

Family Handbook



**3435 North 14th Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68521**

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Dear Families,

Welcome to Educare Lincoln. Educare Lincoln is an Early Childhood School for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years of age. We are privileged to be able to provide your child(ren) with early childhood education programming year-round. It is important to us that you and your child(ren) feel welcome in our program. We hope that this Family Guide to Educare will provide you with the information you need in order to take advantage of the programs and activities offered through Educare Lincoln. This guide describes our program, policies, and procedures. It also provides information regarding your participation in monthly parent, child teacher activities, home visits, parent teacher conferences, as well as other family and child activities. We look forward to your suggestions and encourage you to ask questions.

Sincerely,

The Educare Staff



Mission Statement

Educare Lincoln's mission is to establish a high-quality, one-stop community learning center for at risk children and families; implementing specialized learning environments, which develop children academically and socially, empowering them to become productive members of society through research and evidenced based practices.



Educare's Partnership with Families Your Child's Road Map to School Success

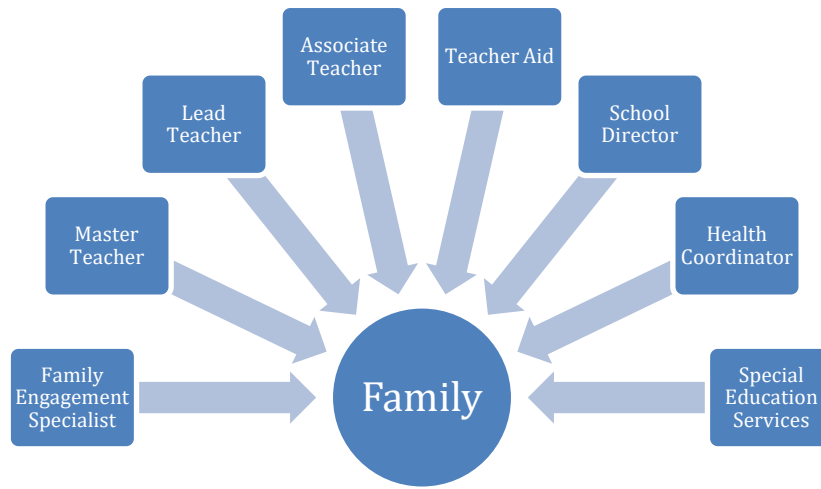
Educare will:

- Treat all children and families with respect and dignity;
- Provide quality early childhood educational opportunities for children and their families;
- Provide opportunities for families to participate in program activities individually and/or with their children;
- Share children's activities and progress with parents, both informally and formally through daily conversations and planned conferences and home visits;
- With the family, Educare will, identify family strengths and needs and develop a Family Partnership Agreement identifying goals for the family;
- Provide resources and referrals to community agencies as needed;
- Include families in the process of informed decision-making in Educare's day-to-day operations as well as larger program decisions through written and verbal communication.

Family Expectation:

- Ensure your child arrives at Educare by 8:30 a.m. on a daily basis
- Notify child's classroom staff if your child is going to be absent. (Give the reason for the absence and the return date.)
- Pick your child up each afternoon by 5:30 p.m. (Police will be contacted if over 15 minutes late without contact to Educare staff).
- Keep the program staff updated on family changes (i.e.: phone number, address, e-mail address)
- Participate in school activities and parent child mandatory activities;
- Participate in home visits and parent-staff conferences
- Keep your child up to date on physical exams, immunizations, and dental check-ups and turn in paper work to the Health Coordinator
- Maintain a medical and dental home so that all family members are cared for physically
- Work in partnership with Educare Family Engagement Staff and Teachers in identifying child and family goals and planning how to achieve the identified goals
- Support your child(ren)'s development through reading to, talking, and playing with your children in their home language
- Conduct yourself in a manner consistent with school rules in order to ensure a calm environment for all families and children.
- Educare Lincoln encourages parents/guests to not use cell phones in the building during school hours. Family members are encouraged to turn off phones as they drop off and pick up their children in order to allow for communication with teaching staff. Educare staff are not permitted to use cell phones in the classrooms.
- Educare is a Tobacco/Drug free environment. No smoking or illegal drugs will be allowed in and around Educare property or at any activities.
- Remember outside Food is not permitted beyond the double doors. You are free to join your child in eating all outside food at the entry-way.
- If your child arrives after 9:30 and is still in need of breakfast, families should plan on sitting with their child while they eat breakfast. Learning experiences will begin at 9:30 am and teachers will be facilitating these experiences.

Educare's Early Childhood Education Program Family Teams



Infant and toddler classrooms have 8 children; preschool classrooms have a maximum of 17 children in each classroom. Educare classrooms are staffed with 3 teachers, the **Lead Teacher**, **Associate Teacher**, and **Teacher Aid**. Classroom supervision is provided by Master Teachers. **Master Teachers** observe in the classroom, coach and model “Best Practices”, review lesson plans, and meet with all classroom staff regularly to discuss classroom strengths and areas of growth.

Special Education Services are provided through our partnership with LPS and serve to assist classroom staff in promoting children’s special educational needs.

The **Family Engagement Specialists’** role is to support children and families by sharing information and activities that enhance the parent-child relationship. They are also available to assist families with problem solving during times of crisis through referrals to appropriate agencies in the community.

The **Family Engagement Supervisor’s** role is to support the Family Engagement Specialist along with children and families. The Family Engagement Supervisor makes connections in the community to help provide families with information about Educare along with people throughout the community. The Family Engagement Supervisor also makes connections for families to utilize.

The **Health Coordinator’s** role is to support the health needs of the children. The Health Coordinator ensures all children have their medical needs met (i.e.: well child checks and immunizations). The Health Coordinator supports children’s health needs throughout the day as needed.

The **School Director’s** role is to ensure all grant and licensing requirements are met throughout the school. The School Director also ensures children, families and teachers have the support that they need.

The **Executive Director’s** role is to make connections throughout the community to obtain financial resources to maintain the supports needed to maintain the daily functions of the school.

Creative Curriculum/Teaching Strategies-GOLD

Educare is committed to providing high quality care and early education experiences for children. Young children are learning all the time. They learn best by being active. The teacher's role is to provide an environment that guides children's active exploration and learning.

All teachers focus on the following objectives identified in the Teaching Strategies Gold Curriculum. The objectives for the development and learning for birth to Kindergarten are the following:

- Social-Emotional
- Physical
- Language
- Cognitive
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- The Arts

Teachers provide individualized attention and interactions for infants and toddlers at a time in their lives when that attention is most important for brain and general development. Teachers in infant and toddler classrooms observe children closely to discover their interests. Careful planning allows teachers to support children's explorations and expand on their particular interests by providing stimulating and appropriate toys and other materials. Each toddler classroom and daily schedule provides for experiences with blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, art, books, water sensory materials, music and movement and experiences with food.

Each preschool classroom environment is set up to include interest areas such as blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, art, library, discovery, sand and water, music and movement, and cooking. The daily schedule provides opportunities for children to spend time in each area every day. There is a balance of active and quiet play, as well as large and small group experiences. Teacher directed learning experiences occur in small groups, often during learning center time.

The classrooms will plan walking field adventures to expand on the children's learning. We welcome parents and volunteers to develop ideas for experiences, assist in the planning and join us during our outdoor and indoor adventures.

The time children play outside is an important part of their learning. All children will engage in outdoor play, as weather permits when the temperature and/or wind chill is above 32 degrees and the temperature and/or heat index below 90 degrees. In cold weather, please send a warm coat, hat, gloves and boots. During the summer months in hot weather, please send a swimsuit and towel for water play. See attached weather chart on next page:

GREEN: All children will be outside.

YELLOW: All children will be outside, staff will pay close attention to children becoming too hot/cold and adjust time outdoors if necessary.

RED: Infant/Toddlers will NOT go outdoors. Pre-school may go outdoors for very short time periods.

Language and Literacy Skills

Strong language and literacy skills are essential for children's success in school. Literacy skills can be taught as soon as your child is born. Teachers engage children in daily language and literacy small group activities in the classrooms. The areas the teachers primarily focus on are oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness.

A child who enjoys literacy activities will be more likely to acquire these skills. Teachers plan a variety of ways to enhance children's development of literacy skills. They serve as positive role models, reading books to children when they are interested and showing enthusiasm while reading aloud. Children are also encouraged to read often throughout the day.

Children also gain valuable skills while playing in the writing area. This area has many materials to encourage children to write and learn the letters of the alphabet. Infants and toddlers also practice their fine motor skills by scribbling with different writing materials.

Dual Language Learners

Bilingualism is an asset to individuals, families, and our entire society. The benefits of supporting a child's home language and encouraging families to keep their language strong are:

Cognitive – Bilingual individuals have brains that are very active and flexible

Social-Emotional – Becoming bilingual supports children to maintain strong ties with their culture

Learning – Bilingual children benefit academically by developing a more flexible approach to problem solving

Global – Bilingual individuals have the opportunity to participate in a global community and learn more about people from other cultures

Social Emotional Skills

Educare Lincoln has three school-wide rules: Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Neat. The rules and the definitions of the rules can be seen in every classroom along with in the hallways of the school on a uniform poster.

To assist children in meeting these expectations, Educare has implemented the Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS) model. Children learn how to make a friend, be a friend, and how to solve problems with other children.

The Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS) model is used throughout the school to provide support to all children. This model emphasizes building positive relationships between teachers and children, teachers and families, between staff members, and between children and their peers. The PBIS curriculum also guides teachers to design supportive environments, to teach various social skills strategies, and provides a process for teachers and parents to work together to support children in the development of social emotional competencies.

Children with Disability Services

Serving children with disabilities is a very important piece of Educare's work with children and their families. At least 10% of enrollment opportunities are made available for children with disabilities. If a child has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), for birth-3 years old, or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for children aged 3-5, this plan is incorporated in the educational services provided at Educare.

Educare's Partner, Lincoln Public Schools, provides an Early Childhood Special Education Teacher who can be reached with questions or concerns regarding your child at any time. This person can be reached at 402-458-3171.

PTI Nebraska is a statewide resource for families of children with disabilities or special health care needs, enabling parents to have the capacity to improve the education and healthcare outcomes for their children. Early Childhood Parent Support Coordinator or Specialist can be contacted at 402-346-0525.

Screenings and Assessments

Throughout the year, Educare will use one or more of the following screening and/or assessment tools or community resources to gather information about your child’s development. Results of any screenings will be shared with you.

Data regarding children’s progress and family engagement is used to ensure accountability, support family progress toward outcomes, and to spur conversations with community and families about school readiness. By having these conversations, parents become more thoughtful consumers and more effectively advocate for their child.

Age Group	Area To Be Tested	Test/Resource
0 - 3	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOLD Developmental Continuum • Ages & Stages Questionnaire • Preschool Language Scale
0 - 3	Social-Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOLD Developmental Continuum • Ages & Stages Social/Emotional Questionnaire • Devereux Early Childhood Assessment • MEFS
0 - 3	Cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOLD Developmental Continuum • Ages & Stages Questionnaire
0 - 3	Motor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOLD Developmental Continuum • Ages & Stages Questionnaire
3 – 5	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOLD Developmental Continuum • Ages & Stages Questionnaire • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test IV • Preschool Language Scale
3 – 5	Social-Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOLD Developmental Continuum • Devereux Early Childhood Assessment • MEFS
3 - 5	Cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOLD Developmental Continuum • Bracken Basic Concept Scale • Ages & Stages Questionnaire
3 – 5	Motor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOLD Developmental Continuum • Ages & Stages Questionnaire
0 – 5	Dental	Nebraska Health Department
0 – 5	Vision	Lions Club
0 – 5	Hearing	Educare Health Coordinator
0 – 5	Lead	Educare Health Coordinator
0 – 5	Height and Weight	Educare Health Coordinator

Guidance and Discipline

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

1. Promote positive relationships with children by:
 - Being responsive to a child's needs
 - Notice when children are meeting expectations and offer praise and encouragement
 - Taking advantage of opportunities to build relationships between parents and teachers through home visits, parent-staff conferences, regular communication, and parent involvement
 - Having thoughtful conversations with children
 - Celebrating children's triumphs
 - Being respectful of children, parents, and staff
 - Greeting each child individually
 - Creating a classroom community
2. Provide children with caring, consistent environments by:
 - Establishing predictable, daily routines
 - Providing continuity of care
 - Individualizing care and instruction
 - Implementing developmentally appropriate practices
 - Engaging children through their interests
 - Providing children with choices
 - Implementing special rituals throughout the day
 - Utilizing positive guidance techniques with children
3. Teach children social skills by:
 - Modeling appropriate behaviors
 - Teaching problem solving techniques
 - Providing safe spaces for children to process and express emotions.
 - Having clear expectations for behavior
4. Using the 4 R's to redirect a child's behavior by:
 - Reflect: State the child's behavior back to them: "You are really excited!"
 - React: State your reaction to the child's behavior: "I am worried."
 - Reason: State you reason: "You may get hurt".
 - Rule: State your expectation with verb first: "Stand by me".

If a child's behavior cannot be addressed in the context of his/her classroom environment we will seek additional assistance from experts including Mental Health Consultants and Special Education Service Providers in order to help him/her be successful. It is our intent to meet the needs of every child through individualization and full inclusion in a program.

Biting Policy

Biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior of toddlers. Biting behavior can also occur at the preschool age and can be very problematic and unsafe for others. It is important for staff and parents to address biting when it occurs.

Children bite for many different reasons. In order to respond effectively it's best to first explore the reasons why a child is biting. A child may bite as a means of relieving stress/ tension, or expressing his/her needs, wants or feelings such as frustration, anxiety, anger, etc. It is important that the staff models statements that the child can use to communicate their feelings and needs. For example, "You feel mad when Joe takes your truck" or "I can tell that you want me to pay attention to you." Modeling appropriate communication can help prevent problematic biting behavior from continuing.

Teaching staff will reinforce desired behavior in the classroom through the acknowledgement of pro-social behavior such as showing empathy, comforting others, taking turns with a toy, or helping others. Staff will:

- Not label, humiliate or isolate a child who bites.
- Discourage play, which involves "pretend" biting, or play that is rough and unsafe.
- Help the child make connections with others through appropriate play and communication.

Staff will continue employing preventative steps and intervene in situations as they occur. If a child continues to engage in biting behavior that has become unsafe, the child may be temporarily removed from the situation and redirected to a quiet area to calm him/her before joining others.

Staff will work with parents to implement strategies that help the child that is biting.

Health

Educare realizes that physical health is one of the keys to your child's ability to learn. Educare will monitor your child's health on a daily basis and will keep in contact with parents/guardians about your child(ren)'s health. All children must be current with their immunizations and well baby/well child exams (2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months and 24 months, 3 years and 4 years). Children who are not current with their immunizations will be excluded until they are up to date.

All children are required to have an updated physical and dental exam.

During the year, all children attending Educare will have the opportunity for height and weight, vision, hearing, hemoglobin levels (to check for anemia), blood lead levels and dental exams. Parents will be notified of the screening results and follow-up care will be recommended as needed.

Eating and Nutrition

During each program day, the children will be served a nutritionally balanced breakfast, lunch and snack. Daily menus are posted weekly in each classroom. Educare serves breakfast from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and snack at 2:30 p.m.

Children's meals are served **family style** to promote social and motor skills. Family style is a meal style where teachers/staff and children sit together and food is placed on the table in a large bowl from which children serve themselves. Children are taught about good eating habits, social skills, and are encouraged to try new foods during family style dining.

We encourage and support mothers that breast feed their children. We provide a lactation room for nursing mothers. Mothers who provide breast milk for their children need to label the milk with the following information: date expressed and date frozen. All unfrozen unused milk will be discarded within 48 hours of thawing. Health Coordinator can help refer families to Lactation counseling if needed.

Once a day, children will practice brushing their teeth after a meal or snack. Infant's mouths are swabbed once a day to clean their gums.

Educare is a peanut and pork safe school.

Educare does not allow outside food or drinks inside the building. If a family or child should bring an outside food or drink into the building, they will be asked to take it out of the building or to throw it away at the front desk.

Please inform your child's Teacher, Family Engagement Specialist, or the Health Coordinator if your child is allergic to any foods or has special dietary needs.

Parent and Family Involvement Opportunities

Daily / Weekly Child Reports

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

Home Visits / Parent Staff Conferences

Teachers and your Family Engagement Specialist will make at least two home visits per year in order to gather and share information about your child's development and preferences. As the person who has the most influence in your child's development, you have a great deal of information to share with the teaching staff regarding your child's interests, development and preferences. Home visits also allow you to develop a good working partnership with Educare staff members. Two Parent Staff Conferences will be held per year with the teachers also.

Classroom Opportunities

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

- Read a story to children
- Share family traditions
- Sing a song/ play instruments/teach a traditional dance
- Help with art activities
- Help with a walking adventures around the school
- Show children how to use tools
- Support your child's learning goals at home
- Share family recipes
- Help with cooking activities
- Eat breakfast, lunch, or snack with your child
 - Please inform teacher 1 day prior to attending.

Volunteer Opportunities

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

- Assisting in a classroom (i.e. reading or helping in a center area)
- Assisting in the school (i.e. laundry, parking lot duty)
- Assisting with outdoor activities (i.e. water play)
- Planning for and assisting at special program events and activities
- Making phone calls to other parents to remind them of events and activities
- Assisting program staff in preparing materials for the classroom
- Translate materials into home languages
- Plan or participate in cooking foods reflecting your culture
- Participate in parent meetings

If parents would like to volunteer on a consistent basis at Educare Lincoln, a background check and orientation must be completed before volunteering can take place.

Classroom Meetings, Parents and Children Together (P.A.C.T.)

Parents are required to attend P.A.C.T. meetings on monthly basis. These meetings are scheduled in the classrooms. The classroom activities support parents in:

- Meeting other parents who have children with similar ages
- Learning from other parents and share success stories
- Sharing information and solve program problems
- Planning activities for parents and children
- Participating in parent and child activities around an identified curriculum objective or goal with feedback regarding their child's development
- Asking staff questions
- Sharing program improvement ideas

Policy Council

The Policy Council is a group of volunteer parents whose decisions guide and direct the program. The Educare staff is then responsible for implementing the policies approved by the Policy Council and the Educare Board of Directors. The Policy Council is comprised of parent and community representatives who are elected by the parent body. Representatives then serve a 1-year term and may be re-elected up to 3 years. Meetings are held once a month, typically the first Thursday of the month.

The Policy Council makes informed decisions regarding:

- Funding applications
- Long term and short term goals of the program
- The annual self-assessment process for the program
- Hiring practices for new employees
- The planning and coordination of program sponsored activities for families
- The recruitment of volunteers

For more information about Policy Council, please speak with your Family Engagement Specialist.

General Policies

Enrollment Policy

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

- Families must meet income guidelines
- Children must be between 6 weeks and five years of age as of July 31st of the current school year
- Parents must be working, attending school, or in a job training program approximately 30 hours a week

Non-Discrimination Policy

Educare does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, political beliefs or status with regards to public assistance, in determining which children are served.

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

Operating Hours

Educare is open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. year-round. Educare's core hours are 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Core hours are the hours during the day when the majority of learning takes place at Educare. If families need their children to attend school outside of core hours due to work or school schedules, parents must provide evidence of their schedule to verify the need for use of hours outside of core hours.

Late Pick Up Policy

If a parent should pick up their child after 5:30 p.m. on a consistent basis, a plan will be put in place with parents/guardians to prevent late pick-ups from happening. Plans will be followed-up on by Family Engagement Specialist. Attendance plans will be monitored by Educare staff and may result in the modification of school hours if the issue cannot be remedied.

School Arrival / Departure / Visiting Policies

School Arrival / Departure / Visiting Policies (Parent)

When dropping off or picking up your child you must sign your child in/out using the iPad check in/out system in the classroom. The individual dropping off or picking up your child must be the person to check in/out. An Educare staff member is not able to check your child in/out.

Your child will only be released to a parent/guardian* or individuals you have designated on your child's "Authorization for Release & Emergency Contact" sheet.

Non-custodial caregivers from your "Authorization for Release & Emergency Contact" sheet picking up or dropping off children will check in at the receptionist desk and/or classroom. Non-custodial caregivers will have their identification verified by two Educare staff. Your child will not be released to a non-custodial caregiver until an appropriate photo identification is provided. Educare employees will sign off on the designated form in the classroom verifying they both checked the identification provided.

We CANNOT accept authorization to pick up changes over the phone, unless there is an emergency.

Educare will not release a child to anyone who cannot safely care for the child. This includes an abusive/aggressive person, or anyone suspected of being under the influence of drugs/alcohol. Educare staff reserves the right to notify the Lincoln Police Department for assistance if it deems the person attempting to pick up a child is unable to safely care for the child.

Children must be dropped off or picked up by an individual 12 years of age or older.

If a child is left after hours, and Educare has not received notification of an adult coming to pick up the child or a parent/guardian or designated adult cannot be reached after fifteen minutes, Educare will contact the Lincoln Police Department for assistance.

Visitors

We welcome all parents/guardians to visit your child's classroom anytime during the day.

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

***Educare's definition of parent is anyone identified or listed as mother and father on the child's birth certificate. We cannot discriminate against mother or father listed on the birth certificate. By law, Educare must release a child to a parent listed on the birth certificate UNLESS prior legal notification has been given. Legal notification stating a child is not to be released to a parent can be given in a protection order, juvenile court order or a custody order.**

*** Educare will make ID's for individuals who are 18 and under if they do not have a form of picture identification.**

Emergency Information Policy

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

- Educare requests emergency contact phone numbers in addition to the Parent/Guardian's phone number.
- You will be asked to provide names and phone numbers for individuals who can pick up and drop off your child along with emergency contact names and numbers. Listing an individual as an emergency contact does not give us permission to release to that individual also, they must be listed on the drop off/pick up consent also.
- Please let your emergency contacts know that you have placed them on your emergency contact list.
- Please notify Educare immediately of any changes in your phone numbers and address or your emergency contacts person's numbers.

Attendance Policy

Performance Objective: The program effectively tracks attendance of Early Head Start and Head Start participants enrolled in the full-day, full-year center-based program option. Children are expected to maintain an 86% attendance record. For children to fully experience all the opportunities available, it is important that they be in attendance at a minimum from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Teachers, Family Engagement Specialists, and Administrative Staff closely monitor attendance. This interdisciplinary approach assures any barriers to regular attendance are addresses in order to maintain a level of participation that promotes the greatest outcomes for a child's development. All absences are documented in Child Plus and/or the child's file.

Operational Procedures

1. Administrative Assistant and Teachers enter attendance data into Early Head Start and Head Start's data management system.
2. Within an hour of program starting (8:30 a.m.), the Administrative Assistant will gather attendance at 9:30 a.m. every morning. It is the expectation of Educare Lincoln that all families call the Administrative Assistant to report an absence. If a family has not reported an absence by 9:30 a.m., the Administrative Assistant will call the family to check on the family's status. Administrative Assistant will make note of attempts to contact or contacts to the family in attendance notes on Child Plus. If a family goes 2 consecutive days without an absentee notice, then the Family Engagement Specialist will contact the family.
3. Educare's Administrative Assistant submits a **monthly written report by the 5th** of each month to include the following:
 - a) Overall Educare of Lincoln Attendance
 - b) Early Head Start Attendance
 - c) Head Start Attendance

4. Attendance Rate Calculations
 - a) If a child's attendance rate is between 86-100%, no action is taken
 - b) **Excused Absences Include:**
 - i. Hospitalizations
 - ii. Serious Illness or Injury
 - iii. Communicable Diseases
 - iv. Other health ailments that temporarily prevent attendance
 - v. Death in the Family
 - vi. Significant temporary family situations (custody, loss of transportation, birth, move, etc.)
 - vii. Cultural and religious family activities
 - viii. No more than 30 calendar days for pre-approved absence (vacation, travel abroad, etc.)
 - c) If a child's attendance rate is **below 86%, attendance percentage is re-calculated, not counting excused absences.**
 - i. If new percentage is 86% or above, no action is taken
 - ii. If new percentage is below 86%, Family Engagement Specialists proceed with follow up steps outlined below.

5. Educare Staff will monitor attendance on a weekly basis. FES will check attendance for their caseload on Fridays in order to monitor attendance for the week/month in order to monitor trends. FES will utilize Child Plus to monitor attendance. FES will highlight the children who are below 85% attendance.
 - a) If the reason for the absences is unknown the Family Engagement Specialist makes personal contact with the parent to discuss their child's attendance and offer assistance to the family in order to promote regular attendance.
 - b) For illness related absences (chronic or persistent conditions resulting in a pattern of regular or frequent absenteeism), the Family Engagement Specialist makes a referral to the Health Coordinator for additional follow up with the family. The referral and any follow ups by either Family Engagement Specialist or Health Services Coordinator are documented in Child Plus.
 - c) If absences result from other factors that are affecting the family, including temporary family problems the Family Engagement Specialist initiates appropriate family support procedures. These procedures include home visits or direct contact with the child's parents or guardian. All contact and follow ups are documented in Child Plus.

6. When a child is absent without communication from the family, the Family Engagement Specialist attempts to contact the family. If no contact has been made from the family after 2 days of consecutive absences, **Family Engagement Specialist attempts a Drop-In visit.** If staff are unable to contact the family, a *Withdrawal of Services* letter specifying a required return date is sent and if the child is not present on specified date, he/she is withdrawn from the program accordingly.
7. If a child's **attendance rate falls below 86% for a second consecutive month**, the Family Engagement Specialist meets with the family and creates a written Attendance Improvement Plan. Subsequent improvements are monitored by the Family Engagement Staff.

8. If a child's attendance rate falls **below 86% for a third consecutive month**, the Family Engagement Specialist attempts all means to contact the family. If the family does not make contact or is not willing to accept help to improve their low attendance rate within a reasonable time, the Family Engagement Supervisor revises the Attendance Improvement Plan.
9. In the case that **three months or more of excused absences** occur during which time Classroom Staff, Family Engagement Specialist, and Health Services Coordinator (if applicable) have offered multiple supports to the family, **yet the goals of the Attendance Improvement Plan are not satisfied to a reasonable degree to demonstrate need for full-day, full-year services**, the Family Engagement Supervisor may determine that a *Withdrawal of Services Letter* is needed.

Consistent and punctual attendance is important for a student's success in school.

Educare Lincoln was developed to meet the needs of full-time working parents and/or students; therefore, we have developed a year-round program. Research has shown full year programming makes a significant difference in the achievement of children. Families are expected to maintain their children in Educare year-round. The following concessions will be made for summer attendance: Families who wish to take an extended leave from Educare must fill out an extended absence form and have it approved by the School Director. This form can be given to you by your Family Engagement Specialist.

Dressing for School

Children should wear comfortable play clothes that are easy to wash. We do several messy projects and go outside daily. Bring an extra set of clothes to be kept at the site.

Children should wear closed toe shoes that are safe for running climbing and playing.

Children should dress for the weather. During the cold weather season, please send a warm coat, hat, mittens and boots. During the summer months children participate in water play. Children should have a swim wear along with a towel on water play days.

Medication Policy

Educare encourages families to give needed medicine at home, before or after school, if at all possible. If the child needs medicine during the school day, parents must check all medicines in with the Health Services Coordinator or classroom teacher. Educare must have written permission from the parent/guardian and instructions from the physician in order for the medication to be given.

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

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

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

If you have any questions, please contact our Educare Health Office at 402-458-3171.

Exclusion Policy

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

- Fever accompanied by behavior change or other signs or symptoms of illness. (Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100 degrees or higher taken under the arm or an oral temperature of 101 degrees or greater). **Children must be free of fever for 24 hours without any medication or have been cleared by their physician to return to the center.**
- Signs/symptoms of possible severe illness (Unusually tired, irritable, uncontrolled coughing, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, seizures, and/or severe stomach pain).
- Vomiting (two or more episodes within 24 hours).
- Diarrhea either uncontrolled or uncontained. (Uncontrolled diarrhea is defined as 2 or more watery stools in an 8-hour period, stool frequency exceeding 2 or more watery stools above normal for that child, or stools containing blood. Uncontained diarrhea is defined as 1 loose stool that cannot be contained by the diaper or use of the toilet).
- Mouth sores with drooling.
- Rash with fever or signs of illness.
- Skin lesions that are weeping or draining and cannot be covered with a waterproof dressing.
- Untreated ringworm
- Eye drainage (defined as pink or red eyes with white or yellow discharge that causes matting of the eyelashes).
- Head lice; A child with head lice will not be sent home. If a child should have head lice, they must be free of head lice and nits in order to return the next day.

Sick children must be picked up within one hour after the parents are notified of the illness.

If your child has been excluded for illness, they cannot return for 24 hours or until they have received treatment and provide a doctor's note showing a doctor clears the child's return to school.

If a child is identified with a communicable disease, we will notify all parents with a note posted in the hallways of the school.

Transition Policy

Transition activities for children moving from Infant/Toddler to Preschool classrooms:

- Parents must complete a new application and re-qualify for Preschool.
- Transition information will be shared with parents during a parent conference.
- Parents will have the opportunity to meet the receiving classroom teacher and visit the new classroom.
- The child will begin to visit their new classroom. A parent and/or the classroom teacher will accompany the child on their initial visit.
- Children will spend increasingly more time in the new classroom until they are comfortable with full transition.

Transition activities available to families of children entering Kindergarten:

- Information about Kindergarten readiness will be shared with families.
- Kindergarten round-up dates are shared, and parents can request additional information as needed.
- Parents will be encouraged to visit Kindergarten classrooms.
- Copies of children's records can be sent to receiving Kindergarten teachers or given to the family upon request.
- Educare will work with Belmont towards the end of every school year to provide a Kindergarten tour to all Educare students who will be attending Kindergarten. This tour will show children going to Kindergarten what the expectations of a Kindergarten classroom are. Note: Every child will not be able to tour the school they will be attending, all tours will take place at Belmont Elementary School.

Confidentiality

Educare recognizes as a parent in our program, you share very confidential and private information with us. All forms and information pertaining to you, your children and your family are considered confidential and protected and can only be viewed by appropriate Educare staff and those professional consultants and reviewers who have specific and designated permission. Family records are secured in locked file cabinets and are password protected in our management information system on the computer. Persons will not be given access to this information without your written consent.

Complaint/Grievance Policy

If you have questions or concerns, please talk with an administrator immediately. There is a complaint/grievance form that can be filled out and given to the Executive Director. A copy of the grievance form can be found at the back of this handbook. It is Educare's intent to resolve any concerns or complaints with a family in a timely manner and according to the regulations and guiding principles of the program. The ultimate goal of any resolution achieved is to ensure the maintenance of existing relationships and upholding the integrity of the Educare mission.

Families can also report complaints related to a child care/preschool by following one of the following methods:

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

Safe Sleep Policy

Infants under the age of 12 months are placed in their cribs, on their backs, whenever they are sleeping or ready to go to sleep. There is nothing placed in the crib except the baby. This includes blankets, pillows, bumper pads and toys.

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

Child Abuse Reporting Policy

Educare is concerned with the physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being of children and will cooperate in the identification and reporting of cases of child abuse or neglect in accordance with the law. In compliance with Nebraska law, all employees or contracted service providers of Educare, who have reasonable cause to believe a child has been subjected to conditions or circumstances which would result in abuse or neglect, shall report such incident to the Lincoln Police Department or Child and Family Services.

Abuse or neglect means knowingly, intentionally, or negligently causing or permitting a minor child to be:

- Placed in a situation that endangers his or her life or physical or mental health;
- Cruelly confined or cruelly punished;
- Deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or care;
- Left unattended in a motor vehicle if such minor child is six years of age or younger;
- Sexually abused or sexually exploited by allowing, encouraging, or forcing such person to solicit for or engage in prostitution, debauchery, public indecency, or obscene or pornographic photography, films or depictions.

As employees of Educare, we are not here to make a judgment as to whether a child is abused or neglected. Our reporting of a suspicion is to help protect a child if the need is there and to help a family access needed services. The care and wellbeing of children is of the utmost importance to us. We are legally mandated to report any suspicion. If you have questions concerning this law or would like additional information from Child and Family Services, please call **1-800-652-1999**.

Standards of Conduct

Educare maintains a zero tolerance for violence (physical, verbal and/or emotional). Educare believes that all families, while on Educare property, should direct their energy towards engagement of their children and school activities. Educare believes each family should implicitly and explicitly demonstrate respect for all Educare employees and families.

We consider violations of these principles to be a breach of good faith, which is detrimental to the organization, children, staff, families, and the program. Violation of these school wide rules will subject a parent to possible disciplinary action. Disciplinary action imposed by Educare may vary depending upon the seriousness of the offense but may not include the suspension or expulsion of a child due to an adult's behaviors. Disciplinary action can work up to and include suspension or expulsion of an adult's presence on Educare property. All parents of Educare should strive to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects use of sound judgement, common sense, integrity, and reasonable responsibility that protects Educare's children, families, and safety.

If Standards of Conduct should be violated, a meeting with the Family Engagement Specialist and/or School Director will take place to address any violations. Non-compliance with Standards of Conduct can lead up to removal of an Educare parent from the program. If this should happen, a plan will be put in place in order to ensure consistent attendance of children at Educare.

Educare Lincoln has three building wide rules: Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Neat

Be Kind

1. The use of threatening, abusive, profane, obscene, offensive language or actions along with any type of physical aggression are prohibited
2. Discrimination of any nature including, but not limited to, race, religion, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disabilities, medical condition, marital status, gender, or age is not tolerated

Be Safe

1. Abusing, damaging, or sabotaging property belonging to Educare, employees, or families will not be tolerated
2. Parents will ensure to keep their children with them when they are not checked into a classroom at all times

Be Neat

1. It is the expectation of Educare that families pick up after themselves and do not litter the grounds of Educare Lincoln
2. Parents are expected to assist in supporting the Educare team to ensure Educare possessions are well taken care of and kept in working condition

I _____ have received and understand the Standards of
Conduct Policy and Family Handbook for Educare Lincoln.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Administration Signature: _____ Date: _____

School Closings

Educare will be closed for the following holidays during the 2018/2019 school year:

Labor Day, September 3
Thanksgiving Break, November 22 and 23
Winter Break, December 24 through January 4
M.L. King Day, January 21
President's Day, February 18
Spring Break, March 15
Memorial Day, May 27
Independence Day, July 1 through 5

- Should a holiday fall on a Saturday, Educare will observe the holiday on the Friday before the holiday. If the holiday falls on a Sunday, Educare will observe the holiday on the following Monday.
- Educare will close over the winter break for approximately 14 days.
- Educare will also close 5 days throughout the year for training days.
- Educare will close the last Tuesday of the month at 1:00 p.m. to allow for staff training time.
- Announcements of school closings due to bad weather will be made prior to the beginning of the school day. **Cancellation announcements will be broadcast on local television stations. Typically, when Lincoln Public Schools are closed Educare will also close.**
- If school closes during the day, parents will be called and texted requesting to pick up their child or have an emergency contact pick up their child as soon as possible. Educare staff will remain on duty until all children have been picked up.

AUGUST 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

3 Last day of 2016-17 School Year
6-10 Training-**No School for Students**
13 First day of 2017-18 School Year
28 1:00 PM Pickup

SEPTEMBER 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

3 Labor Day
25 1:00 PM Pickup

OCTOBER 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

12 **No School**
30 1:00 PM Pickup

NOVEMBER 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

22-23 Thanksgiving Break
27 1:00 PM Pickup

DECEMBER 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

18 1:00 PM Pickup
24-31 **Winter Break**

JANUARY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

1-6 **Winter Break**
21 M.L. King Day
29 1:00 PM Pickup

FEBRUARY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

8 **No School**
18 Presidents' Day
26 1:00 PM Pickup

MARCH 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

14 **No School**
15 Spring Break
26 1:00 PM Pickup

APRIL 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

16 **No School**
17 **No School**
23 1:00 PM Pickup

MAY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

21 1:00 PM Pickup
23 LPS Last Day of School
27 Memorial Day

JUNE 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

25 1:00 PM Pickup

JULY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

1-5 Holiday
30 1:00 PM Pickup
AUGUST:
2 Last day of 2018-19 School Year
5-9 **NO SCHOOL**
12 First day of 2018-19 School Year

Educare Lincoln
Parent Grievance Form

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

Date: _____

Child: _____ **School/Classroom #:** _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Address: _____

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

*****FOR STAFF USE ONLY*****

Immediate Actions Taken:

Response to Grievance:

Name of Individual Responding to Grievance: _____

Administrative Staff Signature

Date