



CREEKSIDE FOREST SCHOOL

AT INDIAN CREEK NATURE CENTER

Family Handbook

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Table of Contents



Table of Contents..... 1

Our Mission.....2

Session Details.....2

Non-Discrimination Policy.....2

Guidelines for Enrollment..... 3

Curriculum and Daily Rhythm.....3

Developmental Growth Reporting..... 4

Outdoor/Physical Activity.....5

Tuition Policies..... 6

Attendance and Important Dates..... 8

Emergency Preparedness..... 9

Security Procedures/Access.....12

Communication..... 17

Illness & Injury Policy..... 18

Outdoor Safety and Inspections.....21

Tobacco-Free/Nicotine-Free Policy..... 23

Universal Precautions.....24

Behavior, Discipline and Discharge..... 26

Staff..... 30

Our Mission

We are creating Champions of Nature in an outdoor learning environment that educates the whole child through play-based learning.

We believe...

- *In immersive outdoor learning.*
- *Learning looks like play.*
- *Curriculum can be guided by the seasons and take place in all weather.*
- *Teaching and learning starts with inquiry and occurs cyclically.*
- *In being environmental stewards and living lightly on the earth.*
- *Early childhood education fosters critical lifelong skills.*
- *In celebrating the diversity in all life.*

Session Details

Children must be 3 years old and potty trained before their first day of school.

Session	Days Attending	Times	Fee
4 days AM Preschool	Tuesday - Friday	8:30am-11:30am	\$510 a month (2025/26)
4 days PM Preschool	Tuesday - Friday	12:30-3:30pm	\$510 a month (2025/26)

Capacity: 14 children per session. Per Iowa Law, at least a 1:12 teacher to child ratio will be maintained at all times. We generally operate with a 3:14 teacher to child ratio.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Children enrolled at Creekside Forest School shall have an equal opportunity for a quality education regardless of their sex, race, ethnicity, religion or physical disability. The school shall be free of discrimination, provide equal opportunities for the participants, and encourage knowledge, respect and appreciation for diverse cultural groups. At Creekside Forest School the curriculum and instructional materials will reflect the cultural and racial diversity present in the United States and the variety of careers, roles, and lifestyles in our society. Our belief "In celebrating the diversity in all life" is in part to eliminate bias on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, religion and physical disability. The curriculum fosters respect and appreciation for cultural diversity and an awareness of the rights, duties, and responsibilities of each individual as a member of a multicultural, nonsexist society.

Creekside Forest School will make reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and we make every effort to meet the dynamic needs of all students. Limitation of accommodations may exist for children whose needs require extreme facility modification beyond the capability of ICNCs resources, or the fulfillment of the school's vision to provide an outdoor, nature-based education.

Guidelines for Enrollment

Prior to enrolling, the following forms must be completed in accordance with the State of Iowa Law:

- Activity Consent Form - updated annually
- Emergency Medical Treatment Authorization Form - updated annually
- Enrollment Form
- Family Handbook Acknowledgement - updated as needed
- Immunization Exemption (Medical) - updated annually, if applicable
- Immunization Exemption (Religious) - updated annually, if applicable
- Immunization Certificate - updated each time your child receives vaccinations
- Monthly Medicine Record - updated as needed
- Photo Release & Liability Waiver - updated annually
- Pick up Authorization - updated annually
- Student Health Form - updated annually
- Sunscreen & Insect Repellent Consent Form - updated annually

Note: Parents are responsible for keeping all information in their child's file current and up to date. We will issue reminders. Please be aware, due to state law requirements enrollment can be interrupted or terminated if information is not kept current.

A \$255 deposit is required to secure a child's spot in the school. This deposit may be refunded prior to July 1st, less a 10% administrative fee.

Curriculum and Daily Rhythm

Our approach to teaching and learning is play-based through an emergent curriculum. Children will connect with their natural environment through activities and explorations centered on what is happening seasonally. This approach uses seasonal occurrences as the underpinnings for year-long exploration. There is room for students and teachers to elaborate on an emergent curriculum throughout the year. We are defenders of childhood so we carefully balance unstructured learning and play with skill-building and other intentional teaching practices. As a result, we are able to meet children's social, emotional, and physical needs while providing them with essential kindergarten readiness skills.

Our time together varies with the rhythms of the season, student interest, and weather conditions. Rather than referring to a schedule, we adopt a rhythm for our time together. Below is a sample of the rhythm we use to start the day, however this is due to change based on the needs of the students.

Morning Session	Afternoon Session	Activity
8:30-8:45 am	12:30-12:45 pm	Drop Off Window
8:45-9:45 am	12:45-1:45 pm	Centers Exploration
9:45-10:05 am	1:45-2:05 pm	Circle Time
10:05-11:15 am	2:05-3:15 pm	Excursion
11:15-11:30 am	3:15-3:30 pm	Pick Up Window



Developmental Growth Reporting

At CFS we use a specially designed tool to document the growth of each child throughout the school year. [You can find the progress report linked here](#). The report is simply one communication tool of the growth a child is making over time, which is formally documented two times per year (December & May). *We are focused on growth at Creekside Forest School*, starting wherever your child is at! The progress report tool is directly influenced by the [Iowa Early Learning Standards](#). It is important to note that these standards and benchmarks are *not* a checklist. They are *not* a set of milestones that a child must complete before they attend kindergarten. It is *not* a report card. These standards and benchmarks are skills many children might develop or demonstrate between 3-5 years of age, therefore we find it helpful to document their growth during their preschool experience.



Outdoor/Physical Activity

We not only recognize the essential role the outdoors has in whole child development, we believe it is essential and align every decision around it. Children will be outside in all weather. They will be physically active. Movement is encouraged and fostered. Risky play has value here and we teach safety considerations to children. We will develop appropriate physical challenges for children that foster gross and fine motor development in an outdoor setting. We will follow HHS regulations for safety and have an indoor space available for times when the weather is too dangerous for outdoor learning. In order to fully engage in our program, we provide every student with a complete set of rain and winter gear at absolutely no cost. The gear we provide was sourced from Soko Outfitters and is available for free for the school year. It includes:

Fall/Spring:

- Lacrosse rain boots
- Patagonia rain jacket with a hood
- Patagonia rain pants
- Reima rain mittens (loaned out as needed)
- Patagonia fleece mittens
- Chaos winter hat (optional)
- Outdoor Research waterproof rainhat

Winter:

- Outdoor Research balaclava
- Insulated mittens
- Keen insulated snow boots
- Patagonia or The North Face winter coat with hood
- Patagonia or The North Face snow bibs

All seasons:

- Hiking Backpack
- Snack Container

Because children will be spending extended periods of time outdoors in all weather, note that your child may come home wearing their spare set of clothing, or with muddy boots, or with gloves that need washing mid-week. We think the trade off for more dirty laundry or wearing 'play jeans' to preschool is worth it for rich outdoor learning experiences. We encourage you to dress your child in clothing and shoes that they can actively learn in.

Lastly, an active, outdoor school will consume a lot of energy. Be mindful of any changes to your child's schedule or nutrition at home that will help them rest and rejuvenate after a big day at school.



Tuition Policies

Payment Policy

Brightwheel is used as an all-encompassing billing, communication, and student assessment tool. Parents manage their own payments (ACH or credit card) through Brightwheel. Payment is due on a monthly basis and must be paid via a recurring payment option. Statements are sent and due through Brightwheel. Cash or check are acceptable forms of payment on an emergency basis only, and the administrator can provide a receipt of payment for the child's account in Brightwheel.

Parents are provided with personalized statements via Brightwheel that contain all charges (tuition, late pick up fee, etc.) and applicable discounts. Parents have a single view of their balance at all times within Brightwheel.

Monthly fees are due in full regardless of the child's absences. Tuition is collected August - May. August tuition reflects a deduction of the \$255 enrollment deposit. The base monthly tuition is \$510. Tuition is due on the first day of the month. Payments are considered late after the 10th of the month and a \$10 late charge will be added. Tuition that is one month overdue forfeits a child's spot in class.

Written notice of intent to withdraw a child from school before the end of the school year should be done at least one month in advance. For example, withdrawal in February would require notice before January 1st. Failure to provide notification one month in advance will result in a charge of full tuition for the subsequent month. Withdrawals before July 1st entitles the family to a refund of their \$275 deposit, less a 10% administrative fee.

Waiting List

A waitlist will be kept in the event that all available spots are full. Families will be placed on the waitlist in chronological order based on the date and time of their application on Brightwheel. If a spot opens in the class, families will be contacted to begin the enrollment process.



Attendance and Important Dates

Creekside Forest School 2025-26 School Calendar

August 2025							September 2025							October 2025							November 2025						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
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					0	0																					
11	12	13	14	15	0	3																					
18	19	20	21	22	0	5																					
25	26	27	28	29	3	5																					

September 2025							October 2025							November 2025						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
1	2	3	4	5	4	4														
8	9	10	11	12	4	5														
15	16	17	18	19	4	5														
22	23	24	25	26	4	5														
29	30				1	2														

October 2025							November 2025						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
		1	2	3	3	3							
6	7	8	9	10	4	5							
13	14	15	16	17	4	5							
20	21	22	23	24	4	5							
27	28	29	30	31	4	5							

November 2025							December 2025							January 2026							February 2026							March 2026						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.							
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17	18	19	20	21	4	5																												
24	25	26	27	28	2	2																												

December 2025							January 2026							February 2026							March 2026						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
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15	16	17	18	19	4	5																					
22	23	24	25	26	0	0																					
29	30	31			0	0																					

January 2026							February 2026							March 2026						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
			1	2	0	0														
5	6	7	8	9	4	5														
12	13	14	15	16	4	5														
19	20	21	22	23	4	4														
26	27	28	29	30	4	5														

February 2026							March 2026						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
2	3	4	5	6	4	5							
9	10	11	12	13	4	5							
16	17	18	19	20	4	5							
23	24	25	26	27	4	5							

March 2026							April 2026							May 2026							June 2026						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
2	3	4	5	6	4	5																					
9	10	11	12	13	4	5																					
16	17	18	19	20	0	0																					
23	24	25	26	27	4	5																					
30	31				1	1																					

April 2026							May 2026							June 2026						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
		1	2	3	3	3														
6	7	8	9	10	4	5														
13	14	15	16	17	4	5														
20	21	22	23	24	4	5														
27	28	29	30		3	4														

May 2026							June 2026						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
				1	1	1							
4	5	6	7	8	4	4							
11	12	13	14	15	4	5							
18	19	20	21	22	4	5							
25	26	27	28	29	4	4							

June 2026						
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Stu.	Tch.
1	2	3	4	5	2	5
8	9	10	11	12	0	2

Student days in school: 147
Teacher days in school: 192

Updated 06/02/2025

Student days in school: 147
Teacher days in school: 192

Updated 06/02/2025

Calendar Legend

Sep 1, 2025	Labor Day	No School (students AND teachers)	Conference Week (normal schedule for kids)
Nov 26-28, 2025	Thanksgiving Break	First Day of School (8/27/2025)	Evening Family Night
Dec 22, 2025 - Jan 2, 2026	Winter Break	Last Day of School (6/3/26)	Evening Meet the Teacher Night
March 16-20, 2025	Spring Break	Teacher Work Day/NO SCHOOL for students	

Optional home visits will be scheduled with families in the month of August. This 15-20 minute visit is optional, and is best for those who have additional questions or would benefit from a personal visit from the teachers..

Absences of Children

If your child is unable to attend school for any reason, contact the teachers via Brightwheel Messages as soon as possible. Advance notice is preferred, but we understand that emergencies happen.

If your child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness, it is important that you contact us immediately so we can post an Illness Notification Form and take necessary precautions.

Tuition is not prorated for absences.

Emergency Preparedness

We have established safety rules and procedures to comply with state and city regulations as well as to promote personal safety. Announced and unannounced fire and tornado drills will be conducted throughout the year. No refunds will be given due to emergency closings.

Weather Related Closings

The safety of our families traveling to and from preschool is of great importance to us. In the event of inclement weather, we may need to cancel class due to hazardous travel. Due to our preschool half-day program, it is possible that only the morning session or only the afternoon session may be impacted by weather. Cancellations will be communicated via Brightwheel. Canceled classes will not be made up. We encourage your family to safely enjoy the winter weather together!



Evacuation Plan

In any event when the building is determined unsafe and evacuation of the premises is necessary, teachers and children will begin to evaluate the building, closing doors behind them. The teachers will bring with them children's emergency contact information. Children and teachers will use the nearest exit, which could be the side door near the preschool classroom, the front doors of Amazing Space, or another door near the occupied space. Teachers will lead children through the evacuation route and to the pre-arranged meeting place, which is the Amazing Space parking lot (primary) or Amazing Space Education Circle (secondary). After a headcount at the pre-arranged meeting place, staff will determine if another location is more appropriate. Parents will be contacted and made aware of the alternate pick up site. Children and teachers will return to the building when it is determined safe.

Fire Emergency Plan

Fire escape routes are clearly marked and posted in each room. Staff and children are trained to react quickly and efficiently to the building's fire alarm system. Drills are conducted once a month at different times of the day to ensure that all children and teachers are familiar with all the exit points. The following steps will be followed:

1. Before opening doors, check to ensure it is not hot to the touch. The first adult to the door will hold the door open as the children and remaining teachers exit the building.
2. Exit from the preschool room will be at the east door nearest the preschool room.
3. Teachers will ensure that all children are accounted for.
4. The Director or other designated staff will shut all windows, turn out the lights, close all doors, check all bathrooms for children and then proceed to the meeting place.
5. No one will re-enter until the "All-Clear" signal has been given.

During the event of a real fire, 911 will be called and the children and teachers will exit the building as stated above. Designated staff will be responsible for taking emergency contact information outside. The teachers will be responsible for the emergency bag containing a list of children and phone numbers; first aid kit, cell phone, and flashlights. The children and teachers will remain in their designated area until emergency vehicles arrive.

If necessary to move from the designated area, teachers and children will access safer areas of the property via prairie walking trails. Parents will be notified, and children will remain on the premises at the designated area until parents arrive.

Tornado Emergency Plan

Emergency Tornado routes are clearly marked and posted in every room. Tornado drills will be conducted once a month at different times of the day to ensure that all children and teachers are familiar with the emergency procedure.

1. A weather radio sits at the front desk. When a warning is sounded for our area via the sirens or the weather radio, teachers will be notified.
2. The first adult to the door will hold the door open as children and remaining teachers leave the room to go down the hallway towards the restrooms.
3. Teachers will lead the class to the women's restroom where they will remain seated along the east wall.
4. Teachers will carry emergency phone lists, attendance roster, a cell phone to listen to the latest news and weather alerts, a first aid kit, and flashlight.

In the event of a tornado, the above procedures will be followed. The staff and children will remain in the designated area until the "All Clear" is given. We will remain in our safe spots until the building is determined safe to exit. If it is necessary to leave our building, staff will follow the evacuation guidelines as set out in the Emergency Plan for Fire, using the front doors of the building as the nearest exit.

Inclement Weather on Trails Plan

Preschool students will spend significant time outdoors on ICNC property and trails. All staff will carry radios with them, and radios are also stationed at the front desk, at Naturalists' desks, and in the Copy Room. Should inclement weather arise while the class is outdoors, a staff member in the building will radio the teachers for immediate return to the building. Staff will take the most direct route back to the nearest building for shelter. If caught outside, students and staff will lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine or culvert with hands and arms protecting the head. Students and staff leave the ditch, ravine or culvert immediately after the tornado has passed to avoid the possibility of flash flooding.

Trail Emergency Plan

Should an emergency arise while the preschool students and staff are on the trails or away from the building, the teachers will radio back to the building with their location, the nature of their emergency, and request support. For minor issues, staff might treat the concern from their first aid kit carried in their backpack. For more serious issues, staff in the building may call 911 and another staff member will hike to their location to provide support. If appropriate, the remaining teachers and students may return to the building while emergency care is provided on the trail.

Flood Emergency Plan

Should Indian Creek exceed its banks a portion of ICNC trails will be closed and children will not access those trails or the Barn campus. The Amazing Space campus is far out of reach of flood waters. If Indian Creek flows over the road near the bridge on Otis Road, families will be notified to plan an alternate route for pick up or drop off (i.e., taking 44th Street from Mt Vernon Road to access Otis Road). Classes will not be canceled.



Power Failure Emergency Plan

If there is a power failure in the entire building while the children are present, the director or supervisor will check with each staff member to ensure children are safe and calm before troubleshooting or notifying the electric company of the power outage. If it is determined it is safe for the children to remain in the building then classes will resume either indoors or outdoors. If it is not safe the staff will follow procedures listed in the "Evacuation Plan" for moving children to safety and notifying families.

Outdoor Air Quality Plan

ICNC may change its operating status during and surrounding periods of poor air quality. ICNC makes decisions based on environmental conditions impacting its operations and the safety of guests and staff. During times of poor air quality, ICNC will make every effort to adjust programs and services to modify the activities for the health and safety of our guests and employees. Detailed plans are located in the ICNC Safety Procedures and Protocol Guide.

Structural Damage Emergency Plan

If structural damage occurs for any reason, staff will instruct and assist children to take cover under tables and away from windows. For children outside the building, staff will instruct and assist the children to move away from the building to a safe location. Children and staff will stay in these locations until the "all clear" is given by a supervisor. The Director of Education or Supervisor will call 911. Structural damage will be assessed by official personnel before children can remain in or re-entering the building. If it is necessary to evacuate the premises, the evacuation procedure explained above under "Evacuation Plan" will be followed.

Bomb Threat Emergency Plan

The "Evacuation plan" will be followed. The Director or staff will call 911 to inform authorities that a bomb threat has been received. Any instructions given by the emergency personnel will be followed. Staff and children will return to the building once the search has stopped and the building has been declared safe. Parents will be notified if a threat is received.

Toxic or Hazardous Materials Emergency Plan

In the event of a toxic spill, the Director or staff will assess the situation. If possible, staff will make every attempt to secure a no-risk environment, which may mean closing or opening windows or evacuating children and notifying families as specified under "Evacuation Plan". If it is a non-hazardous substance, then staff will block off the area and clean it up immediately. Students and staff will remain between the hazardous material and an exit to avoid being trapped.

Lockdown Emergency Plan

In an event where a "lock down" procedure is necessary, staff in each classroom will lock their classroom door, turn off all lights, and take all the children to the northwest corner of the classroom, furthest from the classroom door. Doors will remain locked until the teachers and children are cleared to exit.

Dangerous Adult

A dangerous adult includes any adult exhibiting inappropriate behavior (conduct that is reckless, disorderly, dangerous, threatening, including self-harmful behavior), baring arms, and or showing signs of intoxication by either drugs or alcohol and you are concerned for your safety or the safety of others. This also includes any person who is prohibited by court order or parental request to see or transport the child. If an adult presumed, by any staff member, to be a danger to children and staff:

1. Any staff member available will immediately call 911.
2. Staff will take the children to a centralized location, safe away from the situation at hand. Doors will be locked, if possible.
3. A designated staff member will calmly request that the person leave the premises and advise them that officials are on their way. If the person leaves the property before the officials arrive, staff will write down the license plate of their vehicle, a full description of the individual and the details of the situation.
4. Staff will not place themselves or the children in danger by attempting to detain the individual.

Security Procedures/Access



Supervision Policy

Active supervision is maintained at all times during school hours, including drop off and pick up. This means staff will remain in ratio at all times and be in communication with other staff via walkies as small groups transition from area to area. When children are engaged in play in the outdoor classroom, boundaries will be shared with each child and staff will station themselves where they can see and hear all children. Small groups will be utilized often to efficiently provide active supervision.

Cell phones are generally not used during the school day. Occasionally staff will upload photos or

communicate with a family via Brightwheel, or use the Face to Name feature to take a quick headcount. Staff to staff communications largely occur via radio, which also allows for communication with staff inside the building.

During transition times, especially at the beginning of the year or with a change in seasons, staff will use walking ropes with knots for each child, transitional songs, and other strategies to ensure children are taught expectations for safe transitions. Games like Red Light, Green Light and equating our group to a wolf pack also teach trail safety and support active supervision on the trails. While near the wetland or other areas where additional supervision is needed, staff practice touch supervision and position themselves within arms reach of a child.

The Director is not included in the student to teacher ratio on a regular basis to allow for 1:1 support when needed. If a staff member should need to leave the group, before doing so they will discuss how to keep an appropriate ratio or break into small groups.

Access Policy

1. Any person in the building who is not a staff member, substitute, or volunteer who has had a background check and approval to be involved with the preschool shall not have “unrestricted access” to children for whom that person is not the parent, guardian, or custodian, nor be counted in the staff to child ratio. “Unrestricted access” means that a person has contact with a child alone or is directly responsible for care.

Indian Creek Nature Center is open to the public, and members of the public may be in the building and/or on the grounds while preschool is in session. The preschool classroom door will remain locked. Staff will have keycard access to the room. The outdoor area(s) in which preschool children are present will be closed to the public. Restrooms and other indoor spaces will also be closed to the public when in use by the preschool. Signage will be posted on the doors or applicable gates to notify the public of the restricted access.

2. Staff will approach anyone who is in the preschool classroom or within close proximity of the class while outdoors to ask what their purpose is. If staff is unsure about the reason they will contact the Director of Education or other management staff. If the situation becomes dangerous, staff will follow the “Dangerous Adult Emergency Plan”. Non-agency persons who are on the property for other reasons such as maintenance, repairs, etc. will be monitored by staff and will not be allowed to interact with the children on premise.

- “Supervision” means to be in charge of an individual engaged with children in an activity or task and ensure that they perform it correctly.
- “Monitoring” means to be in charge of ensuring proper conduct of others.

3. A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor - even if the sex offender is the parent, guardian, or custodian - who is required to register with the Iowa sex offender registry (Iowa Code Chapter 692A):

- a. Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer at the school or nature center.
- b. Shall not be on the property of the nature center without the written permission of the Executive Director or Director of Education, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender’s own minor child or ward to and from school.
 - i. The Executive Director or Director of Education is not obligated to provide written permission and must consult with their HHS licensing consultant first.
 - ii. If written permission is granted it shall include the conditions under which the sex offender may be present, including:
 1. The precise location in the building or property where the sex offender may be present.
 2. The reason for the sex offender’s presence at the facility.
 3. The duration of the sex offender’s presence.
 4. Description of how the staff will supervise the sex offender to ensure that the sex offender is not left alone with a child.
 5. The written permission shall be signed and dated by the director and sex offender and kept on file for review by the center-licensing consultant.

Any registered sex offender will only have access with written permission from the Executive Director or Director of Education. Registered sex offenders will remain at the nature center only for the time reasonably necessary to drop off and/or pick up their own child while being escorted by the director to and from their entrance to the building through the front doors.

Confidentiality Policy

Children’s records will be kept strictly confidential and secure at all times. Records are kept electronically using Brightwheel software. The Brightwheel [Privacy Policy](#) outlines the protection and encryption of a child or family’s personal information. Personal information is not sold to any third parties, and information is only used in accordance with this Privacy Policy. While using Brightwheel, parents can only see information for their own child in their personalized feed; guardian’s access is even more limited, as they cannot edit student profiles, view or make payments, or add new users. Staff cannot access the Billing feature unless granted permission

as an admin. More information about Brightwheel security is also viewable [here](#). Additionally, staff are trained to not share sensitive information regarding children with other families and those not affiliated with Indian Creek Nature Center.



Drop Off and Pick Up

The morning session begins at 8:30am. Drop off is from 8:30-8:45am. The doors to the building will be locked until 8:30am. The afternoon session begins at 12:30pm. Drop off is from 12:30-12:45pm. Admittance will not be allowed before 12:30pm. In order to maximize our time together, teachers will not wait for students and will begin the day at 8:45am and 12:45pm. Notify the teachers of any planned late arrivals, especially as the class will be outdoors or on the trails.

When the weather is cooperative, teachers will greet families outdoors for check in. If the weather is poor, check in will be at the preschool classroom door. If an hour of preschool has passed and a child is not present, nor has an approved adult communicated the absence to staff, CFS staff will message the family via Brightwheel about their whereabouts.

The morning session ends at 11:30am and the afternoon session ends at 3:30pm. Children can be picked up between 11:15-11:30am or 3:15-3:30pm either outdoors (weather permitting) or at the preschool classroom door (poor weather). Late pick ups for both the morning and afternoon sessions will be charged \$1 per minute after the first 5 minutes late beginning at 11:30am and 3:30pm. Fees will be added to the subsequent month's tuition. Parents will be contacted via phone if 10 minutes has passed beyond scheduled pick up. Emergency contacts will be called at 20 minutes beyond scheduled pick up time if no parent contact has been made.

Check in and check out will be completed via Brightwheel. Children will only be released to authorized adults. Authorized adults are listed on the registration paperwork completed by the child's parent or guardian. Should a last minute change occur requiring a different adult to pick up a child, a phone call with the teachers or Director of Education is acceptable. Email notification is not acceptable. The authorized person picking up must present a photo ID when they arrive. If a parent or guardian has been restricted from picking up a child, a copy of the court order is required. Daily attendance records that include the time of arrival and departure and the person dropping off and picking up are kept electronically on Brightwheel.

If parents are divorced, or unmarried:

1. ICNC will need a copy of all custody paperwork. If these papers are not provided, we will only be able to release the child to the person who enrolled the child, and/or the people authorized to pick up the child(ren) on the Emergency Contact Form
2. If there are any restrictions of parental contact, the parent or agency that has custody of the child must provide a court order that allows this restriction. Only a court order can deny a parent/guardian access to their child. If no court order is on file, we cannot prevent a parent/guardian access to their child(ren). In these situations, we can inform the person who enrolled the child that a parent/guardian is at Indian Creek Nature Center.

Parent Involvement and Visitors

ICNC has an open-door policy that gives parents the opportunity to have an active role in their child's day. It is important to us that a strong family atmosphere exists and that everyone is involved and informed. Parents have the right to unlimited access to their children at all times at Creekside Forest School.

1. Family members and special adults are encouraged to join us at Creekside Forest School. At least 1 day's notice should be provided to teachers before visiting the classroom [via signing up online](#). This allows us to prepare you for the activity, weather, or other circumstances.
2. Any visitors, including classroom volunteers, are required to [sign up on signup.com](#). This is our electronic record of the visitor's/volunteer's presence and also contains contact information in the event staff needs to reach a volunteer on short notice.
3. Sometimes siblings and other children join in Creekside Forest School celebrations or Family Nights. This is great! If a child is in attendance but is not enrolled in our preschool *during the regular school day*, they may not be able to participate in certain activities for liability reasons and should always be under the supervision of their family member at all times.

Field Trips and Non-Center Activities

At this time field trips off of the ICNC campus will not be conducted. Creekside Forest School will operate primarily from the Amazing Space building and immediately surrounding grounds and trails, as well as the Barn grounds and trails. If non-center activities become an option, the director will communicate with families well in advance.

Emergency Plan for Lost or Abducted Child

Prevention measures are taken to ensure the safety and security of children. Children are not allowed to be in any part of the nature center without the appropriate staff supervision consistent with HHS ratio regulations. Staff regularly perform name-to-face counts throughout the day, and communicate this information with each other via walkies if there are small groups learning in different areas. Additionally, staff spend roughly the first month of school teaching expectations regarding trail safety. Games like Red Light, Green Light and establishing a return to the group call (a wolf howl) teach children how to return to the group and be safe on trails. During all trail excursions, one teacher leads, one teacher is last, and a third teacher or volunteer walks with students in the middle. No children are allowed to run out of sight. Children are checked in and out of school by an approved adult, all of which is documented electronically via Brightwheel.

In the event staff are unable to locate a child:

1. All children will be brought into their designated room.
2. Non-ratio staff will immediately and completely search the grounds and the building while the other children are being supervised.

If the child is not found within 10 minutes:

1. Parents will be called and 911 will be notified. A detailed description of the child, including what they are wearing and places they might have gone will be given to emergency officials.

If the child is observed being abducted:

1. 911 will be called immediately and a complete description of the child and the abductor will be given, if possible.
2. If an advanced warning is received that someone is coming to take a child, the child will be taken to the Executive Director's office where a staff member will stay with the child with the door locked.
3. When the person arrives to attempt to take the child, they will be encouraged to leave the premises. If the person refuses, 911 will be called. No staff or children will leave the nature center until authorities arrive.

An incident report will be completed.

Parental Code of Conduct

1. All families and designated pick up persons are always expected to be respectful to our staff and children.
2. Shouting and profanity are not allowed. Persons using profanity, shouting, or engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave and may result in child's dismissal from our school.
3. Music from radio and personal audio may be inappropriate and disruptive for young children. To maintain our positive and safe environment we ask that no car audio be heard outside the vehicle while in our parking lot.
4. Appropriate dress attire is required to pick up and drop off your child(ren). Shirts are required (no profanity or obscene items on shirt). Shoes are required. Pants or shorts are required.
5. Any matters relating to the child's education that are not resolved with the child's teacher must be addressed to the Director of Education.



Photo Sharing and Social Media Policy

Please consider and respect the privacy of CFS students in all online activities, such as sharing photos of your child taken on campus or while attending a school function on social media. The posting of identifying information about students (including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and so forth) is prohibited. Should you choose to post a photo taken at CFS which contains the image of student(s) not under your household, please hide (cover or blur out) the face of said student(s) unless you have attained consent from that student's family.

Staff Training for Emergency Procedures

Creekside Forest School staff will be trained at orientation and annually for emergency preparedness and adherence to safety measures. Additional support and training will be provided to ICNC staff who may be in the building at the same time as the preschool students.



Communication

Daily Communication

Teachers and families will use the messaging feature on Brightwheel to communicate daily, and the teachers can provide real-time updates and photos for each child during the day through the app as well. You'll also have a chance to speak with the teachers at pick up and drop off. Parent/Teacher conferences are held twice during the academic year, and free Family Nights are scheduled throughout the school year.

Families are welcome to visit their children any time during the school day, join in on an activity or snack, or participate in an outdoor adventure. We have an open door policy! Volunteering is welcome and encouraged. Families can access [this signup.com link](https://this.signup.com) to volunteer or visit the classroom. This Handbook will be provided to each family and is continually accessible.

Newsletters

Newsletters will be sent monthly via email. These will include information about the upcoming month and offer an opportunity to learn more about our school and our approaches to whole child education.

Incident Reporting

Incidents involving minor injuries will be reported to the parent the day of the incident. The staff member who observed the incident will prepare a written incident report. A copy of the report will be provided to the parent or authorized person at the end of the day. The parent or authorized person must sign the report. A copy of the report will be made and given to parents or authorized people and the original will be placed in the child's file.



Illness & Injury Policy

Sick Child/Injured Child

- If a child exhibits bacterial/viral or other unusual symptoms of illness or requires emergency medical care due to injury the Director of Education or supervisor will administer first aid appropriate for the situation and within the scope of their training from one of the first aid kits containing all necessary supplies as required by the Department of Health and Human Services.
- First aid kits are located in each classroom, at the front desk, and in the mud room. If an ice pack is needed, single use ice packs are located above the microwave in the staff break room. Kits also include medication needed for children with special needs (if applicable), local emergency phone numbers, parents' home and work numbers and emergency contact phone numbers, and poison control center phone number.
- An incident/accident report will be filled out by a staff member describing the symptoms that the child is experiencing.
- The report will be duplicated. A copy of the report will be made and given to parents or authorized person, and the original will be placed in the child's file.
- If a child has a known medical condition, parents must inform the Director of Education and/or staff at registration or as soon as possible of all procedures required should a problem arise while the child is at Creekside Forest School. Proper medications must be available and appropriate forms completed.
- Dental emergencies will be handled following the guidelines provided by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.
- Each child's Medical Consent Form will be completed and updated annually at registration.

Medical Emergency/Serious Injury/Illness

- If the child needs medical attention beyond the first aid training by staff, emergency personnel will be called immediately.
- Families will be notified immediately after calling emergency medical personnel. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, staff will contact the emergency contact person listed on your child's Parental Emergency Medical Consent Form.
- The child will be transported by an ambulance to a local hospital for treatment. A supervisor will go with the child in the emergency vehicle taking the child's file and the emergency medical consent form. This form must accompany the child to the hospital.
- Other staff at the nature center will be responsible for the safety of the children remaining at school.

Policy for Admission and Exclusion from Child Care due to Illness

Keep in mind that we spend the majority of our time outdoors daily. If a child is not well enough to go run, play, or be outside, please keep them at home as there is no option for children to stay indoors. If any symptoms of illness are present during drop off, or if a child is not feeling well, the teacher will request the child go home to prevent the spread of illness. CFS follows the [Iowa Department of Health and Human Services criteria for child illnesses and exclusion](#).



Parents, legal guardians, or an authorized emergency contact will be notified immediately when a child has [any sign or symptom that requires exclusion](#) from Creekside Forest School. The diagnosis of a disease can only be made by the child's health care provider so parents or guardians must provide the Director of Education with any information or advice received from the health care provider pertaining to an illness or disease that could directly impact staff or other children enrolled in Creekside Forest School. We reserve the right to admit or exclude a child regardless of the health care provider's recommendations. The child's health care provider shall determine if antibiotics or other medications are required for treatment of an illness. The use of antibiotics for illness is not required or encouraged as a condition for attendance at school unless noted below:

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in school activities, including outdoor play;
2. Child's fever reaches or exceeds 100.4. **A child MUST be fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications (i.e. Tylenol) before returning to care.**
3. The illness results in a greater need for care than teachers can provide without risking the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care;
4. The child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a health care professional indicates that you can include the child in the school's activities:
 - a. Fever accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness until medical professional evaluation finds the child able to be included at the facility;
 - b. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness like:
 - i. Lethargy that is more than expected tiredness,
 - ii. Uncontrollable coughing,
 - iii. Unexplained irritability, fussiness, or persistent crying,
 - iv. Difficult breathing,
 - v. Wheezing,

- vi. Other unusual signs for the child.
4. Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, hard stools, or medication that may cause gastrointestinal damage such as ibuprofen, naproxen, or aspirin;
 5. Vomiting illness (two or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours) until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider determines that the cause of the vomiting is not contagious, and the child is not in danger of dehydration;
 6. Persistent abdominal pain (continues more than two hours) or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs or symptoms;
 7. Mouth sores with drooling, unless a health care provider determines that the child is noninfectious;
 8. Rash with fever or behavior change, until a health care provider determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease;
 9. Diarrhea, defined as loose, watery, and frequent stools. Children with diarrheal illness of infectious origin generally may be allowed to return to childcare once the diarrhea resolves, except for children with diarrhea caused by *Norovirus*, *Salmonella typhi*, *Shigella*, or *E. Coli* 0157:H7. For *Salmonella typhi*, three negative stool cultures are required. For *Shigella* or *E. coli* 0157:H7, two negative stool cultures are required to be taken at least 24 hours apart. If treated with antibiotics, samples should not be taken less than 48 hours after therapy is done;
 10. Norovirus, children and staff with diarrhea and/or vomiting should remain at home until 24 hours after diarrhea and/or vomiting cease, and until stools are formed;
 11. Erythema infectiosum (5th Disease), keep children at home if fever is present;
 12. Pink eye (conjunctivitis) with purulent discharge (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge), child may go back to child care when all symptoms are gone;
 13. Scabies, until after the first treatment;
 14. Tuberculosis, until a health care provider or health official states that the child is on appropriate therapy and can attend care;
 15. Impetigo, until 24 hours after the child started medicine from the health care provider;
 16. Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after antibiotics are started;
 17. Varicella-Zoster (Chickenpox), until all sores have dried and crusted;
 18. Pertussis, until five days of appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed or 21 days of cough if no antibiotics are given;
 19. Mumps, child can go back to child care five days after the start of symptoms or until symptoms are gone, whichever is longer;
 20. Hepatitis A virus, until one week after the start of symptoms;
 21. Measles, until four days after onset of rash;
 22. Rubella, until six days after onset of rash;
 23. Herpes simplex, children with herpetic gingivostomatitis, an infection of the mouth caused by the herpes simplex virus, who do not have control of oral secretions, shall be excluded from school. Children with mild cases who do have control of their mouth secretions may not have to be excluded; or
 24. Meningitis (bacterial), children may return to childcare 24 hours after starting antibiotics.

Illness while in Childcare

If a child becomes ill while at school and it is determined that the child should be excluded; we will immediately contact the child's parent/guardian to pick up the child. Until the child is picked up we will care for the child apart from other children. We will give appropriate attention and supervision to the child, give extra attention to hand washing, disinfecting surfaces; and use Universal Precautions.

When staff believes a child is unwell and the child is not throwing up, diarrheal or showing other signs of illness that will require her/him to be removed from care the following procedures will be followed:

1. Staff will take note of any abnormal behaviors.
2. If staff believe a fever is present, they will take the child's temperature.
 - a. Staff will be sure the child is calm and not overheated from activities such as physical activity.
 - b. Time and temperature of initial reading will be recorded. A second reading will be taken 20 minutes later.

3. If the child's temperature reads 100.4 or above both times, staff will contact parents for the child to be picked up immediately.

Preventing Illness

1. To minimize the spread of infectious disease, all staff will practice hand-washing guidelines as determined by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Health.
2. Families are required upon admission to submit a physical examination form and a current Certificate of Immunization for their child(ren), both signed by a physician or health official. Physicals and immunizations must be updated as determined by the Department of Health.
3. Families must comply with these policies in order to maintain a healthy school.

Medical and Dental Emergency Policies

Before your child's first day at Creekside Forest School, a Parental Emergency Medical Consent Form must be completed and signed by the family. This form will specify where emergency medical and dental healthcare should be obtained. It is the parent's responsibility to update this information as necessary. All dental emergencies require that the parents and the child's dentist be contacted. Staff will follow Universal Precautions when handling injuries, illnesses, or emergencies.

Strangulation Prevention

On occasion children may use ropes and cords to build a shelter or as a safety tool (i.e., crossing the road with the teacher and every child holding a spot on the rope). Prevention measures are taken at CFS to protect children from strangulation. There are no window treatments in the indoor classroom. Dramatic play items do not have long handles and straps. Dancing scarves are used under the supervision of teachers.

Oral Health

Good oral hygiene is important for all children. Because children have one snack while at school, staff recognize the need to reinforce oral health activities that should be implemented at home. As a result:

- Children are offered and encouraged to drink water during and after snacks.
- Sippy cups are not used.
- Healthy snacks per USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are provided.
- Staff reinforce and teach appropriate oral health activities when appropriate.
- All staff have access to a child's dentist contact information in the event of an emergency.
- All staff are provided procedures for handling dental emergencies, and the written procedures are also posted in the classroom.

Outdoor Safety

Creekside Forest School's outdoor, nature-based model has children exploring ICNC's woodlands, wetlands, and tallgrass prairies. Additionally, children may learn and play in Hazelnut Hideaway, ICNC's Nature Explore Certified outdoor classroom. This space is both a natural and built environment. Features change regularly. The space evolves with the children and with the seasons. To keep children safe while outdoors, both on the trails and land and in Hazelnut Hideaway, Creekside Forest School staff do the following:

- Staff are trained in Wilderness First Aid, as well as Infant, Child, and Adult CPR and First Aid. Staff develop, evaluate, and revise safety protocols regarding boundaries, water play, plant identification, tree and wind safety basics, and prairie burn safety basics.
- CFS staff are in constant communication with the ICNC Land Team and ICNC Naturalists regarding flora, fauna, and other activities occurring on site relevant to CFS.
- Built equipment in Hazelnut Hideaway is installed according to manufacturer instructions and is anchored.
- Fall surfacing and fall clearances are maintained according to requirements. The ICNC Land Team handles maintenance of surfacing on a seasonal basis.
- Built and natural elements are inspected monthly, with damaged items repaired, removed, or replaced immediately. Things that typically fall in this category include: missing or broken parts, protruding nuts

and bolts, paint issues, unstable structures, unnatural sharp edges, unstable hand holds, trash removal, stinging insect nests, and poisonous plants.

Rough, natural surfaces are prevalent at Creekside Forest School. Wear and tear occurs on our equipment faster due to frequency of use and exposure to the weather.

Poison Ivy and Bees

Our staff identify poison ivy and steer clear of it. If a child is suspected to have been in contact with poison ivy their skin will be washed and families will be informed at pick up. Consult a healthcare provider for suspicious rashes.

Bees, insects and pollinators are celebrated at Creekside Forest School, even those that may sting or bite. We encourage students to respect and not touch or bother insects. In the event of a sting, families will be notified and the child's condition will be monitored. Children with severe allergies should have an Allergy Action Plan on file, as well as medication kept in original packaging at school.

Ticks

To keep children as safe as possible from ticks, staff will do "spot checks" throughout the day. Preventative measures will also be taken, like sitting on sit spots or tarps. Students will be involved in discussions about what ticks look like and what to do if they see one. Teachers will carry "tick keys" in their packs to ensure safe removal of attached ticks. In the event of an attached tick, it will be removed, placed in a baggie, and families will be notified for further monitoring. Staff will encourage families to dress their children appropriately, and encourage families to check for ticks every day after school.



Tobacco-Free/Nicotine-Free Policy

Indian Creek Nature Center facilities, grounds, and vehicles - including Creekside Forest School - are off limits for tobacco and nicotine use included but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff, pipes, snus, Electronic Smoking Devices (ESD) and nicotine products that are not Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved for tobacco cessation. This requirement extends to students, employees, and visitors. This requirement also extends to employee's vehicles while at work. This policy applies at all times, including Creekside Forest School-sponsored and non-Creekside Forest School sponsored events. Persons failing to abide by this policy are required to extinguish their smoking material, dispose of the tobacco/nicotine product, or leave the Indian Creek Nature Center premises immediately. Staff will not wear clothing that smells of smoke while working.



Universal Precautions

Exposure to Blood or Other Body Fluids

Gloves and eye protection will be worn by staff when contact with blood or other body fluids are present, and when cleaning contaminated surfaces. Spills or any blood or body fluid will be cleaned with soap and water, and then disinfected with a fresh solution of bleach and water. Any contaminated material shall be disposed of in a double layer plastic bag with a secure tie.

Cleaning Schedule

To maintain a clean and healthy environment, ICNC uses the following schedule for the preschool classroom and ICNC common areas. Cleaning and sanitizing will be completed by the ICNC Custodian and/or teachers.

1. Before and After Every Use:
 - a. Food prep surfaces, tables and trays
 - b. Utensils, surfaces, and toys that go into the mouth or have contact with saliva or bodily fluids
2. Daily:
 - a. Countertops, tables, floors, doors, and handles – wiped clean and sanitized
 - b. Carpets and large rugs – vacuumed daily, carpet cleaning as necessary
 - c. Hard surface floors - swept and damp mopped
 - d. Hats, gloves, and other outdoor clothing items
 - e. Toilets (common area of ICNC)
 - f. Handwashing sinks and faucets (common area of ICNC and in preschool classroom)
 - g. Drinking fountains (common area of ICNC)
 - h. Computer keyboards and device screens designated to the preschool classroom
 - i. Telephone in the preschool classroom
3. Weekly:
 - a. Machine-washable cloth toys
 - b. Dress up clothes
 - c. Play activity centers

Additional cleaning will be done as needed. All schedules may vary according to need. For a description of all cleaning supplies, contact Amazing Space Manager Sarah Botkin.

Hand Washing

Teachers will demonstrate clean personal hygiene sufficient to prevent or minimize the transmission of illness or disease. All staff shall wash their hands at the following times:

- a. Upon arrival at school.
- b. Immediately before eating or participating in any food service activity.
- c. Before leaving the rest room either with a child or by themselves.
- d. Before and after administering non-emergency first aid to a child if gloves are not worn.
- e. After handling animals and cleaning cages.



Teachers will assist children in personal hygiene sufficient to prevent or minimize the transmission of illness or disease. For each child with a disability, a separate cloth for washing and one for rinsing may be used in place of running water. Children's hands shall be washed at the following times:

- a. Immediately before eating or participating in any food service activity.
- b. After using the restroom.
- c. After handling animals.

Distribution of Medication

The On-Site Supervisor is authorized to provide medication to a students under the following conditions:

- When a child requires prescription or over the counter medication while at school, the families must submit a completed Medication Authorization Form. Staff are unable to administer any medication without this form.
- The families must supply all medications. All medications shall be stored in their original containers, with accompanying physician or pharmacist's directions and label intact and stored so they are inaccessible to children and the public. Nonprescription medications shall be labeled with the child's name.
- If medication is to be kept at Creekside Forest School for treatment of a chronic condition, no more than one month's supply should remain at school at any one time.
- We will complete the Medication Authorization Form with date, time, amount, type/name of medication, and initialed by the staff member that administered the medication to the child.
- If the medication was not given, the reason will be recorded on the Medication Authorization Form.
- Staff shall not provide medications to a child if the provider has not completed pre-service/orientation training that includes medication administration

Creekside Forest School will not stock OTC medications. Other health products, such as sun blocks, ointments, etc., will be kept inaccessible to children in their original containers in an upright position so that they cannot contaminate or spill.

Drugs and Alcohol Policy

No drugs are allowed on the premises. Indian Creek Nature Center is a smoke-free campus. Our facility and grounds are available to rent. Alcohol may be present at rentals but is not permitted outside the space being rented. Alcohol will not be served in the presence of children, nor will children have access to alcohol on premises. All alcohol kept onsite at ICNC is locked and securely stored.



Nutrition

Your child will receive nutritious snacks each day, which are included in the cost of monthly tuition. Our snacks will meet or exceed government standards and will promote healthy eating habits. Snacks will be served with water and are prepared in part by the children, under the supervision of teachers. The snack menu is on Brightwheel.

Food brought from home

Children with a heavily restricted diet may want to bring their own foods, properly labeled with the child's name and date. Food from home cannot be stored in the child's cubby and must be provided directly to a teacher at check in. Food brought from home for children less than five years of age shall be monitored and

supplemented if necessary to ensure CACFP nutritional requirements are met.

Children may bring snacks for special occasions such as birthdays, holidays or festivals. Families should speak with teachers in advance to accommodate allergies of students in the classroom.



Behavior, Discipline and Discharge

Philosophy

Our goal is to create the safest, most positive atmosphere possible. For this to occur, it's important for families to share information about a child's behavior needs or goals that will impact their experience at Creekside Forest School. A conversation at enrollment or a review of a child's previous behavior reports are two ways to do this. In turn, the school will share this policy and other relevant information with families at enrollment to ensure clear expectations for behavior.

Children are expected to behave in a way that is not disruptive to other children, the earth, property, or activities. Children will be taught how to show others respect through modeling by their teachers on a daily basis. This includes all adults in a child's circle of influence to model appropriate behavior and to set clear expectations. Modeling also provides children with tangible skills for coping with situations and allows the child to see how to self-regulate. Teachers will help guide children to develop self-control and appropriate behaviors to promote positive relationships with other children and adults. We realize guidance is an ongoing process to help children develop self-management and appropriate social emotional behavior.

Addressing Behavior and Discipline

Corporal punishment and physical discipline are not used and prohibited at all times at Creekside Forest School. Teachers address challenging behaviors in a respectful, empathetic, and kind manner. Below are some of our approaches:

- If the child is being destructive or disruptive, the first step for the teacher will be positive redirection.
- If this does not resolve the problem, the child will be removed from the situation to allow quiet reflection with the teacher. ("Removal" might mean taking 4 steps back from play to take a deep breath, or moving from the dramatic play area to the calming corner.) During this time the teacher will provide positive encouragement for that child's immediate needs. Once the child is calm and feels safe, the teacher will discuss the situation with him/her. A resolution will be determined by the child and teacher together. Either via Brightwheel message or at pick up, teachers will discuss any important issues with families regarding the child's day.
- Children will not be made to sit in a "time out" alone and for a set time. Children will not be excluded from other children for discipline purposes. Our goal is to instill problem solving and conflict resolution in each child so that future situations may be handled without adult intervention. This is one core tenant of early childhood education and we are willing to work with children to build this skill.
- Teachers will consult with each other, families, and the Director of Education especially during Monday work time to develop plans to support a child who is challenged by self-regulation or other behavior concerns. Teachers training and support in the areas of behavior management and appropriate behavior guidance also takes place during Monday work time.
- If the child is consistently destructive, teachers will keep a log on Brightwheel and discuss the issue with the family. The Director of Education will be informed of all interactions.
- If the family and teachers cannot find a solution, parents will be encouraged to contact outside resources. A great source is the Grant Wood Area Education Agency or your child's pediatrician.
- Teachers will be encouraged to be continual learners on the topics of social emotional learning, behavior management, and early childhood development.

Suspension or Discharge

While we understand that dysregulation and big emotions are part of being a young child, disruptive or destructive behavior will not be allowed at school. A suspension or discharge from school denies the child the benefit of continuity of a quality early childhood education experience. We recognize suspension or discharge are significant decisions, and the following policy is used in the rarest of circumstances only.

- If a child continually hurts another child or staff member they will be sent home for the day to calm down, regulate, and try again tomorrow. Families will be contacted to develop a course of action upon the child's return. If there is a severe case of a child being dangerous to themselves and others, or being excessively destructive (three or more occasions in a month), then that child may be discharged without any notice.
- Out-of-program suspensions that remove a child from the program for a short period of time or place restrictions on when a child may attend the program (i.e., Tuesday and Thursday only, versus Tuesday-Friday) will be recommended on a case-by-case basis, if determined to be appropriate for the child's needs, success, and happiness at school. These restrictions on attendance are only recommended if all other strategies are unsuccessful and this option will allow the child to remain enrolled and have a quality early childhood experience.
- If the efforts are unsuccessful or the parents are not willing to cooperate, then the child may be discharged from Creekside Forest School. These are used as a last resort option only. The Director of Education will notify the parents in writing of the termination date, and will review the child's incident and/or behavior reports with the family in detail. Generally, this will be a two-week notification so other arrangements and a transition plan can be made. A child may be dismissed immediately if a threat to other children, teachers, or self. Families may speak with the Director of Education or Executive Director if they believe a review of the discharge is necessary, or if the discharge is not in the best interests of the child.

- The Director and Creekside Forest School will provide support to families as they transition their child to a new environment. This includes providing written reports or notes to families, new teachers, or area professionals. It also includes supporting the family in generating questions to ask, things to look for in a new program, and providing support to the child in saying goodbye to old friends and hello to new friends.

Discharge of a child may also be due to:

- excessive abuse of policies,
- failure to provide required records/documentation to the preschool,
- failure to make payments.

Biting Policy

Even in the best school, biting can sometimes occur among preschoolers and occasionally older children. When it happens, it can be scary and very frustrating for children, parents and teachers, but is not something to blame on anyone. Understanding the reason for biting is the first step to changing a child's behavior. When biting occurs, teachers will immediately take action, not to blame but to change the environment and help children change their behavior. It is important that the adults remain calm and in control of their emotions when biting occurs. Teachers should not show anger or frustration towards the child and should calmly respond to the child, letting them know that biting is not ok. You can expect the following from staff:

- We will remove the child who bit from the situation and focus caring attention on the child who was bitten. Safety is paramount. We will provide first aid as well as comfort, support and advice to any child who is bitten.
- We will encourage the biter to help take care of the child that was bitten (hold ice pack, comfort the child).
- We will talk to the child who bit and talk about different strategies that the child can use next time (give them appropriate words, if needed) instead of biting. This will be done in a short, simple way.
- We will provide appropriate programming for children to help prevent biting.
- We will provide teachers with adequate knowledge and training to deal properly and effectively with biting.
- We will take your concerns seriously and treat them with understanding and respect.
- We will tell you what specific steps we are taking to address biting and explain the reasoning behind those steps.



- We will respond to your questions, concerns and suggestions—even when our response to some suggestions is ‘no’.
- We will work to schedule conferences about biting with you at a time you can attend.
- We will keep your child’s identity confidential if he or she bites. This helps avoid labeling or confrontations that may prolong the behavior.

It is important to explore the reasons for biting when it occurs. Teachers will work with parents to gather information about the child’s behavior and begin observations to determine the reasons for biting. Once triggers are identified, teachers can work on prevention strategies and start teaching replacement skills. Here are some examples of this assessment:

1. The teacher will examine the context in which the biting is occurring and look for patterns. The teacher will ask the following questions:
 - a. Was the space too crowded
 - b. Were there too few toys
 - c. Was there too little or too much to do
 - d. Was the child in a routine transition
 - e. Was the child who bit getting the attention and care he/she deserved at other times, other than when he/she was biting
2. The teacher will change the environment, routines or activities if necessary.
3. The teacher will work with the child who is biting to resolve conflicts and frustrations, including using words.
4. The teacher will observe the child, to get an idea of why and when they are likely to bite.
5. The teacher will identify children likely to be bitten and make special efforts to reduce their chances of being bitten.
6. The teacher, parent and Director of Education will meet regularly to regulate an action plan and to measure the outcome of these changes.
7. If biting continues the teacher will observe the group more closely and work with the parents to seek out additional resources as necessary to shadow the child who is biting.

First Aid in response to biting (both child and adult):

1. Wear gloves, clean the wound with soap and water. Run water over the wound for 5 minutes.
2. Apply ice or cool compress to help reduce the pain or swelling.
3. Bandage the wound as necessary.
4. Write a detailed incident report for both children and/or teachers involved with the incident.

First Aid if bite breaks the skin (both child and adult):

1. Wearing gloves, clean the wound with soap and water. Run water over the wound for 5 minutes.
2. Control the bleeding.
3. Cover the wound with sterile dressing and bandage.
4. Contact parents of BOTH children involved and encourage them to contact their healthcare provider to determine if they need to be seen.
5. Write a detailed incident report for both children and/or teachers involved with the incident.

Confidentiality Plan

When children bite, their parents are informed personally and privately the same day. All information is confidential and names of the children involved in the incident are not shared between parents. In addition, biting is always documented on our standard incident form that is completed and signed by teachers, parents and the Director of Education is notified. One copy is given to the parent and one copy is kept in Creekside Forest School files.



Teachers and Staff

Professionalism

Each staff member is an early childhood education professional and is expected to act as such. The ICNC Employee Handbook details professionalism to a greater extent. All staff are expected to meet the following professional expectations:

- Arrives on time and stays the entire shift.
- Is not absent from work on a regular basis and finds a substitute when necessary.
- Dresses appropriately for interaction with children and the day's activities, including being outdoors.
- Takes directions, suggestions and criticisms, and follows through to improve performance.
- Respects confidential information regarding children, families, and coworkers.
- Displays a positive attitude towards ICNC and the mission of the nature center and Creekside Forest School.
- Attends meetings, professional development, training, and other events hosted by the school.
- Completes Iowa HHS required training courses in a timely fashion.

Orientation

All new staff will read the ICNC Employee Handbook and this Family Handbook at orientation. An electronic copy will be provided for future reference. Prior to working in the classroom, the Director of Education will create a comprehensive on-boarding schedule to complete required paperwork, review operation and policies, tour the property and grounds, receive training from colleagues, and perform other school year preparations.

Professional Development

Research indicates that formal education or training that increases the knowledge of providers has been shown to be the greatest determinant of safe and quality programming for children. Therefore, the state of Iowa has set the following requirements for staff training and development:

Below are the training requirements for center directors, on-site supervisors, and all staff counted as part of the staff ratio:

TIMEFRAME	TRAINING REQUIREMENT
Within first 3 months of employment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training<input type="checkbox"/> Universal Precautions<input type="checkbox"/> Infant, child, and adult CPR<input type="checkbox"/> Infant, child, and adult First Aid<input type="checkbox"/> Essentials Child Care Preservice Series (or approved equivalent)
Within the 1st year of employment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> 10 contact hours of training from one or more of the following topical areas:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Child development▪ Guidance and discipline▪ Developmentally appropriate practices▪ Nutrition▪ Health and safety▪ Communication skills▪ Professionalism▪ Business Practices▪ Cross-cultural competence
Annually thereafter:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain current certification for the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training (expires every 5 years)▪ Essentials Child Care Preservice Series (expires every 5 years)▪ Infant/Child/Adult CPR (verify expiration date on card/certificate)▪ Infant/Child/Adult First Aid (verify expiration date on card/certificate)<input type="checkbox"/> Universal Precautions<input type="checkbox"/> Six contact hours of training from one or more of the topical areas listed above<input type="checkbox"/> Center directors and on-site supervisors must have eight contact hours of training

Indian Creek Nature Center will pay for and support the scheduling of required training to be completed within the first three months of employment. A portion of the training required within the first year of employment and annually thereafter may be paid by ICNC at the determination of the Director of Education and Executive Director. A staff member interested in participating in training courses after his/her annual requirement for training has been met will be paid by the staff member. ICNC will support the staff member in scheduling and registering or applying for professional development that advances the quality of the preschool.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The Executive Director, Director of Education, preschool lead teacher, and preschool assistant teacher are mandatory child abuse reporters. Suspected cases of child abuse or neglect must be reported to the Department of Health and Human Services:

CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE
Dept. of Human Services
1-800-362- 2178

Staff members may directly report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect to the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services and will complete all necessary paperwork. The staff member should inform the Director of Education of the report and together decide whether or not to inform the parents of the report. If a staff member is accused of abuse and/or neglect by a parent or co-worker, such an accusation will be reported to the Director of Education or Executive Director and a determination will be made as to whether there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse and/or neglect. If there is reasonable cause, a report must be made to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). ICNC will cooperate with any HHS investigation. In addition, the accused staff member will be informed of the allegations and be given an opportunity to respond to those allegations. Termination of employment after a child abuse allegation is at the discretion of the Executive Director.