**Sample Parent Handbook**

**NOTE: All items in red are required by licensing. Make sure you review the ND Child Care Regulations (Century Code & Administrative Rule) while you create your program’s handbook. These are suggestions for creating your document and it is your responsibility to tailor it to align with your own program and be knowledgeable of the content. Contact Child Care Aware of ND for more assistance in creating your Policies and Contract.**

**Program Name**

**Address**

**Phone Number**

**Email**

**Mission/Philosophy**

* Your mission statement should be clearly defined. What is your purpose and what are your goals for the children and families in your program?

**Policies and Procedures**

**Hours/Days of Operation**

* List your program’s hours of operation, holidays and days closed

**Hiring Policy**

* List the hiring practices/policies for staff
	+ Educational requirements: Getting Started, ND Safe Sleep (Annually for any staff that work with children under 12 months), Mandated Reporting (Annually)
	+ Continuing education requirements
	+ All staff must have Pediatric CPR with AED and Pediatric First Aid
* How you obtain references and employment histories of staff members
	+ All staff are background checked and fingerprinted
* Staff under the age of 18 will not be left alone with children and must always be supervised by an adult
* Discuss the methods of performance evaluations

**Grievance Procedure**

* Explain your process for handling complaints/concerns
	+ Example: If you have any concerns or complaints about the program, please address them with the director as soon as possible. If you have a serious complaint that you feel is not being addressed, you may contact the licensing specialist,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (insert name and phone number)

**Mandated Reporter**

* As a mandated reporter, child care providers are required to immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect as required by North Dakota Century Code section 50-25.1-03. To report suspected child abuse and neglect, call the **statewide toll-free Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Line 1-833-958-3500, *between 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday.* If a child is in immediate danger CALL 911.**

**Liability Insurance**

* Explain that liability insurance is a licensing requirement (center license only) your program meets.

**Media Release**

* It is recommended to have a written permission form on file for all children to have their picture taken. Children cannot be photographed without a signed permission form from their parent/guardians.
* All records and information with respect to children, families and staff are kept confidential.

**Visitors**

* Explain your policy for allowing visitors in the building, such as all visitors are required to check in, so staff know who is always in the building.
* Explain that parents have unlimited access.

**Eligibility**

* List the ages of the children you accept. Note that you do not deny enrollment based on race, creed, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

**Enrollment Requirements**

* Pre-admission visits must be provided to parent(s)/guardian(s) to view the facility and discuss the policies. Parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be provided with written notice of any significant changes in services or policies.
* You may wish to start each contract with a *(define length)* probationary period to evaluate if the program is the best fit for the program/child/family.
* List the required forms that need to be completed PRIOR to attendance. (Make note that all records are kept confidential.)
	+ Immunization records
	+ SFN 845 - Child Information Sheet
	+ Birth Certificate/Passport (must verify identification of children in care)
	+ SFN 847 - Parent Statement of Health
	+ Parent Consent Forms (Infant Sleep Permission Form and Water Activity Permission Form). Forms available on Child Care Aware of ND website
	+ Signed Contract & Policies

**Responsibilities of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)**

* Children’s Arrival and Parent/Guardian Departure
	+ Parent’s/Guardians need to notify program of any changes in schedule
	+ List procedure for arrival and departure (parent/guardian/approved adult must walk child to and from the facility at arrival and departure, helping them with their coats, helping them wash their hands, verbal exchange with the staff required at both arrival and departure to ensure staff are aware child has arrived or is departing).
	+ Ensure that children do not depart from the child care premises unsupervised, except when the parent and provider consent that an unsupervised departure is safe and appropriate for the age and development of the child. The provider shall obtain written parental consent for the child to leave the child care premises unsupervised, which must specify the activity, time the child is leaving and length of time the child will be gone, method of transportation and parental responsibility for the child once the child leaves the child care premises.
	+ Explain where people should park (designated parent parking spots, not in front of building blocking sidewalks, keeping sidewalk open so people that are entering and exiting the parking lot can see children that may be crossing, and remind everyone to enter and exit parking lot with caution).
	+ Parent/Guardian should remove the infant from the car seat as well as any outerwear upon arrival.
	+ Upon departure parent/guardian should place their own child in their car seat and secure the car seat safety straps.
	+ If the program suspects the person picking up the child is under the influence, program will call one of the alternative people listed to transport the child.
	+ Explain the importance of signing in and out
		- Explain the sign in/out procedure. Consider using an electronic system for more accurate and consistent information.
* Authorization to Pick Up Child(ren)
	+ Only authorized people listed on your Child Information Sheet may pick up the child(ren) from the program. Please notify me of any contact information changes.
	+ Explain your process to release the child(ren) to adults not on the list and that they will be asked for a photo ID before releasing the child(ren).
	+ If there is a court order (such as a divorce settlement or restraining order) that limits the rights of one of the child’s biological parents to drop-off/pick-up child(ren), you must provide the program with a copy of that court order.
	+ Determine if you have an age requirement for picking up child(ren) (example: Must be 18 years or older).
	+ Follow North Dakota car safety restraint laws
* Parent/Guardian and Staff Communication
	+ Identify where parent/guardian information boards are located. It is recommended to have an information board for each classroom to communicate with parent/guardians and a program information board located near the entrance of the building for general information.
	+ List other forms of communication such as newsletters, e-mails, texting, etc.
	+ All parent/guardians should be asked to refrain from using their cell phones during arrival and departure time.
* Required Supplies
	+ Explain that the parent/guardian is responsible for providing extra clothing (appropriate size and for the season) for each child in case they become soiled.
	+ List all supplies parents will be required to supply for child(ren). Ex. Diapers, bottles, wipes, sleep sack, blanket, water bottle, etc.

**Schedules**

* Attendance
	+ Explain whether the family will be billed for days the child(ren) are scheduled due to vacation/ illness.
* Changing Schedule
	+ Explain how much time you will need in advance for any change in schedule. It is also recommended to not guarantee that the change in schedule can be met but instead will be evaluated on a case by case need.

**Storm Days**

* Explain your procedure for storm days. (How and when parent/guardians will be notified, and how the decision is made to close ex. follow school closings)

**Curriculum Overview**

* If your program follows a curriculum, please explain it here.
* The program provides written daily routines of individual or small group activities appropriate to the age and needs of children. The program must include activities that foster social, intellectual, emotional, and physical growth.

**Daily Reports**

* Any parent may request written daily reports for their child, including details regarding eating, napping, and diapering.
* Licensing regulations state that parents of infants receive a written daily report detailing the infant’s sleeping and eating processes for the day and the infant’s diapering schedule for the day.

**Daily Schedule**

* Parents will receive a copy of their child’s daily schedule upon enrollment, and they will be posted in each classroom
* It is recommended that at the infant/toddler age daily schedules are very flexible and used as a guideline. Daily routines foster development of good health habits, self-discipline, adequate indoor/outdoor play, rest/sleep, and mealtimes with opportunity for various experiences.

**Guidance & Discipline Policy**

* Licensing requires you to have a written policy regarding discipline.
* Discipline must be constructive or educational in nature and may include diversion, separation from the problem situation, talking with the child about the situation, praising appropriate behavior, or gentle physical restraint, such as holding. A child may not be subjected to physical harm, fear, or humiliation.

**Transition of Children**

* Explain when children will be transitioned to the next age group (i.e. based on chronological age, staffing and maturity of child). You may want to explain that parent/guardian wishes are always respected but may not always be granted due to the above.

**Personal Possessions**

* Explain the program’s storage of personal belongings (pacifiers, blankets, etc.) and how storage is labeled.
* Explain your policy for toys brought from home. Most programs do not allow this due to the possibility of the toy being broken or misplaced. The exception to this rule could be nap or comfort item or toys brought specifically for show and share

**Transportation**

* Explain your transportation policy if you provide any type of transportation. If you do not transport, it needs to be stated that no transportation is your policy.
* Children will never be left in a vehicle unattended
* The driver shall be eighteen years of age or older and shall comply with all relevant federal, state, and local laws, including child restraint system laws.
* When transportation is provided by the child care program, children must be protected by adequate staff member supervision, safety precautions, and liability insurance.

**Accountability Policy**

* Program must establish procedures for when a child(ren) fails to arrive as expected.
* If the child(ren) will not be attending or is going to be more than 10 minutes late, you must notify the program. The director/staff member **(program designates responsibility**) will call the parent/guardian or emergency designee if the parent/guardian cannot be reached.

**Field Trips**

* If your program will be going on periodic field trips explain the permission form policy and any fees required.
* Explain how children will be transported to/from field trips (walking/driving).
* Staff will take along a first aid kit, a recent photo of each child, emergency contact information, any emergency medication and a copy of the care plan for children with special needs.

**Pets and Animals**

* The operator shall ensure parents/guardians are aware of the presence of pets and animals in the child care.
* The operator shall ensure that the child care is in compliance with all applicable state and local ordinances regarding the number, type, and health status of pets or animals.

**Incident Policy**

* Explain when first aid will be administered or when incident reports will be written up, when parent/guardians will be called and when emergency services will be called.
* Incident report forms are required within 24 hours of incident and recommended it be signed by the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian receives a copy and a copy placed in the child’s file.

**Emergency Procedures**

* Complete SFN 517 form and post for parents to view.
* Include emergency procedures and how parents will be contacted.
* Emergency drills will be practiced monthly.

**Children with Special Needs**

* All children with diagnosed special health needs are required by licensing to have a current written health care plan signed by a parent/guardian or physician (should be updated yearly).
* Emergency medication and/or equipment included in a child’s care plan should be provided by the parent, so it is available when the child is in care. If not provided, the program will need to call 911 or have an emergency plan in place.

**Immunization Policy**

* Licensing requires that children be up to date with their immunizations or have a valid exemption.
* Discuss the program policy concerning unimmunized children. It is recommended to consult an attorney to discuss liability risk.
* If a vaccine preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs at the program, it is recommended for unimmunized children to be excluded for the duration of the possible exposure.

**Guidelines for Exclusion**

* Exclusion is recommended when the child is no longer able to comfortably participate in activities or the child needs greater care than the child care staff can provide, therefore compromising the health and safety of the other children. List your exclusion policies for fever, diarrhea, vomiting, pink eye, etc.
* Explain that your program can override a health care provider’s orders based on your program’s policies.
* Explain the procedure that will be followed if children become ill while at the program.

**Medication Policy**

* Explain your medication policy by listing whether you will distribute medication as needed or only distribute life-saving medicine required by health care plans.
* Written parental permission to give prescription, over-the-counter medication, and over-the-counter products is required. It is recommended to obtain written instructions from a health care provider in addition to the written parental permission to administer prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications.
* Explain to parent/guardian that medication should be given to staff and should not be left in diaper bags/backpacks or placed in cubbies.
* Programs should only accept medication in its original container that is labeled with child's name.
* Expired medication should not be given.
* The program will include completed medication records in the child’s file.

**Outdoor Policy**

* Share your outdoor policy according to the day’s outdoor temperature.
* Recommend a health care provider’s written order if parents request that their child does not go outside for play.
* Explain that parents are responsible for providing weather-appropriate clothing and shoes (rubber soled, closed toe, back strap, etc.) for active play.

**Aquatic Policy**

* The program must have policies that ensure the health and safety of children in care while participating in aquatic activities, including types of aquatic activities the child care center may participate in, staff-to-child ratios appropriate to the ages and swimming ability of children participating in aquatic activities, and additional safety precautions to be taken.
* The program may not permit any child to participate in an aquatic activity without written parental permission, which includes parent disclosure of the child’s swimming ability.
* If not offering any aquatic activities, you must state that as your policy.

**Meals and Snacks**

* Explain how meals are prepared (onsite or catered) and times served.
* Infants should be fed on demand unless alternative instructions from physician is provided.
* A written order from the child’s physician is recommended for alternative feeding instructions.
* Food supplied must meet USDA requirements.
* Daily or weekly menus are posted and where parents can view them.
* Adaptations concerning special food requirements and requests from parents.
* Children are encouraged to eat but coercion or force feeding is never allowed.
* Discuss how food allergies will be handled and posted.
* Discuss rules for food brought from home (special diet, special events, birthdays)
* Notify parents if the program participates in the food program.

**Toilet Training**

* Have a discussion with parents/guardians before starting toilet training. It is important to consider if the child is developmentally/physically ready, (toileting readiness checklist), and the importance of consistency between home and child care, etc.
* It is important to ask parents/guardians to provide several changes of clothing as well as undergarments in case of accidents.
* It is not recommended to allow underwear until the child has mastered toileting. Sanitary conditions cannot be maintained if children are having more than an occasional toileting accident while at child care.

**Nap and Rest Time Policy**

* Let families know which items are supplied by your program, which items families are responsible for supplying, and who will be responsible for washing items weekly.
* Licensing requires space be provided for quiet play for children who do not nap.

**Infant Sleep Policy**

* All infants under 12 months must be placed flat on their backs for sleep in a safety-approved crib or pack-n-play. The infant’s face must remain uncovered when sleeping. If parents request their infant to be placed in an alternate sleep position or in another device/equipment for sleep, parents must provide a written order from a health care provider.
* If an infant falls asleep while not in a crib or pack and play, the infant must be moved immediately to crib or pack-n-play.
* Infant Sleep Permission form must be completed for all children under 12 months of age.
* Licensing requires visual checks every 10-15 minutes and a monitor in the room with the infants when they are sleeping unless a staff member is in the room.

**(Program Name) Contract**

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of child:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# ***Hours of Operation***

## **First Day of Care**

The first day of care will be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *(date)*

## **Extended Care Hours***(If not offering delete this section)*

* Agreed upon extended hours will have an additional charge of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## ***Child Care Rates and Fees*** *(Choose the option that best fits your program needs)*

#### **Regular Rate**

* The fee will be $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ per (monthly, bi-weekly, weekly, and daily).
* If the client is receiving subsidy payments from a government agency, the client is responsible for paying the full amount of the fees under this contract if the government agency does not pay the provider for any reason.

#### **Drop-in Rate** *(If not offering delete this section)*

* The fee for drop-in care is $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Fees are due before care is provided.

#### **Rate Increases**

* The rate will increase annually on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Clients will be notified of the amount of increase on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Payments**

* Fees are due prior to services rendered. Payments are due on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *(date/time).*

#### **Late Payment Fees**

* If the child care fee is not paid when due, a late payment fee of $ \_\_\_\_\_ per day will be added to the past due amount until it is paid.
* The fee for an insufficient funds check will be $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, plus the amount of any bank charges to the program’s account.

#### **Early Drop-off and Late Pickup Fees**

* The client will pay an additional fee of $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ if the child is dropped off earlier or picked up later than the time stipulated in this contract without prior arrangement.

## **Holding Fees**

* The program agrees to hold a space until \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *(insert date)* for the client’s child. The client agrees to pay the program $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ per (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) during the holding period. Payment is due \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly). If the client decides not to enroll the child before the end of the holding period, the holding fee will not be refundable. The holding fee will not be applied to care once the child is enrolled.

#### **Registration Fees** *(If not requiring delete this section)*

* The client will pay a registration fee of $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ upon signing the contract.

#### **Additional Fees** *(Delete this section if not providing these services)*

* There *will/will not* be an extra fee for field trips. The program will notify the client of the fee for each trip at least one week in advance.
* The client will pay a $ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ food fee per [day / week / meal]. *(Keep in mind you cannot charge for any food that is reimbursed by a USDA Food Program.)*

## **Holidays***(List those that meet your program needs)*

* The child care program will be closed on the following days each year: *(list holidays)*
* The client does/does not have to pay for holidays listed above.
* If a holiday falls on a weekend, the day will be observed on the Friday or Monday proceeding or following the holiday.

**Bad Weather Closings** *(Choose the option that best fits your program needs)*

* The client will/ will not be charged for inclement weather closing due to closing of the facility.

## **Termination of Care**

* The client has the right to terminate the contract but must give a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [2 week / 30 days] written notice to end this contract. Payment is due for the notice period whether the child is brought to the program for care during that time.
* The program may terminate this contract at will. The provider may be required to refund payments made for that child at a pro-rated amount.
* The program reserves the right to immediately terminate this contract if the client does not meet payment obligations.

# **The Signatures of the Parties to the Contract**

* By signing this contract, clients indicate that they have read and agree to the contract.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or legal guardian’s signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or legal guardian’s signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Co-signer Date

*(A co-signer is required if the client is under the age of 18. The co-signer guarantees the contract and agrees to be responsible for all its financial terms if the client fails to pay the provider.)*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Program/Provider signature Date