immediate Evacuation** – Children and staff are evacuated to a safe area near the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire or other similar emergency.
- **Evacuation and Relocation** – If the situation will not allow us to return to the building, we move to an off-site location. We have made advance arrangements, but you will receive a text message or e-mail alerting you of the situation and detailed information about picking up your child.

Concordia on Whipple	Preschool and two's classrooms	Linne School, 3221 N Sacramento Ave or Brands Park, 3259 N Elston Ave
	Infant and toddler classrooms	Daughters of Charity, 3335 N Whipple St
Concordia on Seeley	All classrooms	Epiphany United Church of Christ, 2008 W Bradley Pl or St. Benedicts Catholic School, 3900 N Leavitt St
Concordia on Ravenswood	Preschool and two's classrooms	McPherson Elementary School, 4728 N Wolcott Ave
	Infant and toddler classrooms	Ravenswood Community Child Care Center (RC4), 4908 N Damen Ave
Concordia on Milwaukee	All classrooms	Schurz High School, 3601 N Milwaukee Ave

During an emergency, please do not call the school. This keeps the main telephone line free to make emergency calls and relay information. We use email and Procure as our emergency notification system. Should any emergency arise, you will receive an email or Procure message informing you of the situation.

We use the contact information provided on your enrollment forms for your emergency contact telephone numbers. Should your contact phone numbers change, it is important that you notify the front desk immediately.

Also, during an emergency, only those persons you list on the designated pick-up form will be allowed to pick up your child. We will not accept different pick-up arrangements during an emergency. This will only create additional confusion and divert team members from their assigned emergency duties.

### **Safety and Building Security**

Teachers in each classroom cannot allow children to leave with anyone unless they are on the authorized pick-up form. Every Concordia center has security measures that include external door locks, security cameras, door monitoring, and screening procedures for people entering our buildings.

Our centers use electronic entry systems to help prevent unauthorized persons from entering our buildings and program areas. Team members monitor the external doors to grant entry. You are part of our security systems, too. As you as you enter or leave, do not allow people you do not know to enter our buildings with you.

We provide parents with limited access badges or key fobs for internal doors. You can be issued up to two badges without cost, but you may purchase additional badges. If you forget your badge, you may be asked to show identification before a staff member will give you access to the children's program areas. Please keep your badge in a safe place. If you lose a badge, IMMEDIATELY notify us so that we may deactivate your badge. Replacement badges are available. When you withdraw your child from Concordia, you must return all the badges you have been issued to the front desk staff when you give your four-week written notice. We charge a lost badge fee for each unreturned badge.

You are responsible for knowing and abiding by these procedures.

### **Animal Control Policy**

Healthy household pets that present no danger to children are permitted in our center unless prohibited by local health regulations. Dogs and cats must have had a rabies vaccination verified by a licensed

veterinarian. All animals are physically separated from children both indoors and outdoors except as a portion of a specifically planned program activity under the direct supervision of a staff member.

Immediate treatment will be obtained for any child who sustains a bite or scratch from an animal and the child's parents are notified immediately. In addition, the center will notify the county animal control administrator.

Animals and pets are properly housed, fed and maintained in safe, clean and sanitary conditions at all times. A responsible staff person is assigned to take care of any animal or pet on premises. Domestic animals, birds, or fowl are not permitted at any time in areas where foods are prepared and maintained. The center is kept free of stray animals to avoid injury and/or disease to children.

## Pest Control Policy

Concordia Place is committed to providing children in its care with a safe environment, which includes preventing exposure to pests and pesticides. While pesticides protect children and property from pests that may be found in the facility and its surrounding grounds, under some circumstances they may pose a hazard to children and staff. To minimize potential pesticide exposure to children and staff, our pest control practices focus on prevention and monitoring.

In the areas used by the children's programs, Concordia:

- Makes pest management decisions based on the results of regular inspections. The facility avoids routine use of pesticides not exempted below.
- Ensures that pesticides are applied by certified pesticide applicators or registered technicians.
- Ensures that pesticides are not applied when children are present at the facility. Toys and other items mouthed or handled by the children are removed from the area before pesticides are applied. Children do not return to the treated area within two hours of a pesticide application or as specified on the pesticide label, whichever time is greater.
- Provides at least two operational days but not more than 30 days advance notice of pesticide application to parents and staff except in emergencies where pests pose an immediate health threat to children or staff (e.g. wasps).
- Notifies parents and staff as soon as possible when advance notice is not provided and include an explanation of the emergency, the reason for the late notice and the name of the pesticide applied.
- Makes accessible, upon request, all records of pesticide applications and advance notices for at least 90 days.

This policy does not apply to the following exempted uses of pesticides:

- An antimicrobial agent, such as disinfectant, sanitizer, or deodorizer, or
- Insecticide baits and rodent baits.

## Toy Donation Policy

Concordia appreciates that parents, neighbors, and friends provide gift-in-kind donations for our programs. The children benefit from donations of books, games, and toys. For dramatic play, children also enjoy costumes, clothing and shoes in small sizes for girls and boys, purses, and small business jackets. While our preference is for new items, if you have gently used items that you would like to donate, please speak with a program administrator prior to bringing in your donation.

Below are some guidelines to help ensure that your donation can be put to good use:

- It is most helpful when we receive items that are clean. Please wash or wipe down items before donating them.
- Complete items only; for example, no puzzles with pieces missing.

- Books should be in good condition, without missing or torn pages.
- We regret that for sanitary reasons, we cannot accept donated stuffed animals.
- Please do not donate toys or games that require batteries.
- We do not accept weapon toys or other items that can promote violence.

## **Non-Solicitation**

Concordia recruits and trains teachers and staff to the highest measures of quality so that we provide your child and the other children in our programs the best nurturing and developmental environment possible. Solicitation of employees for alternative employment violates the relationship of trust with Concordia and potentially affects the quality of the care we provide to the families enrolled here. By enrolling your children, you agree that for a period of not less than 6 months after leaving our program, you will not seek to employ, entice away, or even attempt to entice away anyone currently employed by Concordia or anyone who was employed by Concordia in the preceding six months.

## **Privacy, Confidentiality, and Document Retention**

Concordia Place collects, uses, and retains information about participants in our programs and their families for many purposes, such as account payment, records of the child, donations, etc. These records are required for various licensing and government reporting purposes as well as our own program and business operations and are the property of Concordia Place.

Concordia staff members and parents are required to respect the confidentiality of each child and family enrolled in our programs, including enrollment and educational records. Observations, assessment information, and screening results, etc. are filled in the child's educational file and stored in a locked cabinet. Information that the staff obtain about a child's performance is shared only with parents and appropriate center staff. If Concordia feels a referral is appropriate, we will ask for your signed permission. Teachers may make notes for their anecdotal records, but such notes are to be considered as confidential information.

Discussions concerning a child or family, with anyone other than the child's parents or guardians, or other staff members having direct contact with the child, are strictly prohibited. Personal information about families or children in our care is shared with staff members only to the extent of what is necessary to support the child. We require discretion and privacy when discussing confidential family and child information, particularly taking care not to be overheard by staff, parents or children.

Concordia uses private and confidential information to compile statistics about our program and operations that we report to licensing, program funders, and other required reporting. Your personal information is not identifiable.

We use photographs, videos or voice recordings of children for program purposes as well as funding reports, program quality assessment, etc. You provide your permission for us to use these for any outside purposes, such as marketing and media, on your enrollment form.

Lists of parents' email or home addresses and phone numbers are treated as confidential. This information may be used by staff, parents or others working on behalf of any of the organizations in the family of Concordia's ministries for events, projects, communications, or other express purposes. Concordia may use this information for non-program communications to keep you informed on news, activities, and events as it relates to all of Concordia. However, the lists will not be given to parents or anyone else for non-Concordia related purposes.

In addition, Concordia staff, parents, and other volunteers and representatives may form committees or task forces for activities, such as completing special projects, holding special events, or conducting fundraising efforts. These committees may exchange information, such as contact information or personal

background. This information will be used only for its originally intended purpose. Committee members are prohibited from using any information gained for their personal use.

For children enrolled at Concordia on Whipple and Seeley, we are required to enter children's enrollment information with the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services system.

With the above exceptions, we will not give out information to a third party without your prior written approval. It is our policy not to share information about a family with anyone other than appropriate staff members or our representatives.

### **Access to Written Records**

*All records concerning children and families are maintained in locked files at the center. Only the directors, teachers and administrative staff have access to these files. Parents and legal guardians may review their children's file, but Concordia must maintain the documents on site. Records may not be removed from any Concordia premises except as required for legal purposes; in such instances, a subpoena is required for the removal of any records.*

### **Document Retention**

We have developed a document retention policy for our various types of documents based on IRS recommendations, industry standards, as well as adaptations from the 23 Illinois Administrative Code Section 375. When records are no longer active, they are archived and stored in a locked closet. After the document retention time has expired, the information is shredded by a professional shredding service.

### **Program Oversight and Governance**

Concordia Place children's programs are directly administered by our Director of Organizational Development and each center has a Director. Any concerns about your child's program and care should be first discussed with your child's teacher and the appropriate Assistant Director. The Assistant Director can provide resources on how to resolve the conflict and approach the concern in a constructive manner. A parent-teacher conference can be scheduled to discuss the concern.

If you feel your concerns are not resolved, you may request a meeting with the Director or the Director of Organizational Development. If after speaking to the Director of Organizational Development, you feel your concerns are not resolved, you may meet with the President/CEO.

In addition, the Board of Directors governs all Concordia Place programs. Our Board consists of people who have demonstrated a passion for the Concordia mission. Parents whose children are enrolled in one of our programs, members of Concordia Lutheran Church, neighbors, and members from other community and business organizations are all eligible. They review organizational goals, funding, program policies, etc. The board does not review individual matters. However, if you have a policy concern you wish to be brought before the Board, send a written request to Concordia Place, 3300 N Whipple St, Chicago, IL 60618, attention Board Chair. Board meetings are not open to the public.

Parents are encouraged to participate at Concordia. If you are interested in joining Concordia committees, we would be happy to discuss your participation.

## Enrollment and Tuition Policies

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### Eligibility and Enrollment

Children must be age eligible for admission to our early childhood programs. The state license for each center specifies the ages eligible for service. In addition, Concordia on Whipple must follow the Continuity of Relationships policy requirements for children under 3 years old.

The program year for our early childhood programs begins the first Tuesday after Labor Day and operates a full 12 months. However, families may enter the program at any time during the program year.

When you apply for enrollment, we work with you to determine your start date. We look at your child's birth date, current availability and projected openings to determine your child's start date.

To secure enrollment and a start date, you must submit these enrollment documents and fees:

- Enrollment Forms
- Program Questionnaire Form
- IDHS Certificate of Child Health Examination (to be completed by physician)
- Childhood Lead Risk Assessment Questionnaire (to be completed by physician as needed)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program Enrollment and Application Forms
- Parent Manual Agreement
- Birth Certificate, original or certified copy
- Signed Registration Agreement
- Signed Tuition Agreement
- Registration fee, deposit and first tuition payment (details are found on each center's Tuition & Fees sheet)

You must provide these forms before your child's first day of school. These forms are part of our compliance with state licensing and other regulatory bodies. While we provide reminders to you, you are responsible for providing us complete and accurate forms by the deadlines we require. We may require you to remove your child from the program fail to do this.

### **Wait List**

Sometimes we cannot accommodate someone who wants to enroll. This might happen if we do not have any current openings or if we cannot confidently project an opening at the time you apply. If we cannot provide you with a firm start date, you can choose to be placed on our wait list for the next available opening.

When openings become available, Concordia fills them from our wait list. If you are not ready to submit the forms and fees above and start on the date of the available opening, Concordia will offer the opening to the next family on the wait list. *Concordia does not hold open slots.*

### **Annual Registration**

Each spring, Concordia asks each currently enrolled family to confirm their enrollment commitment for the upcoming new program year so that Concordia can better plan its new program year and determine what spots are available to offer to new children.

Unless you provide notice to your center director before the stated deadline, you will be charged your annual registration fee (waived for any child who enrolled after December 31 of the current program year) and tuition payment for the first week of the coming program year. You do not need to provide an additional deposit; we apply your current deposit to the next program year's deposit.

All the above must be provided by the stated deadline to confirm your child's spot in the next program year.

*Please note: when you register for the new program year, you will forfeit your tuition deposit (paid during your initial enrollment) if you withdraw anytime between the annual registration deadline and the start of the new program year regardless of the amount of notification you give.*

## **Tuition**

Tuition is for the cost of teacher salaries, classroom materials, snacks, meals, facility and utilities, insurance, and equipment for a whole program year. Tuition rates are based on our overall annual costs and do not represent a per hour, per day, weekly, or monthly rate; tuition is broken down into smaller amounts for ease of payment.

Tuition is based on enrollment, not attendance. Therefore, tuition payments do not vary with your child's attendance. There are no refunds for any days your child is absent. This includes days absent due to illness, vacation, and days the center is closed.

## **Sibling Discounts**

Concordia offers families with more than one child enrolled at Concordia a 5% reduction on the total tuition for all children. Sibling discounts are applied to tuition only and do not apply to any program fees.

## **Tuition Determination**

Tuition is determined by the classroom your child is enrolled in. It does not change with your child's birthday or age.

As part of your enrollment packet, you sign a Tuition Agreement that reflects the tuition based on your child's classroom, any discounts, subsidies, etc. We create a new Tuition Agreement each time your status changes; changes include, but are not limited to, a sibling change, a classroom change, etc.

Concordia uses a sliding tuition scale based on gross household income and family size. For each additional dependent child in the household, a \$5,000 income consideration is given to determine the household income category. At enrollment, you must provide a copy of your most recent IRS tax statement or proof of earnings if you wish to be considered for the sliding tuition scale. You must disclose any changes to your household's income to the Concordia Revenue Manager as soon as you become aware. Failure to report income changes that would increase your tuition responsibility will result in your legal liability for the unpaid balance of the entire period of your adjusted income.

## **Tuition Payments**

Tuition is paid through automatic bank account transfers (ACH) or credit card (which requires an additional fee, listed on your center's Tuition and Fee Sheet). Tuition payments are due in advance. All tuition is due on the first day of the billing period unless other arrangements have been made in advance. Payments received after the due date are delinquent. We do not accept payments in cash.

## **Insufficient Funds/Returned Payment**

We charge a \$25 fee for any payment that is returned unpaid. After a returned payment, we may require you to use an alternate payment method for future payments going forward.

## **Late Fees**

We assess a \$5 late fee for each day your payment is late. After one week, you will be asked to withdraw your child from the program. You are still responsible for payment of any balance due, and you forfeit your deposit.

Concordia works with parents to collect outstanding balances but reserves the right to use a collection agency as we deem necessary.



## Other Charges and Fees

You are responsible for paying charges and fees described elsewhere throughout this manual, including, but not limited to, late pick-up, failure to sign-out, and t-shirts. These charges are payable the week the charge or fee was incurred.

## Registration Fee, Tuition Deposit and First Tuition Payment

Due at registration is an annual, per child, registration fee, listed on the Tuition & Fees Sheet. This fee covers application to the program.

Also payable at registration is a deposit and your first tuition payment. For families who are enrolled in the IDHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) or other subsidy programs, the deposit amount is based on the tuition amount from our tuition scale, not a co-payment amount.

The tuition deposit will be applied to your last tuition payment in the program, if you provide a four week withdrawal notice. See Withdrawal section below for more information.

## Withdrawals

If you registered for a new program year but decide to not attend after the registration deadline, you forfeit your tuition deposit, first tuition payment, and registration fee.

Once your child is enrolled and has started the program, you may withdraw your child by providing a **four-week written notice**. You forfeit your tuition deposit if you withdraw without appropriate notice. Please contact the Assistant Director or Director for the formal Notice of Withdrawal form and return it when completed.

Subsequent re-enrollment will entail an additional registration fee and all other applicable fees and deposits, providing that your account was left in good standing.

## IDHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)/Action for Children

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) helps low-income families pay for the child care services needed to go to work, school, training, and other work-related activities through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). This state-run program may be able to assist you with paying for child care costs. Illinois Action for Children helps administer this program.

For families that are approved for CCAP, your tuition is not determined by the Concordia Place sliding tuition scale. Instead, IDHS sets standard reimbursement rates to center-based child care providers; a portion of that amount is assigned to you as co-payment that you pay directly to Concordia and IDHS pays the remainder directly to Concordia.

These reimbursement rates do not cover the full cost of our programming. In addition to your CCAP co-pay, you are responsible for paying an additional tuition supplement each week, listed on the Tuition & Fees Sheet. This is not subject to our sibling discount.

A few things to keep in mind when you enroll in CCAP:

- Our staff are knowledgeable in CCAP and can support you through the process.
- It is solely your responsibility to ensure your enrollment and eligibility. Concordia may send you reminders from time to time concerning your coverage, but this is only as a courtesy.
  - You are responsible for completing the application, submitting it to the appropriate IDHS office, and ensuring you receive a response.
  - Please be aware of when your eligibility begins and ends. You must reapply enough in advance of your coverage ending to avoid a lapse in assistance.

- Until Concordia receives confirmation (of your initial eligibility or redetermination in the case of a lapse in assistance), you are charged tuition according to our sliding scale.
  - If you are found **eligible**, we will adjust our billing to reflect your payment from the beginning of your eligibility period.
  - If you are found **ineligible**, you are responsible for all tuition according to our sliding scale during the time your child attended our center.
- While you may either submit the application in person at the Action for Children offices, online, or by mail, we strongly recommend that you to submit your application in person and request a receipt as proof of all items submitted.
- Concordia does not determine your IDHS co-payment. This is determined solely by IDHS. Any concerns regarding your determination must be directed to their offices.
- Irregular attendance or frequent or prolonged absences with no medical or approved reason may result in a family being asked to leave the program.

For more information or to download forms, please visit Action for Children's website at [actforchildren.org](http://actforchildren.org)

### **Prevention Initiative & Preschool for All**

Through a contract with the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), Concordia Place imbeds Prevention Initiative and Preschool for All center-based care in some of our Early Childhood programming at Concordia on Whipple and Concordia on Seeley. Through these programs, Concordia Place receives supplemental funding for a portion of the program day that helps us maintain the high-quality programs and services we offer our families.

If your child has been determined eligible and accepted into either the Prevention Initiative or Preschool for All program, we will update your Tuition Agreement to reflect your dual enrollment in the Concordia Early Childhood Program that is year-round and operates 11 hours a day from 7am to 6pm.

You are still responsible for all CCAP co-payments and tuition for wrap-around services. If you paid the Registration fee, we will apply it toward your future tuition payments.

### **Other Child Care Subsidies**

Some families may be eligible for other programs, which may be able to assist with child care costs. For example, there are child care military subsidies. It is solely your responsibility to apply for any of these programs and ensure you are eligible.

You may be responsible for an additional tuition amount per child, depending on the subsidy amount provided by the program so that the total amount Concordia receives corresponds to the program's sliding tuition scale using your family income and size. Payments through these programs are not eligible for our sibling discount.

### **Cooperation for Outside Funding**

As part of our mission, Concordia Place serves families from a wide array of economic situations. We are able to do this through a combination of our sliding tuition scale, private fundraising and available public funding sources. It is important that we receive all available funding that is intended to support the type of work we do to keep tuition costs as low as possible and provide excellent care and education for your children.

A key part of Concordia Place receiving available public funding is full and timely cooperation from our families. This may involve providing needed information; authorizing Concordia's funding application for your child, or directly applying for funding subsidies.

Some funders, such as Illinois Action for Children, require that you directly apply for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) funding support. In other cases, Concordia Place obtains your approval to provide information in an application to a funder, such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

*Families that do not fully cooperate in Concordia's efforts to receive these funds are subject to reimbursing Concordia for the funding that we would have received.* Each week a pro-rated amount of the lost revenue will be added to the family's weekly tuition payment.

For example, if the income verification you provided Concordia Place during registration shows that you may be eligible for Action for Children subsidies, but you choose to not apply, you will have the difference between the full IDHS rate and our sliding tuition rate added to your weekly tuition amount.

Concordia Place requires that families cooperate fully and timely, but the actual outcome of a family's eligibility determination is not considered. For example, if you apply for Action for Children subsidies and IDHS determines you are not eligible, you have met the Concordia Place requirement to fully cooperate and you are not responsible for any lost revenue.

### **Gracias Referral**

We like to thank you when you refer families to our programs. For each family you refer, we give you a one-time \$100 deduction from your tuition. Once the referred family has attended and paid tuition for a full month, we credit your account \$100. Please note that the referred family must include your name on the application page during enrollment.

## Parent Manual Agreement

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

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

We have fully read and understood the foregoing Parent Manual and agree to abide by its terms and conditions.

**Signature of Parent/Guardian**

**Parent/Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign and return this page only.