



# Educare of Omaha, Inc.

## Family Handbook

### **Educare Omaha at Kellom**

2123 Paul Street  
Omaha, NE 68102  
(531)299-1699

### **Educare Omaha at Indian Hill**

3110 W Street  
Omaha, NE 68107  
(531)299-1619

### **Early Learning Center at Skinner**

4201 N 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Omaha, NE 68111  
(531)299-2099

### **Early Learning Center at Gateway**

5810 South 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Omaha, NE 68107  
(531)299-1499

### **Early Learning Center at Kennedy**

3200 N. 30<sup>th</sup> Street  
Omaha, NE 68111  
(402)561-6190

**Program Hours of Operation:**

Educare Omaha at Kellom and Indian Hill: 8:30am to 2:30pm

Extended Wrap-Around Care Hours: 7:00am to 8:30am and 2:30pm to 5:30pm

Early Learning Centers (ELCs) at Skinner, Gateway, Kennedy: 7:00am-5:30pm

My child's school is: \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom # \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

School Director \_\_\_\_\_

My child's Teachers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My child's Health Aide: \_\_\_\_\_ My Family and Community Engagement Specialist or Family Engagement Specialist :

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Welcome to Educare of Omaha, Inc.**

**Welcome new and returning parents and children to Educare of Omaha, Inc.!** This handbook is intended to provide you with specific information about the operating procedures for our program. These procedures are based upon regulations from the U.S. Department of Public Health, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start; Nebraska Child Care Regulations; Department of Public Health-Division of Community Based Regulations; and other applicable local, state, and/or tribal laws.

We are a Child Development Program serving children aged 0-5 at the Educare schools and 0-3 at the ELCs and within our Sixpence Home Visitation Program. We are privileged to be able to provide your child with quality early learning year-round. It is important to us that you and your child feel welcome in our program. We hope that this Family Handbook will provide you with the information you need to take advantage of the programs and activities offered through Educare of Omaha, Inc. This guide describes our program and policies and procedures. It also provides information regarding your participation in monthly parent meetings, and parent and child activities.

Educare of Omaha, Inc. is funded primarily through Head Start/Early Head Start, Sixpence, and Childcare Subsidy funds. Head Start/Early Head Start is a federally funded comprehensive child development program. It is designed to meet the educational, social, emotional, health, nutritional, and psychological needs of expectant parents and children birth to age five. Sixpence is a program to help parents and caregivers of Nebraska children to provide safe, stimulating environments that spark learning through meaningful interactions. Childcare Subsidy helps parents who meet income requirements and are working and/or going to school pay for licensed childcare.



# **Education is a Two-Way Street**

## **The Role of Educare of Omaha, Inc.**

Our goal is to provide an environment that stimulates each child's curiosity and learning. We encourage each child to develop his/her unique pattern of interests, talents, and skills. We know that children learn best through interactions with people and their educational goals are enhanced through play. While we recognize that each child grows and develops at different rates, their individual goals will focus on the following:

**Language and Literacy-** Learning these skills begins at birth! Children will have the opportunity to develop early reading and writing skills. They will practice language skills and new vocabulary through meaningful conversations with friends and adults.

Approaches to Learning (children's initiative, creativity, self-regulation, problems solving and working memory)- Children will enjoy learning through play experiences in the classroom. They will have opportunities to explore using their creativity and interests to help guide their learning.

**Social and Emotional Development-** Children will practice friendship skills, sharing, and managing emotions to build healthy relationships in a secure, stable, and caring environment.

**Physical Development and Health** (gross motor, health, and nutrition)- Children will develop their motor skills and healthy life habits by engaging in physical experiences and tasting and preparing food.

**Cognition and General Knowledge-** Children will have an opportunity to learn about themselves and the world through books and stories, art and sensory experiences, music and movement, and playing with toys.

## **The Role of the Family**

**Families are their children's first and most important teachers.** Below are some ways you can help your children grow and learn.

Children need to be well rested; Infants may need up to 16 hours of sleep per day. Toddlers may need up to 14. Preschoolers, 3-5 years, aim for 10-13 hours of sleep per day.

Nutritious foods help children stay healthy. If you need assistance with food, contact your family and community engagement specialist.

Bring your child to class on time every day. Remember to keep your child home if they are not feeling well and keep us informed by giving the school a call.

Please dress your child ready for indoor and outdoor play every day.

Create opportunities for learning at home. If you need help with ideas of activities to do at home let your teacher or family and community engagement specialist know.

Please bring an extra change of clothing to leave at school, just in case.

Be an active participant in Home Visits, Parent /Teacher Conferences, as a classroom volunteer, and in family meetings and activities.

Become a part of the Policy Committee or Parent Committee.

## **Educare of Omaha, Inc. Partnership with Families Your Child's Road Map to School Success**

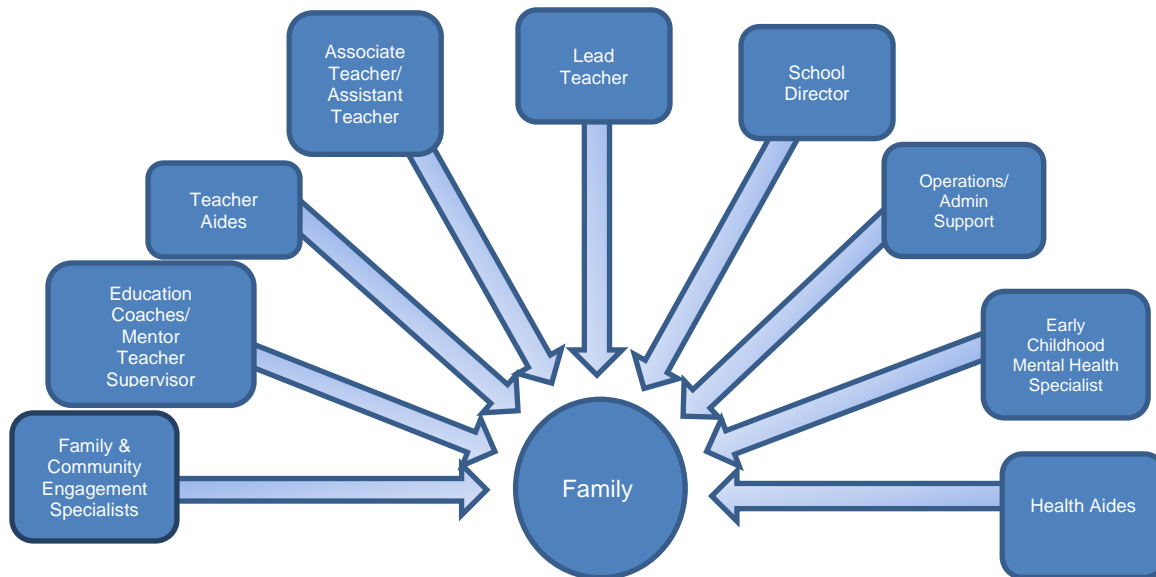
### **Educare of Omaha, Inc. will:**

- Treat all children and families with respect and dignity.
- Provide quality early childhood educational opportunities for children and their families.
- Provide opportunities for parents to participate in program activities individually and/or with their children.
- Share children's activities and progress with parents, both informally and formally through daily conversations and planned conferences and home visits
- Provide resources and referrals to community agencies as needed.
- Include families in the process of informed decision-making in Educare of Omaha, Inc.'s day-to-day operations as well as larger program decisions by inviting them to participate in Policy and Parent Committees.
- Assist families in obtaining a medical and dental home.

### **Families Will:**

- Notify your child's classroom staff if your child is going to be absent (give the reason for the absence and the return date) and **maintain 90% attendance rate. If absences are 3 days or more provide a doctor's note stating that the student can return to school.**
- **Drop off** your child each day before **9:30am**
- **Pick up** your child each afternoon **by 5:30p.m. or at the time designated by school.**
- Keep the program staff updated on family changes including change of contact information.
- Participate in center and parent child activities.
- Participate in the goal-setting process with your Family and Community Engagement Specialist
- Participate in home visits and parent-teacher conferences.
- Keep your child up to date on physical exams, immunizations, and dental check-ups and turn in paperwork to school staff.
- Maintain a medical and dental home so that all family members are cared for physically.
- Support your child's development by reading, talking, and playing with your children in the home using the home language.
- **Apply for Child Care Subsidy, give DHHS the provider number for your child's school (Kellom 16290392, Indian Hill 45150113, Skinner 70074539, Gateway 89389674, Kennedy 96593728) or provide proof of denial to school staff.**
- **Be working and/or attending school and provide proof as requested to your Family and Community Engagement Specialist.**
- Conduct yourself in a manner consistent with school rules to ensure a calm environment for all families and children.

## Educare of Omaha, Inc.



Each classroom at minimum has a **Lead Teacher, Associate/Assistant Teacher, and Teacher Aide Floater**. Infant and toddler classrooms have 8 children. Preschool classrooms have 17 children.

The **School Director** is responsible for oversight of all school operations. The School Director is available to assist staff and families in any area of need.

**Education Coaches and Mentor Teacher Supervisors** observe in the classroom, model “Best Practices;” review lesson plans and meet with all classroom staff regularly to discuss classroom issues.

The **Family and Community Engagement Specialists and Family Engagement Specialists** support children and families by sharing information and activities which enhance the parent-child relationship and assist the family to create goals toward family self-sufficiency. They are also available to assist families with problem solving during times of crisis through referrals to appropriate agencies in the community.

The **Health Aides** partner with school-based health centers and community agencies to provide health and dental screens, education, and resources to families. Ensures that Educare of Omaha, Inc. meets all Head Start requirements regarding Health and Nutrition.

The **Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists/Consultants** are consultants that are available to provide assistance with children who are having difficulty in regulating their behaviors.

**Operations Coordinators and Administrative Assistants** assist with the functioning of the school.

## **Guidance and Discipline**

Our desire is to help children grow up safe, healthy, and ready to learn. We feel that in partnership with parents we can provide children with opportunities that will foster their development intellectually as well as socially. Thus, we do not use any form of physical punishment. We want children to be confident, persistent in their endeavors, develop relationships with peers, communicate emotions and demonstrate empathy. To achieve these goals for children, parents and staff can do the following:

### **Promote positive relationships with children by:**

- Being responsive to a child's needs
- Notice when children are meeting expectations and offer praise and encouragement.
- Taking advantage of opportunities to build relationships between parents and school staff members through home visits, parent-staff conferences, regular communication, and parent engagement.
- Having thoughtful conversations with children
- Celebrating children's triumphs
- Being respectful of children, parents, and staff
- Greeting each child individually
- Creating a "classroom and school community"

### **Provide children with caring, consistent environments by:**

- Establishing predictable daily routines
- Providing continuity of care
- Individualizing care and instruction
- Implementing developmentally appropriate practices
- Engaging children through their interests
- Providing children with choices
- Implementing special rituals throughout the day
- Utilizing positive guidance techniques with children

### **Teach children social skills by:**

- Modeling appropriate behaviors
- Teaching problem solving techniques.
- Providing "private" spaces for children
- Having clear expectations for behavior

If a child's behavior cannot be addressed in the context of his/her classroom environment, we will seek additional assistance from the Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist (or Special Education Service Providers from the Omaha Public Schools if applicable) to help him/her be successful. The Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist works closely with classroom teachers to create an environment that supports social/emotional health and provides strategies for helping individual children be successful. It is our intent to meet the needs of every child through individualization and full inclusion in the program. Educare of Omaha, Inc. will not suspend or expel children from services due to behavior challenges.

## Health & Nutrition



Educare of Omaha, Inc. is committed to providing a quality early childhood experience for your child. Our program is designed to address all areas of development including health, nutrition, and education. We require that all children enrolled in the program receive their recommended preventative health care and treatments such as well-baby exams and dental visits. The preventative health care schedule is determined by the Nebraska Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) recommendations. We assist families in obtaining all health care services needed.

### Before beginning school, we need documentation of the following:

1. Immunization Record (If additional shots have been given since the time of application, please provide proof of documentation.) Children who are on a catch-up schedule due to missed immunizations will require a doctor's note indicating the plan to become current.
2. Most Recent Well-baby/well-child physical exam, including iron and lead test results.
3. Dental exam and recommended treatment
4. Health and nutritional assessments
5. Medical plans and prescribed rescue medications for health issues such as asthma, severe food allergies, seizures, etc.

### Health Screening at School

Throughout the school year, your child may receive the following health screenings:

- Growth assessment – height and weight
- Developmental screening –to determine child strengths and needs, completed by teacher.
- Vision Screening – determines how well a child can see and how well the eyes work together.
- Hearing Screening – determines how well the ears work to receive sound.
- Dental Screening-determines if the child's teeth and gums are healthy. Fluoride treatments may also be administered.
- Lead Screening
- Hemoglobin testing

Educare of Omaha, Inc. sends a Health Report Card to the parents of each child enrolled in the programs regarding the results of any screenings completed.

### Special Health Care Needs

Children sometimes have special health care needs. If your child has asthma, allergies, or other special health needs, please communicate that information to the Health Aide. You will be asked to provide a written plan from your child's doctor,



medication, and/or medical equipment. Written forms must be signed by the medical provider and a parent. **A child will not be able to attend school if the medical plan and/or medication is not received.**

### Asthma/Severe Allergies

If your child has asthma or a severe allergy (anaphylactic reaction), a Medical Provider will need to complete an Asthma or Allergy Action Plan. Both the Medical Provider and the family will need to sign the form. The form will need to be given to the Health Aide at your school. Please return the form to school and provide medication (inhaler, Epi Pen Junior, etc.) and nebulizer tubing/mask (if needed) at least 2 weeks **before entering** the classroom.

### Short-Term Medical Exclusions and Admittance

Educare of Omaha, Inc. staff will assess your child's health in the morning upon arrival and throughout the day. Children will be excluded when they do not feel well enough to participate comfortably in routine activities; cannot be cared for without interfering with the care of other children; and/or have one or more of the following conditions:

- Fever. Temperature equal to 100.4 degrees or above axillary (under the arm) or measured by an equivalent method by health services staff. An infant under six months of age with a fever should be medically evaluated. **Children must be free of fever for a minimum of 24 hours without any medication to return to the center.**
- An acute change in behavior (lethargy/lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or having a quickly spreading rash) in which child is unable/unwilling to participate in classroom activities.
- Diarrhea. Uncontrolled or uncontained. Uncontrolled diarrhea is defined as 2 or more stools or an increase in the number of stools for the child. Uncontained diarrhea is defined as 1 loose stool that cannot be kept inside a diaper or use of the toilet. Loose stool not explained by dietary changes, medication, diaper size, etc.
- Blood or mucus in the stool not explained by dietary change, medication, hard stools.
- Projectile vomiting or vomiting-two or more episodes within 24 hours.
- Rash with fever or a quickly spreading rash.
- Abdominal pain: More than 2 hours of consistent or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs or symptoms of illness.
- Sores inside of mouth, throat, hands, and/or feet.

Sick children must be picked up within one hour of notification of the illness. **If your child has been excluded for illness, they cannot return for 24 hours OR until they have received treatment and been cleared by a doctor to return. If you disagree with the decision to exclude your child, you have the right to speak to the Health Services Staff or School Director about your concerns. These guidelines may change as needed to respond to outbreaks of illness.** Any

changes will be shared immediately with families.

If a child is identified with a communicable disease, we will notify all parents with a note on the classroom door.

### Medical Emergency

Staff have been trained to follow emergency procedures. A staff person will always stay with the injured child and administer first aid, as necessary. If the staff is unsure about the urgency of a situation, they will contact the Health Services Staff and parent/guardian, or other adults listed on the emergency form. If necessary, staff will seek medical assistance from emergency medical services (911) or a hospital emergency room or clinic.

### Diapering/Toilet Training

Diaper changing occurs regularly in our program. Educare of Omaha, Inc will ensure that procedures are posted and followed for diaper changing and sanitation. We also will provide diapers and wipes. We will also assist children in learning to use the toilet when both the family and child are ready for the transition. We encourage families to provide ample undergarments and clothing for potty training purposes as we do not provide pullups.

### Meals

Meals meet **Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP)** guidelines and must be high in nutrients, and low in fat, sugar, and salt. Meals must provide two-thirds of a child's daily food needs.

When possible, meals are served Family Style to allow children to serve themselves in a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere. An adult is seated at the table with the children at every meal to function as a role model, encourage conversation, and provide guidance as needed. Children are encouraged to try all food offered but are **never** forced to eat.

Breakfast 8:30-9:30am

Lunch 11:30-12:30pm

Snack 2:45-3:45pm

We encourage and support mothers that breast feed their children. We provide a lactation area for nursing mothers. Mothers who provide breast milk for their children need to label the milk with the following information: date expressed and date frozen. All thawed unused milk will be returned to the family within 48 hours of thawing. Lactation counseling is available through the program and/or WIC.

After lunch, children may practice brushing their teeth. Infant's mouths are swabbed after one daily bottle feeding.

## Nutrition Education

At mealtime, children may think they are only eating, but they are also learning:

- Table manners by passing serving dishes and saying “Thank-you.”
- Healthy eating habits by having milk, fruit, vegetables, protein, and grains.
- Respect and social skills through friendly conversations.
- Responsibility by learning how to set the tables and help with cleanup.
- Language skills by learning about new foods and through mealtime conversation
- Food Safety and sanitation by washing their hands.

Aside from mealtime, teachers also incorporate nutrition education in their lesson plans with activities such as nutrition-filled storybooks, cooking activities, art projects, and more.

## Food Allergy

The child’s medical provider must complete the “**Medical Statement to request Special Meals and/or Accommodations**” form. The parent should return the signed form to their school before the child enters the classroom. Educare of Omaha, Inc. Food Services team will create menus to keep your child safe. This process may take up to 2 weeks.

***Please note: No peanut products are allowed in Educare of Omaha, Inc. buildings at any time.***

## Religious or Cultural Food Requests

Parents can complete, if needed, a “**Medical Statement to request Special Meals and/or Accommodations**” form 2 weeks before child enters the classroom. We will provide your child with a comparable substitution. Families may bring in one donated item for their child to adhere to the request if the school cannot accommodate the request.

***Please note: Pork products are not served in Educare of Omaha, Inc.***

## Outside Food

Early Childhood programs must meet specific nutrition guidelines as listed above and we have an increasing number of food allergies. We suggest celebrating special occasions like birthdays in ways that do not involve food. No outside food or drink is permitted in the classrooms except for the one donated item for your child’s accommodation if the school is unable to fulfill your request.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington,

D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Outdoor Play

The time children play outside is an important part of their learning. All children will engage in outdoor play unless the temperature and/or heat index is above 90 degrees. In cold weather, please send a warm coat, hat, gloves and boots. When a child is healthy enough to attend school, he or she is healthy enough to participate in outdoor activities.

## Safe Sleep

Infants under the age of 12 months are placed in their cribs, on their backs, whenever they are sleeping or ready to go to sleep. There is nothing placed in the crib except the baby. This includes blankets, pillows, bumper pads, or toys. **Since blankets are not permitted for Safe Sleep practices, sleep sacks are used.**

*\*If parents of infants want their babies to sleep in other positions besides their back, they must provide a note from their doctor authorizing this request.*

## Children with Special Needs

Educare of Omaha, Inc.'s inclusive classroom settings provide all children the opportunity to learn, play and explore with other children. Inclusive environments help children develop healthy attitudes about themselves and others.

Children with an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will receive services in the classroom based on the identified needs. If you would like additional information regarding Omaha Public Schools (OPS) Special Education services, please contact your child's Teacher, Family and Community Engagement Specialist, or the Early Development Network by calling Nebraska Child Find at 1-888-806-6287.

## Social Emotional Development

Educare of Omaha, Inc. provides Social Emotional support services for children through teacher education and training in *Positive Behavior Support curricula*. Family and Community Engagement Specialists are available to help teachers and parents encourage behaviors which move children in the direction of cooperation, making friends and appropriate choices, developing a strong sense of self-esteem, and coping with life's challenges. An Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant periodically visits the classroom to work with the staff and children.

## **Services to Families**

We are committed to supporting your family by establishing a strong partnership with you. A Family and Community Engagement Specialist (FACES) will engage you in regular home visits to help you identify your goals and support you in reaching them by using family strengths, community resources, networking, and education. This will reinforce the gains made by your child in school and support your own personal goals, self- sufficiency, and empowerment.

### **Services include:**

- An individualized assessment of your family's needs
- Emergency or crisis intervention services
- Development of goals and strategies that you identify as areas for personal growth.
- Family meetings on educational topics
- Support for child development and discipline.
- Advocacy for you in dealing with other agencies or individuals.
- Assistance with medical and dental needs for your family
- Support for entire family residing within the home with special emphasis on engagement.

### **Dimensions of Parenting Assessment**

Family and Community Engagement Specialists (FACES) or Family Engagement Specialist (FES) meet with families at their home during the months of September and October to complete the Dimensions of Parenting Assessment. From this assessment, FACES/FES and families will identify goals in a wide array of areas and develop strategies to meet them. Family and Community Engagement Specialists and FES will follow up regularly with families regarding goal attainment and will complete the Dimensions of Parenting Assessment during a home visit again in the Spring.

### **Parent Education and Training**

Family and Community Engagement Specialists, Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist or community partners offer several classes and training throughout the year to support you and your family with preventing and addressing challenging behaviors and creating a positive environment for learning. Classroom teachers hold monthly classroom meetings that focus on child development and provide activities that can be done at home to support it.

### **Daily/Weekly Child Reports**

Parents will be provided with daily written reports. The classroom team will post a newsletter on the parent board at least once a month to provide parents with information about classroom activities and ways of continuing these activities in their home environment. The School Director will also provide a newsletter to keep families informed.

## Home Visits / Parent Staff Conferences

Per our grant requirements, Teachers are required to make at least two home visits per year to gather and share information about your child's development and preferences. As the person who has been most influential in your child's development, you have a great deal of information to share with the teaching staff regarding your child's interests, development, and preferences. Home visits also allow you to develop a good working partnership with Educare of Omaha, Inc. staff members.

Parent-Teacher conferences will also be held twice a year to keep you informed of your child's developmental progress. Teachers will discuss the results of Teaching Strategies GOLD data and other assessments during this time.

## Classroom Opportunities

Parents are always welcome in the classroom. The following are a variety of ways you can become involved in the classroom:

- Read a story to children.
- Share family traditions.
- Sing a song/ play instruments/teach a traditional dance.
- Help with art activities.
- Share family recipes.
- Help with cooking activities and mealtimes.
- Help with health screenings.

## Volunteer Opportunities/In-Kind

Parents and family members can volunteer in a variety of ways including:

- Assisting in the classroom (i.e., reading or helping in a center area)
- Assisting in the school (i.e., laundry, parking lot duty)
- Participating in Parent Committee, Policy Committee, or Policy Councils
- Planning for and assisting at special program events and activities.
- Assisting program staff in preparing materials for the classroom
- Assisting with the recruitment of children and families for enrollment in the program.
- Translating materials into home languages (i.e., Spanish, Arabic or French).

*\*There may be times due to safety precautions when access to classrooms may be limited. All volunteers volunteering 20 hours a week or more must complete a background check to ensure they are eligible to volunteer in a childcare setting and show proof of vaccination.*

## Ways to be engaged in your child's education:

- Volunteer in the classroom and create learning opportunities at home and during your regular routines (driving, grocery shopping, etc.)
- Participate in home visits (with Teachers as well as FACES)
- Participate in Parent-Teacher Conferences during the school year.
- Help with classroom activities.
- Set goals and check in on progress made with your FACES/FES
- Help your child complete learning activities that may be sent home after

parent meetings.

- Participate in Read and Play and Nebraska Growing Readers
- Make sure that your child attends school regularly and on time **by 9:30 am**
- Become a member of a committee or Policy Council
- Help plan and attend parent meetings and family events at school.
- Read to your child in the classroom and at home.

### Policy Council

Educare of Omaha, Inc. programs operate under a philosophy of shared governance. This empowers parents and community members to be active decision-makers in policies, procedures and other important issues that affect how a program operates. Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC) is the grantee for the Early Learning Centers (ELCs) and Omaha Public Schools (OPS) is the grantee for the two Educare schools. All proper staff are Educare of Omaha, Inc. employees.

Parents who express an interest may be eligible to be elected as members of the Educare Policy Committee, NECC or OPS Policy Council attend monthly meetings to be the voice and representative of the parents at their school. Parents on the Policy Committee and Council may attend training sessions that are planned for them, including some out-of-town conferences.

### Confidentiality

Educare of Omaha, Inc. recognizes as a parent in our program, you share very confidential and private information with us. All forms and information pertaining to you, your children and your family are considered confidential and protected and can only be viewed by appropriate staff and those professional consultants and reviewers who have specific and designated permission. Family records are uploaded to a secure database and are password protected. People will not be given access to this information without your written consent, or a court ordered subpoena.

# **Important Policies**

## **Enrollment Policy**

To enroll in Educare of Omaha, Inc, the following guidelines must be met:

- Families must meet program specific income guidelines.
- Children must be at minimum of 6 weeks of age.
- Parents must be working, attending school or in a job training program.
- Parents must receive or apply for Childcare Subsidy.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Educare of Omaha, Inc. does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, mental or physical disability (no matter the severity), sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, political beliefs, or status with regards to public assistance, in determining which children are served.

Educare of Omaha, Inc. welcomes and serves children with disabilities, regardless of the severity. Under the requirement of American with Disabilities Act (ADA), we make reasonable accommodations for such children.

## **Emergency Information Policy**

For the safety and well-being of your child, Educare of Omaha, Inc. must be able to reach you or an authorized person in case of an emergency or if your child becomes ill.

- Educare of Omaha, Inc. requests as many contacts as can be provided (a minimum of three) emergency contact phone numbers in addition to the Parent/Guardian's phone number.
- By listing these emergency contacts, you are giving permission for Educare of Omaha, Inc. staff to release your child to the people listed.
- Please let your emergency contacts know that you have placed them on your emergency contact list.
- Please notify Educare of Omaha, Inc. immediately of any changes in your phone numbers or your emergency contacts person's numbers. All changes must be made in person.

## **Operating Hours**

Educare of Omaha, Inc. is open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday year-round. If there is a need to change operating hours families will be notified in advance.



# Day to Day Operations

## Arrival and Departure

Please make sure that your child arrives by 9:30 a.m. and is picked up by 5:30 p.m. Breakfast is served at 8:30 a.m. Emergencies sometimes occur, so please call your child's school if you will be late dropping off or picking up your child. Children must be dropped off or picked up by an individual **19 years of age or older**. If your child does not arrive by 9:30am and you do not notify the school, your child may not be served if ratios are in jeopardy. **For pickups after 5:30 pm a late fee in the amount of \$15.00 for every 5 minutes late picking up will be incurred. Late fees must be paid in full prior to your child returning to school. Law enforcement will be contacted for children who are not picked up by 6pm.**

All visitors (anyone other than a parent/guardian) entering the building will be asked to stop and check in at the reception desk. Visitors will sign in on the visitor log, receive appropriate identification badges as necessary and will be escorted or directed to their destination. Additional procedures for visitors will be followed as outlined:

- Non-Custodial caregivers picking up or dropping off children will check in at the receptionist desk and/or classroom. The receptionist may verify that the individual is listed on the authorized pick-up list if they are not a regular transporter.
- Your child will only be released to a parent/guardian or individuals you have designated on your child's Family Contact form.
- Educare of Omaha Inc.'s definition of parent is anyone identified or listed as mother and father on the child's birth certificate. We cannot discriminate against the mother or father listed on the birth certificate or other legal documents. Unless we have some type of legal document (i.e., custody order, protection order, Juvenile Court order) stating not to release a child to a specific parent, we will release your child to either parent listed on the birth certificate.
- **We cannot accept authorization to pick up changes over the phone.** Verification of identity with a photo ID is required if the individual picking up your child is not known to staff so, please ensure that your designated pick-up person is prepared to show it.  
When dropping off or picking up your child, you must sign your child in using the check-in system in each classroom.
- If you are late picking up your child and have not contacted the office and we are unable to reach your designated emergency contacts by 6:00 p.m. we will contact the Omaha Police Department for assistance.
- Educare of Omaha, Inc. will not release a child to anyone who cannot safely care for the child. This includes an abusive adult or anyone under the suspicion or influence of drugs/alcohol.
- Educare of Omaha, Inc. employees (or contract employees) may not be listed as emergency contacts for or designated to pick up enrolled children.  
**Please notify your child's teacher and/or front desk staff when there is a change in your address, telephone number, or emergency contact information. Please bring in proof of address to the front desk to update records.**

## Attendance

Educare of Omaha, Inc. is a year-round program, and children must maintain a monthly 90% attendance record for them to fully experience all the opportunities available. Summer school is optional but encouraged for preschool children. If families have multiple children in the program and elect for the preschool child to not attend in the summer the younger children are still required to attend and maintain at least 90% attendance. Consistent attendance is important for children to gain the most from our program, to meet their educational goals, and to develop attendance habits that will continue throughout their school years. Maintaining consistent attendance is a requirement.

Supporting a child's daily attendance allows parents to convey a message to their child that they value education, and that school is an important priority.

Children falling below 90% attendance or more than three days tardy will meet with their FACES or School Director to develop goals towards increasing attendance.

Educare of Omaha, Inc. does not provide transportation. If transportation should become a barrier to your child's attendance, your Family and Community Engagement Specialist/FES and/or teacher can help you explore some transportation options.

Children may be released only to adults authorized by the parent/guardian. Authorization must be in writing.

Please call your child's school by 9 am when your child will be absent and let a staff member know the reason for the absence.

### Parents are contacted when the child is not attending:

- Daily contacts are made to families to inquire why the child is not at school if the parent has not notified the front desk, teacher, or Family and Community Engagement Specialist about the child's absence.
- After the second day of unexplained absences the Family and Community Engagement Specialist/FES will follow up with you at home to address the problem.
- When a child's attendance falls below 90%, the School Director, ERSEA Manager, Family and Community Engagement Specialist and/or teaching team will require you to add goals around attendance improvement which involves developing goals to meet attendance expectations.

## Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic Absenteeism is a determination made by the classroom team, including the Teacher, School Director, Family and Community Engagement Specialist, ERSEA Manager and other Educare of Omaha, Inc. staff. It is based upon behavior that includes an extended period of unexcused absences or a pattern of inconsistent

attendance or tardiness that is negatively impacting the usefulness of the program to the child and family. For example: a chronically absent child may be in school 2 days one week and 3 the next week with various excused and unexcused absences. We hope attendance situations can be resolved so your child and family can continue to participate in the Educare of Omaha, Inc. programs.

### Request for Extended Absence

- Parents must meet with FACES or School Director to request for their child to be excused from school for more than 10 consecutive school days. All requests must be approved at least 7 days in advance.
- If the child does not return on the designated date and there is not further contact with the family the child will be removed from the program and placed on the waitlist.

### Childcare Subsidy

The three Early Learning Centers operated by Educare of Omaha; Inc. are part of an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership. The two Educare schools offer extended wrap around hours. All schools rely on funding from both childcare subsidy (Title XX) and Head Start to provide high quality services for you and your child.

Costs for care at each of the schools within Educare of Omaha, Inc. varies, but all are close to the following rates:

Infants: \$9.00/hour \$50/day

Toddlers: \$8.00/hour \$48/day

Preschool: \$7.50/hour \$45/day and \$100/week during summer school

\* These rates are only estimates and may change at any time.

**All families must apply for Childcare Subsidy.** If you are denied, and proof of denial is given private pay can be utilized to pay the above costs. To qualify for summer school, you must pay the weekly fee one week in advance and have a zero balance for wraparound services.

### Wrap Around Care

Families at Indian Hill and Kellom schools can qualify for wrap around childcare from 7:00 am to 8:30 am and 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm. The Head Start/Early Head Start school day hours of 8:30am to 2:30pm are at no cost to your family. To utilize wrap around care hours, a current work/school verification MUST be on file for the parent/guardian.

**PRIVATE PAY BILLING:** Billing for services will begin the first day the child attends or when the Childcare Block Subsidy Grant (Title XX) benefits are terminated. Title XX must be billed, or a denial or expiration letter presented for private pay billing to be an option at all. Private Pay payments must be received weekly by Friday for the week prior. Your bill will be provided to you

in writing each week with the expectation that payments are made weekly to continue using wrap around services. If you are late picking up your child up, you will be responsible for paying a late pickup fee of \$15 for every 5 minutes that you are late or until someone comes and picks up your child. If late fees are not paid immediately or weekly payments are missed your wraparound care will end immediately and your family will go back to core hours, 8:30am-2:30pm and will sign an updated form.

**TITLE XX BILLINGS:** Title XX co-payments/family fees must be paid by the first of every month or divided into weekly payments to ensure they are paid in full monthly. Parent/Caregiver will be responsible for updating their Title XX authorization. If your Title XX expires, you will receive a private pay bill immediately and be expected to make payments immediately or until your Title XX is re-authorized.

## Supervision of Children

At Educare of Omaha, Inc., safety, and security for children being served is the highest priority. The program applies consistent supervision of all participating children through an approach to classroom staffing that adheres to all Head Start Program Performance Standards as well as Nebraska Childcare Licensing regulations.

Each child in an Early Head Start Classroom is assigned one primary caregiver, thus enabling the development of secure relationships; helping with any issues children may face in separating from their parents. Children are grouped in classrooms of eight with up to three teachers. All staff are assigned as primary caregivers for enrolled infants and/or toddlers.

Children in 3-5-year-old Head Start Classrooms are grouped in classrooms with no more than 17 children with three teachers. The Lead Teacher, in collaboration with the Associate and Aide, develops activities specially designed to increase children's abilities in all developmental screening domains.

Consistent supervision of all children, both indoors and outdoors, is ensured through the environment as well as staff behavior. Space and furniture are arranged for children to be in teachers' line of sight. In addition, teachers are always engaged with children, providing active supervision as well as stimulation and support, whether inside or outside.

## School Delays and Closings

Educare of Omaha, Inc. programs will follow the decision of the Omaha Public Schools District in determining school delays or closure for severe weather. Please refer to the local news stations for up-to-date information. Other decisions regarding closure may be made by the Executive Director or designee based on circumstances that may affect individual classrooms. Families will be texted if a decision is made to close early.

## Holidays and Celebrations

Families may celebrate many different holidays throughout the year. This can be an exciting time for children and their families. We are interested in offering meaningful experiences for children that reflect the family cultures and traditions of all the children in the classroom. There will **not** be an emphasis on specific holiday celebrations or activities. Conversations about the diversity of celebrations will be included as part of planning with families to create a multicultural curriculum in the classroom.

## Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

All Educare of Omaha, Inc. staff or contracted service providers are considered, by state law, to be mandatory reporters and must follow policy about reporting suspected child abuse or neglect. If staff have reason to believe a child has been abused or neglected, a report will be filed following Educare of Omaha, Inc. protocol. If you have a concern about the safety of a child in Nebraska, you may file a report by calling 1-800- 652-1999, twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week.

## Medications at School

Please communicate with your child's teacher and the Health Aides if your child has any medical needs. Families must bring a written doctor's order to school to have any medications dispensed to your child.

Educare of Omaha, Inc policy states that any medications ordered by a doctor to be administered three times per day should be given by the family before school, after school, and at night. If a child needs medicine during the school day, parents must check all medicines in with the appropriate health services team member. Educare of Omaha, Inc. must have written permission from the parent/guardian and instructions from the physician for the medication to be given.

All prescription medication must be in the original container. The child's name, doctor's name, date, expiration date, and how the medication is to be given should be on the pharmacy label. It should also include how long the medicine is to be given.

All over-the-counter medicine and ointments must be in the original manufacturer's container, have the child's name and have written instructions from the physician.

All medications will be kept in a locked box or cabinet out of children's reach. If needed, medication will be refrigerated.

The first dose of any medication must be given at home.

Medication orders expire 1 year from the date ordered.

If it is an emergency medication, (inhaler, Epi Pen, etc.), your child will be excluded until an updated medical order and/or medication is received.

## Work/School Verification

**Early Head Start/Head Start** is designed for parents and caregivers who are working or going to school. Work/School verifications will be completed three times per year to begin at enrollment. You will be asked to provide your most recent paystub or your current school schedule to your Family and Community Engagement Specialist or Family Engagement Specialist. Parents and/or caregivers who are not working or going to school will work closely with their FACES to take steps toward attaining employment or enrolling in school within 60 days.

## Sex Offenders

It is the policy that Educare of Omaha, Inc. will not knowingly allow into the building any level child sex offender contained on the Nebraska State Sex Offender Registry into the building. Parents or legal guardians who are sex offenders may be allowed into the building to pick up and drop off their child or attend parent/child events **but** must be always escorted by a staff person.

## Zero Tolerance of Violence Policy

Educare of Omaha, Inc. maintains zero tolerance for violence (physical, verbal and/or emotional). Acts of violence by persons engaged in program activities at or near Educare of Omaha, Inc. will not be permitted. Anyone committing these offenses will be banned from Educare of Omaha, Inc. property.

## Cell Phone Usage

Cell phone use in the school is not allowed during school hours. We encourage parents to turn off phones as they drop off and pick up their children to allow for communication with teaching staff. Educare of Omaha, Inc. staff are not permitted to use cellphones in the classrooms.

## Tobacco/Drug Free Environment

Educare of Omaha, Inc. is a tobacco/drug free environment. No smoking or illegal drugs will be allowed in or around Educare of Omaha, Inc. property or at any Educare of Omaha, Inc. activities.

## Clothing and personal belongings

Young children may be involved in messy play throughout the day. Families should provide a clean change of clothing to be always kept in the classroom. Clothing should be exchanged as the seasons change so that children are appropriately dressed. When a child wears the change of clothing home, teachers will send the soiled clothing home the same day. Please provide another clean set of clothing for the following school day.

Please make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather as each classroom goes outside every day. This includes appropriate shoes, jackets/coats, hats, gloves, etc. as necessary.

Your child will be provided with engaging educational toys every day and active learning environments indoors and outdoors.

Having toys from home, personal belongings, or wearing jewelry at the center can create tension between children and each child's personal storage space is limited. It's also distressing for children, parents, and staff members when things are lost, damaged, or misplaced. **We cannot assume responsibility for loss or damage to personal belongings or jewelry.**

For their safety, children will not be permitted to wear any shirts, jackets, sweatshirts, jewelry, or articles of clothing that tie around their necks or waists. Please remove all drawstrings. We cannot assume responsibility for lost, stained, soiled, or torn clothing or shoes. Please be sure to label all extra clothing (e.g., jackets, sweaters, hats, and gloves) with your child's first and last name.

## **Program Grievance**

### **Complaint/Grievance Policy**

If you have questions or concerns, please talk with the person you have concerns with. If this is not possible, please talk to the person's supervisor or the School Director. The following page is complaint/grievance form included in this handbook that can be filled out and given to the School Director. It is Educare of Omaha, Inc.'s intent to resolve any concerns or complaints with a parent/guardian in a timely manner and according to the regulations and guiding principles of the program. If the situation could not be resolved with the School Director families may request to have an additional meeting with the School Director along with the appropriate executive team members. The goal of any resolution achieved is to ensure the maintenance of existing relationships and uphold the integrity of the proper mission.

If the complaint is not resolved at the school or executive team level families can also report unresolved complaints by following one of the following methods:

- Contacting Child Care Licensing at: 1-800-600-1289
- Faxing the complaint to Child Care Licensing at (402) 471-7763
- Regular Mail:
  - Department Health and Human Services  
Licensing & Regulatory Affairs  
Child Care Licensing  
PO BOX 94986  
Lincoln, NE 68509
- Submit complaint electronically to [dhhs.ne.gov](http://dhhs.ne.gov).





**Educare of Omaha, Inc. Parent Grievance Form**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Child: \_\_\_\_\_  
School/Classroom#: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the nature of your complaint (include date, place, time, person(s) involved etc.):

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Immediate action taken:

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**Response to Grievance-**

Name of Individual Responding to Grievance:

Resolution:

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Administrative Staff Signature

Date

It is Educare of Omaha, Inc. intent to resolve any concern or complaint with a parent or member of the community in a timely manner and according to the regulations and guiding principles of the program. The ultimate goal of any resolution achieved is to ensure the maintenance of existing relationships and or partnerships and uphold the integrity of the agency's mission.



### **Handbook and Expectations Acknowledgements**

Educare of Omaha, Inc. provides high-quality early education programs and works to empower parents/caregivers as their child's first and most important teacher. Our family centered approach aims to promote family self-sufficiency and child school readiness. The program and families partner to ensure successful outcomes by:

- Regular attendance provides consistency and routine for my child. I will bring my child to school daily to keep a monthly attendance average of 90% or higher. \_\_\_\_\_
- If my child will be absent, I will contact the school to let them know the reason for the absence before 9:30 a.m., the day of the absence. \_\_\_\_\_
- If attendance is below 90% for more than one month, my Family and Community Engagement Specialist (FACES) or Family Engagement Specialist (FES) and I will work together to create goals to improve attendance. \_\_\_\_\_
- Because it is important for my child to benefit from all of the program's great offerings, including breakfast, my child will arrive no later than 9:30 a.m. My child will be picked up promptly at either 2:30 p.m. if utilizing core hours at Educare Omaha at Indian Hill or Kellom, or by 5:30 p.m. if using wrap around or attending an Early Learning Center.
- I acknowledge that if my child arrives after 9:30 a.m. there may be a chance of my child not being able to be served that day due to staffing ratios. \_\_\_\_\_
- Consistently late pick up of my child may jeopardize continued enrollment in the program and I may be charged a late pick-up fee. My FACES, FES or School Director will work with me to assist in strategies or family goals to work toward meeting program pick-up and drop-off times. \_\_\_\_\_
- To ensure I am my family are successful in the program and in life, I agree to meet with my FACES or FES to establish a Family Partnership Agreement within 30 days and create family goals within 90 days of my child enrolling in the program. \_\_\_\_\_
- I understand that the program will ask me to complete surveys to assist in identifying any resources or referrals needed and to highlight areas where I and my family are successful and doing well as well as program surveys to gain feedback on how well the program is meeting my needs. My FACES or FES and I will complete Dimensions of Parenting surveys 3 times per year in October, February, and May. My survey scores will be shared with me and will determine how often my FACES or FES and I will meet for home or center visits throughout the program year. \_\_\_\_\_
- I understand that I must provide work or school verification when requested throughout the year. Additionally, I must prove that I am actively working or going to school for my child to access hours beyond the core hours of operation, 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., if my child is enrolled at Educare Omaha at Kellom or Indian Hill. Hours prior to 8:30 a.m. and after 2:30 p.m. are considered wrap-around hours. Any fees that might be assessed for those wrap-around hours need to be paid and current to utilize wrap-around hours. \_\_\_\_\_
- I understand the program offers many ways for me to become involved and will encourage me to attend school activities such as parent/child activity events, Read and Play events, parent meetings and other events or activities designed to promote the parent/child bond, create ways for parents/caregivers to interact, provide parent/caregiver leadership opportunities and promote school readiness for my child. \_\_\_\_\_
- I understand that the program needs to ensure that children are safe and have a way to contact me or other authorized adults if something occurs Therefore, I will keep my contact information and contact sheet up to date at all times to ensure the school has a current working phone number and/or email

address and current living address in addition to at least one other emergency contact in case of emergency. \_\_\_\_\_

- To ensure my child stays safe, anyone who picks up or drops off my child at the school will be listed on a contact information form, prior to dropping or picking my child up, must be 19 years of age or older, and will need to provide proper identification at time of pick-up of my child.
- I understand the program offers health and nutrition services to children and families to promote children's optimal health and development and will help me establish a medical or dental home if I need assistance. Because the program receives federal funding from Head Start, I understand that expectations are that children will remain up to date on all recommended health physicals, dental exams, screenings, and treatments to meet Head Start requirements Below are lists of medical documentation needed and when we need to have it on file:
  - Before beginning school and renewed every school year
    - Updated immunization record
    - Medical plans and emergency medications for asthma, allergies, seizures, or any other emergent medical diagnosis
    - Completed forms and/or physician's note for special dietary needs.
  - Within 45 days of enrollment
    - Most recent well child check (these will need to be turned in after each exam)
    - Most recent hearing and vision screening results or signed consent form.
  - Within 90 days of enrollment
    - Most recent lead and hemoglobin test results or signed consent form.
    - Most recent dental exam or signed consent form.
      - Lead and hemoglobin along with dental will need to be turned in after every exam.

**I acknowledge that I understand and will fulfill these expectations and other explained to me and written in the Family Handbook for as long as my child is enrolled by signing and dating below.**

**PARENT** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_  
**EDUCARE OF OMAHA, INC. STAFF MEMBER** \_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_