

# Serendipity Preschool Program Handbook



Serendipity  
PRESCHOOL

A TRADITION SINCE 1974

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## Welcome to Serendipity Preschool

Serendipity Preschool is a nonprofit organization established in 1974. Serendipity is operated by a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is made up of parent volunteers.

Serendipity Preschool was awarded the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Grant in 2009 due to the dedicated work of the School/Community Preschool School Improvement Advisory Committee members, Board of Directors, and community preschool program teachers and directors. With this grant, Serendipity can offer high-quality free preschool to 4-year-old children. In addition to our Universal Preschool Program, we offer preschool to 3- and 5-year-old children at a modest tuition rate.

The preschool program has adopted and meets the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, administered by the Iowa Department of Education. The Iowa Early Learning Standards are used to guide expectations and instructional practices for the children. Serendipity Preschool adheres to standards developed by the Iowa Department of Human Services and the Iowa Department of Education.

### **Our Mission Statement** *IQPPS 10.1*

To provide a safe and loving environment that encourages independent growth, cooperative learning, and stimulates the social-emotional, academic, cognitive, language and physical development of each child.

### **Program Philosophy** *IQPPS 10.1*

Serendipity Preschool believes in providing a safe environment to encourage independent growth and learning.

Serendipity Preschool believes that our research-based curricula provide a variety of activities to stimulate each child's development.

Serendipity Preschool believes in meeting and exceeding all state regulations to afford our students and staff maximum protection.

Serendipity Preschool believes in family participation and involvement in our program as well as partnership with our community agencies to best meet the needs and interests of our Serendipity family.

Serendipity Preschool believes that all children can learn and participate in a way that is unique and meets the needs of each child as an individual.

## **Goals for Children** IQPPS 10.1

- Children will show progression in social/emotional, physical, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, and language development skills.
- Children will be enthusiastic and curious learners.
- Children will be safe and healthy.

## **Goals for Families** IQPPS 10.1

- Families will feel welcome in the program and classroom.
- Families will collaborate with the school in a meaningful partnership to help children be successful.
- Families will advocate for their children.

# **Enrollment, Tuition, and Programming**

## **Enrollment Eligibility**

Children must be three-, four- or five-years-old on or before September 15<sup>th</sup> of the intended enrollment year.

Children who are four years old on or before September 15<sup>th</sup> of the enrollment year are eligible for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program at no cost to parents.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy and Equity in Early Childhood Education Statement**

It is the policy of Serendipity Preschool to not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the preschool Director, Sara Cross, Director, 1100 Gordon Ave., (515)981-0901, [saracross.serendipity@gmail.com](mailto:saracross.serendipity@gmail.com)

Serendipity Preschool follows NAEYC's position that "All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that enable them to achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society." We adhere to the recommendations set forth by [NAEYC's Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education's Position Statement](#).

## **Registration** 441 IAC 109.4(2)

Registration begins around March 1<sup>st</sup> each school year for the following school year. During the week of registration, a sign-up link will be available on our website to sign up for the preschool program of your choice. After you have signed up, the director will contact you during the weeks following the sign-up end date. After that time, registration materials will then be available from the Preschool Director.

## **Withdraw of Enrollment** 441 IAC 109.4(2)

If you wish to withdraw your child's enrollment, please let us know as soon as possible so we can fill your child's spot. For tuition paying students, families will not be issued a refund of any portion for the month of withdrawal from the program. Tuition must be current before withdrawing from enrollment.

## **Hours**

Monday–Thursday: 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Friday: 7:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

## **Classes Offered**

### 3-Year-Old Class

Tuesday & Thursday, 8:00-11:00 a.m.

### 4-Year-Old Classes

4AM Class: Monday, Wednesday, & Friday- 7:55-11:15 a.m.

4PM Class: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday- 12:00-2:45 p.m.

### 5-Year-Old Class

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday- 8:00-11:15

## **Tuition and Fees** 441 IAC 109.4(2)

3-year-old class: \$135 per month for the 2022-2023 school year. A one-time registration fee of \$70 will be charged prior to the start of the school year for children in the 3-year-old class. A one-time \$65 snack fee will be charged prior to the school year so our program can provide snacks for all children each day.

4-year-old class (Universal Preschool): Tuition is at no cost to the families. Tuition is paid for by the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program grant. No fees will be charged for children in the Universal Preschool Program.

5-year-old class: \$260 per month for the 2022-2023 school year. A one-time registration fee of \$70 will be charged prior to the start of the school year for

children in the 3-year-old class. A one-time \$65 snack fee will be charged prior to the school year so our program can provide snacks for all children each day.

For tuition-paying students, monthly tuition is due during the first week of each month. Payment may be sent to school with your child or mailed to Serendipity Preschool, 1100 Gordon Ave. Norwalk, IA 50211.

For the 4-year-old class, there is no charge for preschool. Ten hours of weekly instruction for children aged four years on or before September 15<sup>th</sup> is at no cost to families and is paid with funding by the Universal Preschool or Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program grant.

Scholarships for tuition are available through 4RKids for tuition-paying families. Scholarships are income-based. Paperwork can be obtained by the director and sent to the scholarship committee directly from the families. Paperwork is confidential and is only seen by the family and the scholarship committee.

### **Class Sizes** IQPPS 10.4; 441 IAC 109.8(2)

- 3- year-old class: 22 students
- 4- year-old classes: 20 students
- 5- year-old class: 12 students

Serendipity Preschool is licensed for 37 children. The maximum class size for the 3-year-old class is 22 children. A teaching staff-child ratio of at least 1:8 will be maintained. The maximum class size for the 4-year-old class is 20 children in each session. A teaching staff-child ratio of 1:10 will be maintained to encourage adult-child interactions and promote activity among children. Our Universal Preschool Program follows the recommended group size noted in the [Teacher-Child Ratios within the Group Size](#) chart adapted from standards and included in the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards. In addition, we schedule extra staff to go above and beyond best practice.

The Preschool Director will maintain a current list of available substitutes for both the teacher and teacher assistant. Should one of the teaching staff need to be absent or temporarily leave the room, the Director will arrange for coverage of the classroom to maintain the staff-child ratio.

### **Inclusion** IQPPS 1.7, 3.3, 9.10

Serendipity Preschool is an anti-bias, inclusive preschool, viewing each child as an individual with differences and similarities to share. We do not discriminate against anyone, and embrace differences in cultures, race, and ethnicities in our classroom communities. Your child will be exposed to a variety of toys, classroom materials, activities, and lessons that support a variety of races, cultures, ethnicities, family structures, gender roles, and identities. Program staff ensure that all families



regardless of family structure, socioeconomic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds; gender; abilities; or preferred language are included in all aspects of the program, including volunteer opportunities. These opportunities consider family's interests and skills and the needs of program staff.

Our staff receive training and are active in identifying and countering any teaching practices, curriculum approaches, or materials that are degrading with respect to gender, sexual orientation, age, language, ability, race, religion, family structure, background, or culture. Our teaching staff counter potential bias and discrimination by treating all children with equal respect and consideration, initiating activities and discussions that build positive self-identity and teach the valuing of differences, intervening when children tease or reject others, providing models and visual images of adult roles, differing abilities, and ethnic or cultural backgrounds that counter stereotypical limitations, and avoiding stereotypes in language references.

Serendipity Preschool provides for all children, including those with disabilities, English language learners, and other unique learning needs. Modifications are made in the environment, activities, and staffing patterns to include individualization of all children, including children with special needs. Our staff are made aware of the identified needs of individual children and are trained to follow through on specific intervention plans. Staff will be given specialized training through Heartland AEA, CCR&R, and other entities, when necessary, to meet the needs of the children in our care. It is our belief that inclusion in our program will enrich the experience for teachers, students, other children, and their families. Our preschool facilities meet the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) accessibility requirements. Any care plans (IEP, health needs plan, etc.) are kept on-site in the child's file which is confidential and secure. Emergency plans are easily accessible to the adults caring for the child, but inaccessible to children or other adults (non-staff) to protect confidentiality.

## Your Child's Day

### Who Is in Your Child's Classroom? IQPPS 8.2, 10.2

**Program Director:** The preschool Director is designated as the preschool administrator supervising the preschool program. The Director meets all qualifications described in the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards.

**Teacher:** A teacher licensed by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners and holding an early childhood education endorsement is assigned to the 4-year-old preschool classroom. A teacher with specialized early childhood training is assigned to the 3-year-old preschool classroom. We also have a licensed teacher in the 5-year-old class.

**Teacher Assistant:** A full time teacher assistant in the 4-year-old classroom conducts activities under the supervision of the teacher. There are two assistant teachers in the 3-year-old classroom. The teacher assistants have specialized training in early childhood education.

**Support Staff:** Heartland AEA 11 support staff provide resources and assistance to the teacher and classroom upon request to help all children be successful in the preschool setting. Such staff may include an early childhood consultant, speech and language pathologist, social worker, occupational therapist, physical therapist, audiologist, or others.

Serendipity Preschool develops partnerships and professional relationships with agencies, consultants, and organizations in the community that further the program's capacity to meet the needs and interests of the children and families that they serve. Because of this, we will occasionally have others in our classrooms, which parents will know about ahead of time.

### **Daily Activities** IQPPS 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 3.9, 3.11, 3.12; 441 IAC 109.12(1)

A consistent daily schedule is planned to offer a balance of learning activities. Our schedule provides children learning opportunities, experiences, and projects that extend over the course of several days and incorporates time for play, creative expression, large-group, small-group, and child-initiated activity. Children in our program have varied opportunities to develop a sense of competence and positive attitudes toward learning, such as persistence, engagement, curiosity, and mastery. Our schedule provides time and support for transitions, includes both indoor and outdoor experiences, and is responsive to a child's needs.

Learning is both child- and teacher-directed. Play is planned for each day. Listening is balanced with talking. Large group activities are balanced with smaller group time. Our teachers use their knowledge of children's social relationships, interests, ideas, and skills to tailor learning opportunities for groups and individuals. We provide both outdoor and indoor learning experiences. Your child will have the opportunity for the following types of activities each day:

- Active and quiet times
- Large and small group activities
- Indoor and outdoor play (weather-permitting)
- Child-directed activities
- Teacher-directed activities

Lesson plans for each week are posted in the classroom showing the daily activities for each school day of the week. Weekly notes will be sent home to families via email or sent home in a child's backpack, if requested.

## **Curriculum** IQPPS 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5; 441 IAC 109.4(2)

Curriculum in Early Childhood Education is a framework of educational ideas and practices based on the natural development of young children. It is a process by which learners obtain knowledge and understanding, while developing life skills.

Serendipity Preschool uses Creative Curriculum, a research-based curriculum that views children as active learners, who learn best from activities that they themselves plan, conduct, and reflect upon. Adults arrange interest areas in the learning environment; and engage in a project-based approach to learning.

Our curriculum guides teachers' development and intentional implementation of learning opportunities that are consistent with our program's goals and objectives. It is implemented in a manner that reflects responsiveness to family home values, beliefs, experiences, and language. It guides the development of a daily schedule that is predictable yet flexible and responsive to individual needs of the children. Our curriculum guides teachers to incorporate content, concepts, and activities that foster the following: social-emotional development, physical development, language development, and cognitive development and integrate key areas of content including literacy, mathematics, science, technology, creative expression and the arts, health and safety, and social studies.

Serendipity Preschool also uses complementary curricula such as AI's Pals, Foundations Literacy Program, Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, and Bridges Mathematics.

## **Program Environment & Materials** IQPPS 3.1

Our materials and equipment used to implement our curriculum provide for children's safety while being appropriately challenging, encourage exploration, experimentation, and discovery, promote action and interaction, are organized to support independent use, are rotated to reflect changing curriculum, and accommodate new interests and skill levels, are rich in variety, and accommodate children's special needs.

In addition, the materials and equipment we use to implement our curriculum reflect the lives of the children and families as well as the diversity found in society, including gender diversity, age diversity, language diversity, cultural diversity, and diversity of abilities.

To ensure a quality environment, the ECERS-3 scale will be used twice per year to assess our program environment and make changes consistent with best practice as needed.

## **Child Assessment** IQPPS 1.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 7.3; 441 IAC 109.4(2)

Children are assessed in the following ways:

- **ASQ Screening Tool-** Within the first thirty days of enrollment, all children are assessed using a developmental screening tool called the “Ages and Stages Questionnaire.” Based on data from this screening, we will indicate areas of development that may need further evaluation or areas of needed extra support. Families are a part of this process by providing necessary data for the screener. Results are shared and next steps are discussed with families about areas that need further attention.
- **GOLD- Teaching Strategies GOLD** is used to collect developmental data on students. There are 36 objectives organized into nine areas of development. The nine areas of assessment include: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Math, Science and Technology, Social Studies, and The Arts. The observations of children in these areas help teachers design learning opportunities tailored to each child’s level of development. Families are part of the observation process, sharing important developmental information in a two-way format with teachers to best meet the needs of each child. All data is used to show children’s progress to parents during conferences.
- **IGDIs-** Individual Growth & Developmental Indicators (IGDIs) is used in the 4-year-old classes to assess literacy in the areas of oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and comprehension. This assessment is completed three times per school year. Information gathered from this tool is shared with families and next steps are planned with families for areas where additional growth is needed.

The information from the above is used in the following ways:

- To provide information about children’s needs, interests, and abilities to teachers and families while planning for children
- To plan developmentally appropriate experiences for individual children
- To provide information to families about their child’s developmental milestones
- To indicate areas that require additional assessment and/or support
- For the program to make accommodations to the environment, curriculum, or teaching practices
- To provide information for planning program improvement

Assessment and screening information will be shared throughout the year with families, and formally with families during the Parent-Teacher Conferences in the fall and spring. Informal conferences are always welcome and can be requested at any time. Assessments and observations will also be shared with parents informally at pick-up and drop-off time, over phone calls and emails, and other communication processes. Serendipity Preschool works closely with families and other outside experts to support the learning of each child including those with identified disabilities, dual language learners, identified behavioral health needs, and/or specialized health needs.

If a child is determined to need special accommodations, those accommodations are included in the materials, environment, and lesson plans for that child. Examples include sign language and visuals for children with hearing impairments or language

delays and behavior plans for children whose behavior does not respond to the typical strategies used by teaching staff in the classroom.

Teaching teams meet weekly to interpret and use assessment results to align curriculum and teaching practices to interests and needs of children. All child data will be kept confidential, placed in each child's file, and stored in a secure filing cabinet inside our preschool office.

Families are asked to contribute information about their child's progress. Young children often show different skills in different settings. Working together, the teaching staff and families can gather a complete picture of a child's growth and development. If through observation or information obtained within any of our assessments or screenings, the teacher feels that there is a possible issue related to a developmental delay or other special need, they will communicate this to the family during a parent meeting, sharing documentation of the concern. Suggestions for next steps may include the following, with the knowledge and consent of the parents:

- A referral made to Heartland Area Education Agency for support, additional ideas or more formalized intervention.
- Specific modifications in the classroom to support the child's specific needs.

## **Program Quality and Assessment**

Serendipity Preschool follows Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards. A verification visit from the Department of Education was done in December of 2010 to confirm that we are meeting these standards, and a desk audit is completed annually. Administrators, families, staff, and other routinely participating adults are involved annually in a program evaluation that measures progress toward the program's goals and objectives. The annual evaluation process includes gathering evidence on all areas of program functioning, including policies and procedures, program quality, children's progress and learning, family involvement and satisfaction, and community awareness and satisfaction. A report of the annual evaluation findings is shared with families, staff, and the Serendipity Preschool Board. This information is used to plan professional development and program quality-improvement activities and to improve operations and policies.

Serendipity Preschool has participated in Iowa's QRS and is now applying for Iowa's IQ4K program that has replaced the QRS. This program assigns a level for a rating of quality with the highest level being a level 5. Serendipity Preschool has been a level 5 for the past several years and is applying to the new IQ4K system at a level 4 to start.

**Child Guidance and Discipline** IQPPS 1.3, 1.5, 1.6 1.8, 1.9, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6; 441 IAC 109.4(2), 441 IAC 109.12(2)

Serendipity Preschool uses a positive and proactive approach to helping all children develop social-emotional skills. Our goal is to create an environment which reinforces

positive behavior and fosters social-emotional development to help educate, support, and prepare children for lifelong learning and leadership. Teachers work to prevent challenging or disruptive behaviors through building relationships, environmental design, schedules that meet the needs and abilities of children, effective transitions, and engaging activities. Children are taught skills to support self-management, coping, and social relationships between other children and adults.

Serendipity Preschool staff will never use threats, derogatory remarks, corporal punishment, or physical discipline. Staff will never withhold nor threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline. Teachers manage behavior and implement classroom rules and expectations in a manner that is consistent and predictable.

Rather than focusing solely on reducing challenging behavior of children, teaching staff at Serendipity Preschool focus on teaching children social, communication, and emotional regulation skills through curricula, modeling, peer-mediated strategies, and practice. Our teachers help individual children learn socially appropriate behavior by providing guidance that is consistent with the child's level of development. We also use environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior. Teaching staff help children manage their behavior by guiding and supporting children to persist when frustrated, play cooperatively with other children, use language to communicate needs, learn turn taking, gain control of physical impulses, express negative emotions in ways that do not harm others or themselves, use problem-solving techniques, and learn about self and others. Our staff are trained extensively on EC-PBIS and peer-mediated social skills. Social-skills are taught and reinforced in all children using LEAP peer-mediated social skills. Teaching staff assist children in resolving conflicts by helping them identify feelings, describe problems, and try alternative solutions. All staff are informed of our policies prior to working with children in our program.

If children have behavior challenges that are a concern, we will contact the family so that we can work together to develop and implement a plan for teaching the child social and emotional skills and reduce the behavior challenges. We also encourage families to ask us their questions about appropriate child guidance techniques and seek our assistance if they have concerns about the child's social, emotional, or behavioral development.

If children engage in behavior that is harmful to themselves or to others, staff might remove the child from the activity or room until the child is calm and able to return to the classroom. If the behavior incident is dangerous or might be physically harmful, we will seek to conference with the family immediately with the goal of developing an effective approach to support the child.

For some children, an evaluation, consultation with professionals outside the program, or additional services might be needed to ensure the child can be successfully supported within the program.

### **Early Childhood Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (EC-PBIS)**

Serendipity Preschool uses a program-wide approach, the Pyramid Model within Early Childhood Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (EC-PBIS), to ensure that all teachers and staff use effective and culturally responsive teaching practices that promote the social and emotional competence of all children, provide more individualized interventions to children who need additional instruction or behavior support, and include family input to ensure that interventions are appropriate and relevant within their culture and values. Our program-wide approach is guided by a leadership team that uses data for decision-making, provides training and support to teachers, and fosters partnerships with families.

In our program, we have established the following program-wide expectations for all children and adults:

Be responsible – Be safe – Be kind

All staff members are trained in this model and teach all children about these expectations and link classroom rules to these core values. The expectations can also be taught at home and link to the rules that you might have for your child at home and in the community. We find that when we are all on the same page with our expectations, children are more able to understand and meet those expectations. We communicate our child guidance and discipline policy by handbook and offering relevant resources for parents.

## **Suspension/Expulsion Policy 441 IAC 109.4(2)**

For this policy, terms used are described:

- *In-program suspension* refers to a child being removed from a classroom or from activities that include other children.
- *Out-of-program suspension* refers to removing a child from the program in the short term or to place restrictions on the time a child may attend the program.
- *Expulsion* refers to any dismissal of a child from the program permanently at the request of the program's staff.
- *“Soft expulsion”* refers to program practices encouraging parents or other family members to voluntarily terminate services.

Out-of-program suspension and expulsion are not a general practice of Serendipity Preschool and will only be used as a last resort when there is a serious safety concern that cannot be reduced or eliminated with reasonable modifications. If there is a situation where we feel the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of the other children and our staff is compromised, we will make an *individualized assessment* about whether we can meet the needs of the child without fundamentally altering our program. In making this assessment, we will not react to unfounded preconceptions or stereotypes about what a child can or cannot do, or how much assistance they may require. Instead, we will meet with the child's parents or guardians and any other professionals (such as educators or health care professionals) who work with the child

in other contexts. This decision will not be made without exhausting all other available options.

In-program suspension is also not a general practice of Serendipity Preschool. We utilize EC-PBIS (explained above) and work to prevent, teach, then reinforce. We utilize a calming area in our classroom called “Al’s Place” to help children work through big feelings. Serendipity Preschool will never utilize “soft-expulsion.”

Using parent reports, teacher assessments, information within a child’s file, and other observations, we can make determinations on what a child needs. Teachers will have regular support by the PBIS coach and the director to help with problem-solving, general classroom management, making modifications to the environment, and making accommodations for specific children and groups of children. If behavior issues arise in the classroom, teachers will document the behaviors on our Behavior Incident Form and look for common patterns. The next step is that the teacher will communicate with the director and PBIS coach by showing data collected from the forms. The teacher and director will communicate with parents and team with them to come up with a plan. If it is determined that services or modifications are needed, we will implement interventions as necessary and bring Heartland AEA in (with parental consent) as needed. If the child is determined to need special education accommodations and must be served at the district’s special education preschool program, we will help families and children to make the transition as seamless as possible by offering tours of the program, meeting the new teacher ahead of time, bringing something familiar from their old classroom to their new classroom, and more. We partner closely with the district to make everyone comfortable and minimize any issues related to the transition of programming mid-year.

Parents are constitutionally entitled to notice and an opportunity to be heard when an expulsion or lengthy removal (removal of more than ten days) is being considered. See, e.g., *Goss v. Lopez* (U.S. Supreme Court, 1975). Children with disabilities in early childhood programs are entitled to additional protections when they are removed from their educational program for disciplinary reasons. These protections are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Serendipity Preschool will implement disciplinary removals in a nondiscriminatory manner. Discipline practices will not disproportionately impact any group of children. For example, for young children with disabilities (or for whom a disability has not been ruled out), we will consider the implications of the child’s behavioral needs, and the effects of the use of disciplinary removals when ensuring the provision of FAPE. (IDEA, 300.114(a)(1)).

## **Supervision Policy** IQPPS 3.7, 9.15, 10.5

Our preschool staff provide active and positive supervision of children by sight and hearing. Active supervision will be in the form of focused attention and intentional



observation of children. Our preschool staff position themselves accordingly during play, outdoors, basic care routines, and transitions so that they can observe all children: watching, counting children, and always listening. During transitions, our staff account for all children with name-to-face recognition by visually identifying each child. They use their knowledge of each child's development and abilities to anticipate what they will do, then get involved and redirect them when necessary to engage or redirect. This constant vigilance helps children learn safely.

When not at our center (field trips, walks, etc.), we ensure supervision by scheduling one extra staff above ratio, watching, counting children, and always listening. We use supervision zones on the playground and in the classroom, so staff are scanning their zone constantly. Staff are versed on active supervision upon being hired and additionally reminded, as needed. These supervision rules include not using their cell phone during supervision, staying in their supervision zones, and sitting with and supervising children at snack time. Staff also use name to face recognition while counting children. We avoid being around any bodies of water, but if it were necessary, we would make sure to have every child within an adult's arm's length.

**Snack/Nutrition** IQPPS 1.3, 2.27, 2.28, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16, 5.17, 10.5; 441 IAC109.4(2), 441 IAC 109.15(1), 441 IAC 109.15(2)

Attitudes about food develop early in life. The food children eat affects their well-being, physical growth, ability to learn, and overall behavior. We have an opportunity to help children learn about foods, enjoy a variety of foods from their own culture and others, and to help them begin to appreciate that their bodies need to be strong, flexible, and healthy. Eating moderately, eating a variety of foods, and eating in a relaxed atmosphere are healthy habits for young children to form. Children will be provided varied opportunities and materials that help them learn about nutrition, including identifying sources of food, recognizing, preparing, eating, and valuing healthy foods.

The children will be offered a snack each day at preschool. It will be served at a regularly scheduled time at least two hours apart, but not more than three hours apart. Snacks will be provided by Serendipity Preschool at no cost for Universal Preschool students. A snack fee of \$65 will be charged to parents of tuition-paying 3-year-old and 5-year-old children (no fee for children on scholarship). This fee is paid by the child's family before the school year begins unless other arrangements are made between the child's family and the Serendipity preschool director. Snacks will be healthy, and a snack menu will be created on a weekly basis in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). All snacks will be served and stored in accordance with the CACFP, as well. Serendipity Preschool prepares written menus, posts them where families can see them, and has copies available for families. Menus are kept on file for review.

Clean, sanitary drinking water is made available to children throughout the day. Staff discard any foods with expired dates. Foods that are hotter than 110 degrees

fahrenheit are kept out of children's reach. Foods requiring refrigeration will be kept cold until served.

For each child with special health care needs, food allergies, or special nutrition needs, the child's health care provider should provide the program with an individualized care plan prepared in consultation with family members and specialists involved in the child's care. Children with food allergies shall be protected from contact with the problem food. With family consent, Serendipity Preschool will post information about the child's allergies in the food preparation area and in areas of the facility the child uses to serve as a visual reminder to all adults who interact with the child during the day. See the section titled, "Medication Policies and Procedures" for more information on food allergies.

High risk foods, often involved in choking incidents, will not be served. For children younger than four years, these include hotdogs, whole or sliced into rounds, whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, spoonfuls of peanut butter, chunks of raw carrot, or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.

The preschool does not use foods or beverages as reward for academic performance or good behavior and will not withhold food or beverages as a punishment, nor will teaching staff ever threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline.

### **Birthdays** 441 IAC 109.15(4)

Birthdays are an important and significant event in the life of a child. They afford the opportunity for children to be given special recognition. Accordingly, students who wish to bring treats for the class on their birthday may do so.

Any food brought by students' families need to be unopened, pre-packaged with clearly visible labels with ingredients listed. An exception will be made with fruit or vegetables that are not pre-packaged.

Please contact your child's teacher to arrange a time to bring birthday treats. Half-birthdays may also be celebrated if your child has a summer birthday. Please communicate that with your child's teacher. Invitations to parties outside of school that do not include the entire class will not be distributed at school.

### **Outdoor Play and Learning** IQPPS 2.9, 5.4, 9.6, 9.7, 9.8; 441 IAC 109.12(4)

We have daily opportunities for outdoor play as the weather permits and provided the weather air quality and environmental safety conditions do not pose a threat. This allows children the opportunity to develop their large muscle skills, get exercise, and be active. Children have varied opportunities and are provided equipment to engage in large motor experiences that stimulate a variety of skills, enhance sensory-motor integration, develop controlled movement (balance, strength, coordination), enable children with varying abilities to have large-motor experiences similar to those of

their peers, range from familiar to new and challenging, and help them learn physical games with rules and structure.

We use the [Child Care Weather Watch](#) guidelines to determine if the wind chill factor or heat index is safe for outdoor play. To make sure that your child can play comfortably outside it is important to dress him/her according to the weather. When it is cold outside, your child needs a warm coat, mittens or gloves and a hat (labeled with your child's name). For the warmer days dressing your child lightly is just as important. For those in-between days dressing your child in layers is a practical idea.

There are areas on the playground for children to be in the shade and still be active. We encourage you to bring a hat or other clothing for your child to wear as another protection from the sun. Sunscreen or sunblock with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher will be applied to your child's exposed skin (only with your written parental permission to do so, which is included in your child's intake paperwork) if we are going to be outdoors for more than 30 minutes.

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents due to an elevated risk of insect-borne disease, only repellents containing DEET are used, and these are only applied on children older than 2 months of age. Staff apply insect repellent no more than once a day and only with written parental permission.

Age-appropriate playground equipment has been selected for our playground and installed according to the manufacturer's instructions, including anchoring. To keep your child safe, the Program Director will complete the [National Program for Playground Safety Check](#) on a weekly basis. Daily playground inspections will be conducted to ensure the playground area is clean and free of any hazards such as broken bottles and toys, discarded cigarettes, stinging insect nests, and packed surfacing under frequently used equipment like slides. Inspections will also happen if an injury occurs. If, upon inspection, any problems are found, they will be addressed immediately. Anything that will take more time to address will result in a closure of the play equipment affected. Our playground is fenced in and keeps children safe from any traffic, pits, water, or other hazards.

Children are more active in the outdoor learning/play environment and need more supervision rather than less time outside. Preschool staff will supervise children in all outdoor play areas. Staff supervision of the playground should incorporate strategic watching and listening of all the children within a specific territory (zones of supervision) and not engaging in prolonged dialog with any one child or group of children (or other staff). Preschool staff should try to maintain close proximity to children who are developing new motor skills and may need additional support.

The number one cause of injury on playgrounds is falls to the surface. Our preschool is sure to maintain the correct depth of playground surfacing. According to [Caring for Our Children](#), we must maintain six inches of depth of our rubber mulch. Upon daily inspection, our loose-fill surfacing materials are checked to ensure surfacing is of sufficient depth and has not shifted or displaced significantly, especially in areas

under the slides. Missing or displaced loose-fill surfacing is raked back into proper place or replaced so that a constant depth is maintained throughout the playground. All loose-fill surfacing material, particularly sand, is inspected daily for debris, animal excrement and other foreign material, depth, and compaction of the surfacing, standing water, ice or snow.

All staff is trained upon hire and annually refreshed on playground safety measures. Training is site-specific and the director trains staff on how to check the playground for safety hazards, supervision on the playground, and expectations of both staff and children on the playground.

## **Clothing**

Your child will be learning through creative, active play that can sometimes be messy. Your child should wear comfortable, washable clothing as well as rubber-soled and closed-toe shoes to school. While we encourage the use of paint smocks or shirts during art projects, we cannot guarantee that spills or stains will not occur. Clothing should be free of words, graphics, or pictures that are profane, illegal, or disruptive in nature. All families are asked to provide an extra set of clothing for their child in case of an “accident” or messy play. Please clearly label the clothing with your child’s name to reduce the possibility of mistakes.

## **Toilet Learning IQPPS 5.5**

Toilet learning is a valuable time in a child’s development. We will work closely with families to help children become more independent with their toilet learning. For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the following procedures are in place:

- For children who require cloth diapers, the diaper has an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit. Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.
- Staff check children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or contain feces at least every two hours. Diapers are changed when wet or soiled. Staff change children’s diapers or soiled underwear in the designated changing areas and not elsewhere in the facility.
- In the changing area, staff post changing procedures and follow changing procedures. These procedures are used to evaluate teaching staff who change diapers. Surfaces used for changing and on which changing materials are placed are not used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects, and especially not for any object involved with food or feeding. Containers that hold soiled diapers and diapering materials have a lid that opens and closes tightly using a hands-free device (e.g., a step can). Containers are kept closed

and are not accessible to children. Staff members whose primary function is preparing food do not change diapers until their food preparation duties are completed for the day.

## **Objects from Home**

Because the preschool program provides ample toys and learning materials for your child, we ask that you DO NOT allow your child to bring toys from home, unless there are specific days the teacher allows for this such as “Show and Tell.” If your child brings an “attachment” item from home, we ask that it is small enough to fit inside his/her backpack. Please do not allow children to bring gum, candy, money, or toy weapons to school. The program cannot be responsible for lost or broken toys brought from home. In addition, please have your children finish their food before coming into the classroom.

## **Technology** *IQPPS 2.24, 2.25*

Both screen time and digital media can be great learning tools when used appropriately and with set limitations that are both developmentally and age-appropriate for children. The term *screen time/digital media* in this policy refers to media content viewed on cell/mobile phone, tablet, computer, television, video, film, and DVD.

We limit the use of screen-time technology in our program to an interactive projector used for learning purposes (find your name, visual timers, math lesson games, projection of writing grids, etc.). It is used in our program to extend learning and integrate and enrich our curriculum. Technology is selected by the director and teachers. We also use iPads for assessment purposes. Our IGDIs assessments are done solely via iPad with the teacher on one and the child on another. This assessment is given by a trained teacher and, while using separate iPads, are interacting to administer the assessment.

We do offer other types of technology available to children to use on their own or collaboratively with peers. These items would include microscopes, listening centers, etc. We do not offer screen-time technology as a free choice for children. We distribute a list of age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate apps for families upon request.

# **Family Communication and Involvement**

## **Regular Communication with Families** *IQPPS 7.1, 7.4*

Teachers and administrators use a variety of formal and informal ways to become acquainted with and learn from families about their family structure and their preferred means of child-rearing practices and communication; and information about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds as they wish to share. Families are surveyed in enrollment paperwork and through other questionnaires during the year regarding their family, beliefs, and preferences. Home visits are conducted at the beginning of the school year for the four-year-old class. Program staff communicate with families on at least a weekly basis regarding children's activities and developmental milestones, shared care-giving issues, and other information that affects the well-being of their children.

Serendipity Preschool values the time spent talking and interacting with families and developing strong, reciprocal relationships. As the teacher learns from the families' expertise regarding their child's interests, approaches to learning, and developmental needs, goals for your child's growth and development can be incorporated into ongoing classroom planning. Families are encouraged to share any concerns, preferences or questions with the preschool teacher or administration at any time.

Although in-person daily contact cannot be replaced, preschool staff also rely on sending notes home, e-mails, phone calls, newsletters, and bulletin boards as alternative means to establish and maintain open, two-way communication.

The program will promote weekly and monthly communication between families and staff by written notes and informal conversations or e-mail. Families are encouraged to send written notes or email with valuable information so all the staff who work with the child can share the parent's communication. Staff will use notes to inform families about the child's experiences, accomplishments, behavior, and other issues that affect the child's development and well-being. Parents are encouraged to maintain regular, on-going, two-way communication with the teaching staff in a manner that best meets their needs - email, in person, notes, or phone calls. Monthly check-in forms are emailed to families so families have an opportunity to share information and observations with teachers, and teachers will follow up with families. Teachers will maintain ongoing two-way communication using methods such as monthly check-in forms and regular in-person and email communication.

### **Family Language** IQPPS 3.13, 3.14

Enrollment forms contain a home language survey to be completed by families. If your child is enrolled in our Universal Preschool Program, there is a home visit from the Lead and Assistant Teacher to the child's home. During the home visit it is discussed with the parent the preferred way of communication for the family. Parents that need reading assistance can be assisted by the teachers or the Director. For parents that do not speak English, the preschool will utilize community resources to assist.

Our Serendipity teaching staff support the development and maintenance of children's home language whenever possible. We help children understand spoken language by using pictures, familiar objects, body language, and physical cues.

## **Orientation to new Parents**

Open House is scheduled prior to the first day of school. During this Open House, students and parents are invited to come to Serendipity, visit with the teachers, and explore the classroom, building, and playground. There will be a table set up in the classroom during orientation to assist in completing the enrollment forms as needed. Serendipity Preschool administration and Board members are available to answer any questions. The date for Open House will be communicated to parents as soon as the date is available.

## **Open Door Policy/Sign-In & Out for Visitors**

Parents and legal guardians are always welcome to visit the preschool classroom. To maintain a secure environment, all parents and visitors will check with the director or the teachers and will sign in outside of our classroom. The sign-in sheet includes first and last name, reason for the visit, and a phone number to contact in case of an emergency evacuation. Photo identification will be required for any unknown visitor to the classroom. Classroom volunteers will need to complete a background check prior to volunteering if volunteers are to be counted in our ratio.

## **Attendance/Sign-In & Out for Children**

Daily attendance will be tracked listing times of arrival and departure for each child as well as the person dropping off and picking up.

Please call the preschool or email the director or your child's teacher with the reason for an absence no later than 8:15 A.M. for the morning session and by 12:15 P.M. for the afternoon session. If a student is absent without notification, the preschool staff will attempt to contact the family within the first hour of class to verify the child's absence from preschool.

Current research indicates that effective schools demonstrate high levels of student attendance. This is accomplished through careful and consistent monitoring of student attendance and communication regarding the importance of school attendance to students and parents on a regular basis. Students who exceed an absence rate of 10% of the required school days, whether excused or unexcused, will have their parents or guardians advised of their attendance. This is simply an exchange of information. Should attendance problems continue for reasons other than a parent complying with our established policy for an ill child's return or a doctor's release statement, further disciplinary action could result.

Students who receive tuition scholarships through 4RKids or are in the Universal Preschool Program are required to have a 90% attendance rate. Lower than 90% attendance could lead to loss of scholarship or grant.

### **Arrival and Departure of Children** IQPPS 10.9

All motor vehicle transportation provided by parents, legal guardians or others designated by parents or legal guardians will include the use of age-appropriate, and size-appropriate seat restraints.

When bringing your child to school, we ask that you park your car in the parking lot and turn off the engine before entering the building. Please hold your child's hand as you enter the building to decrease the possibility of an accident. Parents or legal guardians must either accompany children to the classroom at the beginning of the day or leave their child in the care of one of the teaching staff. No child will be permitted to leave the building without an adult.

Children will be signed-in by teachers taking attendance as children arrive and signed out by teachers as children depart. Since all children arrive at the same time, teachers will take attendance and call parents if a child does not come (if we haven't already heard from the parent).

Upon departure, other than parents or legal guardians, only persons with prior written authorization (Parent Consent Form) will be allowed to pick up a child from the preschool. Anyone who is unfamiliar to the teaching staff, including authorized individuals, will be asked to present photo identification before a child is released to them. In the event of an unauthorized person attempting to pick up a child, the child will NOT be released, and the parents will be called immediately. Police will also be called, if necessary.

### **Transportation** IQPPS 10.9; 441 IAC 109.4(2)

Serendipity Preschool does not provide transportation for preschoolers but will help to connect families to make transportation arrangements. Transportation to and from field trips is contracted through the Norwalk Community School District.

### **Field Trips** 441 IAC 109.4(2)

An important learning opportunity can take place in the form of a field trip that is relevant and can reinforce what is being taught in the classroom. Parents will be notified concerning any field trips ahead of time. The notification will include the date, time, destination, and a permission slip to sign and send back. All children going on a field trip will have a signed release for each trip.

As stated above, the preschool contracts the Norwalk District school bus for field trip transportation. Parents will be notified in advance.



A first aid kit, emergency contact information, emergency medications (EPI pens, inhalers, etc.) and emergency transport authorization information for the children in the group will be taken on all trips. Children will be counted at least every 15 minutes while on a field trip. Children may only use a public restroom if they are accompanied by a staff member. Children will never be left alone in a vehicle or unsupervised by an adult.

## **Ethics and Confidentiality**

The Serendipity staff follow an important code of ethics to guide their involvement with children and families. It is essential to protect the confidentiality of all information concerning children and their families. Maintaining a professional attitude includes being responsive to the needs of children and their families while balancing the need for confidentiality. Children are people who deserve respect. One way we demonstrate this respect is to refrain from talking about the children in their presence unless the child is part of the conversation and to refrain from labeling a child negatively or positively. No information about any child shall be shared with another child's parent. We continually strive to model such qualities as patience, tolerance, cooperation, acceptance, understanding of others, and enthusiasm for children as well as for other adults. All Serendipity Preschool staff adhere to [NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct](#).

## **Student Records**

Student records containing personally identifiable information are confidential. Parents may access, request amendments to, and copy their child's records during regular office hours. Parents may also file a complaint with the United States Department of Education if they feel their rights regarding their child's records have been violated. Parents or guardians will be asked to sign a release of information form should they or the school request information be shared with another agency, stating to whom the information is to be released, the reason or purpose for the release of information, when it expires, and ways the parents can withdraw permission if they choose to do so.

## **Grievance Policy** IQPPS 7.5

Open and honest communication between families and the preschool program is an essential component of a high-quality early childhood program. We want you to be confident that your child is being well cared for and is having a quality experience.

Serendipity Preschool encourages families to raise concerns and collaborate with them to find mutually satisfying solutions that staff then incorporate into classroom practice. If there is ever a time you have a concern regarding your child, we want to encourage you to address your concern to your child's teacher. If additional help is needed, either party may ask for the assistance from the Preschool Director, Sara Cross.

If you have a concern regarding some aspect of the program or policy, please contact the Preschool Director. If you remain dissatisfied, you may contact the Serendipity Board President.

## **Family Involvement**

Serendipity Preschool invites you to become involved in one or all the following ways and welcomes other ideas as well.

- Volunteer in the classroom.
- Return all forms, questionnaires, etc. promptly.
- Attend Family/Teacher conferences in the fall and spring semesters.
- Take time to read the family bulletin board.
- Check your child's backpack each day.
- Participate in field trip activities.
- Share your talents in your child's class through activities such as: reading or storytelling, cooking, art, music, sewing, crafts, hobbies, your profession, or artifacts from trips you have taken.
- Share any of your families' cultural traditions, celebrations, or customs.
- Read all the materials sent home with your child.
- Come to play.
- Help with special events. Helping takes many different forms such as preparation of materials at home, making telephone calls, preparing or posting flyers, recruiting other volunteers, collecting donations or prizes, run errands, photography, setup before the event, or clean afterwards.
- Serve on the Serendipity Preschool Board of Directors.

## **Preschool Advisory Committee** IQPPS 10.15

Serendipity Preschool has a preschool advisory committee composed of parent volunteers. This group meets bi-monthly to provide feedback on services that meet children and family needs. They also serve as a sounding board for new ideas and services. Please let the preschool director know if you are interested in being part of the Preschool Board. Interest in becoming a board member can also be indicated in the appropriate section of enrollment paperwork.

## **Volunteers** 441 IAC 109.6(5), IQPPS 7.2

Parents, friends, grandparents, and other adults are encouraged to take an active part in the educational process of the children. Our staff ensure that all families regardless of family structure, socioeconomic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds; gender; abilities; or preferred language are included in all aspects of the program, including volunteer opportunities. These opportunities consider the family's interests and skills and the needs of program staff. Please contact the director if you would like to be a volunteer. For safety purposes, if a volunteer will be working with children, he/she will be expected to submit a criminal record check, free

from history of substantiated child abuse or neglect check. In addition, no person with a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect will come in contact with children in the program or have responsibility for children. If a volunteer works more than 40 hours per month with children, he/she will also need to provide a current health assessment, not more than one year old.

Volunteers shall be at least 16 years of age. All volunteers and substitutes shall sign a statement indicating whether they have one of the following: (1) A conviction of any law in any state or any record of founded child abuse or dependent adult abuse in any state. (2) A communicable disease or other health concern that could pose a threat to the health, safety, or well-being of the children. Volunteers will need to sign a statement indicating they have been informed of their responsibilities as a mandatory reporter. The volunteer will need to undergo the record check process if they are included in meeting the required child-to-staff ratio; they have direct responsibility for a child or children; or have access to a child or children with no other staff present.

### **Resources Available to Families** IQPPS 7.6, 8.1

Our program staff maintain a current list of child and family support services available in the community based on the pattern of needs they observe among families and based on what families request (e.g., health, mental health, oral health, nutrition, child welfare, parenting programs, early intervention/special education screening and assessment services, and basic needs such as housing and childcare subsidies). We will assist in locating, contacting, and using community resources that support children's and families' well-being and development. Resources are available outside of our classroom in our communication center and by request.

### **Home Visits**

Home visits are conducted prior to the start of school for children in our Universal Preschool program. This is an opportunity for the preschool teacher to get to know you, your child, and your family and for you to begin to create a partnership between home and school to best meet your child's needs. This is a great time for you to share what makes your family unique, how you prefer to communicate with the teacher, and share your knowledge about your child's interests, approaches to learning, and developmental needs. You can help the teacher understand what your goals are for your child and whether you have any concerns you would like addressed. Parents are encouraged to share these preferences, concerns, and questions at any time with either the classroom teacher or administrator.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

The preschool program will have formal parent-teacher conferences in the fall and spring. During the conference, the teacher will share results of classroom assessments and samples of your child's work. Together you can plan to continue to encourage your child's growth and development.

## **Family Night**

Family night is an opportunity for you and your family to come to school to participate in fun as well as educational activities. With help from family volunteers, the night will be planned to meet the needs of the children and families in the classroom. We will have at least one family night per school year.

## **Transitions** IQPPS 7.7

Home-school connections are crucial to the transition to kindergarten or any other program, such as special education. The child's family provides the consistency and continuity necessary for a young child to be successful. Making a change from one program to another can sometimes be difficult for a young child whether the transition is within the same building or in another location. Teaching staff will partner with the family as well as the Norwalk Community School District, and Heartland AEA (if needed) to make the transition as smooth as possible by connecting family members with the next program's staff. Preschool staff will provide information about enrollment policies and procedures, program options, and arrange for a classroom visit whenever possible.

## **Health & Safety**

Serendipity Preschool is committed to promoting wellness and to safeguard the health and safety of children and adults who participate in our program. To provide a safe and secure environment for every child and adult, we follow guidelines required by the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, regulatory agencies, and pediatric authorities in the field.

## **Student Physicals and Immunization Certificates** IQPPS 5.1

Before a child begins the program, health records that document the dates of service shall be submitted that show the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the schedule recommended and published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

When a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents, legal guardians, or both provide evidence of an appointment for those services before the child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program, except for immunization for which parents are using medical or religious exemption. In the case of an immunization exemption, parents need to provide the necessary signed paperwork.

## **Health and Safety Records** IQPPS 5.1, 10.8; IAC 641-7

Health information collected from families will be maintained on file for each child in our preschool office. Files are kept current by updating as needed, but at least quarterly. The content of the file is confidential but is immediately available to administrators or teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian for access to records; the child's parent or legal guardian; and regulatory authorities, upon request. Health records need to be kept up to date for the child to attend the program.

Child Health and Safety Records will include:

- Current information required for treatment in an emergency
- Current physical, within the past one year, showing up-to-date immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow-up required for abnormal results
- Current emergency contact information for each child, which is kept up to date by a specified method during the year
- Names of individuals authorized by the family to have access to health information about the child
- Instructions for any of the child's special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness (e.g., asthma, hearing or vision impairments, feeding needs, neuromuscular conditions, urinary or other ongoing health problems, seizures, diabetes)
- Individual emergency care plans for children with known medical or developmental problems or other conditions that might require special care in an emergency (allergy, asthma, seizures, orthopedic or sensory problems, and other chronic conditions; conditions that require regular medication or technology support. All action plans require a physician's signature.
- Immunization exemption certificate for cases in which a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family's religious beliefs. Staff will implement a plan to exclude the child promptly if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program.

## **General Health and Safety Guidelines** IQPPS 5.2

- All staff must be alert to the health of each child, known allergies, or special medical conditions.
- Under the supervision of the preschool teacher, all staff must be alert to the whereabouts of all children. Systems are in place for accounting for children at regular intervals, especially during periods of transition.
- All staff are to follow proper procedures for hand washing, using disinfectant, and following universal precautions to prevent infections.
- All staff are familiar with evacuation routes and procedures.

- All teaching staff are required to complete Blood Borne Pathogens/Universal Precautions annually. Staff will use universal precautions in handling blood or body fluids as recommended by the Center for Disease Control.
- All teaching staff are required to have a certificate of satisfactory completion of pediatric first-aid training, including managing a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing for infants and children. When a child in the group has a special health condition that might require CPR, one staff person who has successfully completed training in CPR is always present in the program.

**Illness Policy and Exclusion of Sick Children** IQPPS 10.5; 441 IAC 109.10(2), 441 IAC 109.10(4), 441 IAC 109.10(16)

For the health and safety of all the children, it is mandatory that sick children are not brought to preschool. Children will have direct contact with staff upon arrival for detection of illness.

Upon arrival at school, each child is observed by teaching staff for signs of illness or injury that could affect the child's ability to participate comfortably in the daily activities. Children will be excluded when a child is not able to participate comfortably; if the illness requires more care than staff are able to provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group; or if keeping the child at preschool poses an increased risk to the child or to other children or adults with whom the child will come in contact.

When a child develops signs of an illness during their day at preschool, parents, legal guardians, or another person authorized by the parent will be notified immediately to pick up the child. Parents are expected to pick up their sick child within 15 minutes from call. Parents will be contacted immediately in case of illness or serious injury. A sick child waiting to be picked up because of illness will be seated in a supervised, separate space from the rest of the class.

For this reason, please be sure that we have current, accurate phone numbers for you, your authorized emergency contact person and your child's pediatrician. In the meantime, we will provide the child a place to rest until the parent, legal guardian or designated person arrives under the supervision of someone familiar with the child. If the child is suspected of having a contagious disease, then until she or he can be picked up, the child is located where new individuals will not be exposed.

For a complete list of our illness/exclusion policy, please see the link below as a reference:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17I6hfCgPa5W64M1seEukNrOYOLUq0Dxb/view?usp=sharing>

## **Reporting Communicable Diseases** IQPPS 5.3; 441 IAC 109.10(5)

Staff and teachers provide information to families in writing (and verbally as needed) about any unusual level or type of communicable disease to which their child was exposed, signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures that are being implemented at the program and that the families should implement at home. Serendipity shall report confirmed or suspected cases of these diseases, or outbreaks of other communicable diseases to the Warren County Health Department. The program has documentation that it has cooperative arrangements with local health authorities and has, at least annually, contacted those authorities to keep current on relevant health information and to arrange for obtaining advice when outbreaks of communicable disease occur.

## **Medication Policies and Procedures** IQPPS 5.8, 10.5; 441 IAC 109.10(3)

The administration of medicines at Serendipity shall be limited to medications ordered by a health care provider for a specific child, for emergency situations like (but not limited to) asthma, seizures, diabetes, or an EPI pen for allergies. An action plan will be filled out by the parent AND child's physician and signed to keep detailed instructions for such medications at school. For information related to food allergies, please see the Snack/Nutrition section.

The medications will be administered by the preschool staff who have specific training and a written performance evaluation updated annually by a health professional on the practice of the six right practices of medication administration:

(1) verifying that the right child receives the (2) right medication (3) in the right dose (4) at the right time (5) by the right method with documentation of each right each time the medication is given. (6) The person giving the medication signs documentation of items.

Teaching staff who are required to administer special medical procedures have demonstrated to a health professional that they are competent in the procedures and are guided in writing about how to perform the procedure by the prescribing health care provider.

Any prescribed medication brought into the facility by the parent, legal guardian, or responsible relative of a child shall be dated, and shall be kept labeled by a pharmacist with:

- Child's first and last names
- Date the prescription was filled
- Name of the health care provider who wrote the prescription
- Medication's expiration date
- Manufacturer's instructions or prescription label with specific, legible instructions for administration, storage, and disposal
- Name and strength of the medication.

Medications will be kept at the temperature recommended for that type of medication, in a sturdy, child-resistant container, out of child reach of children, but easily accessible to staff.

Medication will not be used beyond the date of expiration on the container or beyond any expiration of the instructions provided by the physician or other person legally permitted to prescribe medication. Instructions which state that the medication may be used whenever needed will be renewed by the physician at least annually. Staff will conduct monthly checks on any emergency action plans and expiration dates of emergency medications to be sure everything is up to date and will contact parents in the event anything is outdated.

Any approved medication given by Serendipity teachers will be recorded in the Medication Log and signed by the administering staff member.

### **Cleaning and Sanitization** IQPPS 5.18

The facility will be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. When a spill occurs, the area will be made inaccessible to children and the area will be cleaned immediately.

Toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion will be removed immediately and disinfected after they are cleaned with soap and water. This also applies to other surfaces in the classroom. Toys and surfaces will be disinfected using a non-toxic solution of one tablespoon household bleach to one quart of tap water made fresh daily. To disinfect, the surfaces will be sprayed until glossy. The bleach solution will be left on for at least 2 minutes before it is wiped off with a clean paper towel, or it may be allowed to air dry. Machine washable cloth toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion must be laundered before another child's use. Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used.

Staff will be trained in cleaning techniques, proper use of protective barriers such as gloves, proper handling and disposal of contaminated materials, and information required by the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration about the use of any chemical agents.

Tables will be cleaned with a solution of dish soap and water. They will then be sprayed with a sanitizing solution (e.g., spray a sanitizing bleach solution of 1/4 cup of household liquid chlorine bleach in one gallon of tap water, mixed fresh daily).

Routine cleaning will be supervised by the preschool director and will follow the [Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table](#).

Facility cleaning requiring potentially hazardous chemicals will be scheduled when children are not present to minimize exposure of the children. All cleaning products will be used as directed by the manufacturer's label. Non Toxic substances will be



used whenever possible. Ventilation and sanitation, rather than sprays, air freshening chemicals, or deodorizers, control odors in inhabited areas of the facility and in custodial closets.

### **Procedures for Standard Precautions** IQPPS 5.19

1. Surfaces that may meet potentially infectious body fluids must be disposable or of a material that can be sanitized. Use of materials that can be sterilized is not required.
2. The staff shall use barriers and techniques that:
  - Minimize potential contact of mucous membranes or openings in skin to blood or other potentially infectious body fluids and tissue discharges and
  - Reduce the spread of infectious material within the childcare facility. Such techniques include avoiding touching surfaces with potentially contaminated materials unless those surfaces are sanitized before further contact occurs with them by other objects or individuals.
3. When spills of body fluids, urine, feces, blood, saliva, nasal discharge, eye discharge, injury or tissue discharges, and human milk occur, these spills shall be cleaned up immediately, and further managed as follows:
  - Spills of vomit, urine, human milk, and feces, all floors, walls, bathrooms, tabletops, toys, kitchen countertops, and diaper changing tables in contact shall be cleaned and sanitized.
  - Spills of blood or other potentially infectious body fluids, including injury and tissue discharges, the area shall be cleaned and sanitized. Care shall be taken to avoid splashing any contaminated materials onto any mucus membrane (eyes, nose, mouth).
  - Blood-contaminated material and diapers shall be disposed of in a plastic bag with a secure tie.
  - Floors, rugs and carpeting that have been contaminated by body fluids shall be cleaned by blotting to remove the fluid as quickly as possible, then sanitized by spot-cleaning with a detergent-disinfectant, and shampooing, or steam-cleaning the contaminated surface.

### **Hand Washing Practices** IQPPS 5.6; 441 IAC 109.10(7), 441 IAC 109.10(8)

Frequent hand washing is key to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Teachers teach children how to wash their hands effectively. Posters of children using proper hand washing procedures are placed by each sink. The program follows these practices regarding hand washing:

- Our water temperature will always be between 60-120 degrees
- Staff members and those children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene are taught hand-washing procedures and are periodically monitored.

- Hand washing is required by all staff, volunteers, and children when hand washing reduces the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others.
- Staff assists children with hand washing as needed to successfully complete the task.

**Children wash their hands:**

- Upon arrival for the day
- Before eating meals or snacks
- After eating meals or snacks
- After using the toilet
- After handling body fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, or any touching of mucus, blood, or vomit)
- After playing in water that is shared by two or more people
- After handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals

**Adults wash their hands:**

- Upon arrival for the day
- After diapering or using the toilet (use of wet wipes is acceptable for infants)
- Before and after feeding a child
- Before meals and snacks, preparing or serving food, or handling any raw food that requires cooking (e.g., meat, eggs, poultry)
- Before and after administering medication
- After assisting a child with toileting
- After handling garbage or cleaning

**Proper hand-washing procedures are followed by adults and children and include:**

- Using liquid soap and running water
- Rubbing hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, and under fingernails
- Rinsing well; drying hands with a paper towel, or a dryer
- Avoiding touching the faucet with freshly washed hands (e.g., by using a paper towel to turn off water)
- Throw away paper towel when hand washing is complete

Except when handling blood or body fluids that might contain blood (when wearing gloves is required), wearing gloves is an optional supplement, but not a substitute, for hand washing in any situation listed above.

- Staff must wear gloves when contamination with blood may occur.
- Staff do not use hand-washing sinks for bathing children or removing smeared fecal material.

In situations where sinks are used for both food preparation and other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food.

## **Oral Health 441 IAC 109.10(2)**

Serendipity Preschool gathers information on intake paperwork that includes each child's dentist. If any children do not have a dentist, we provide a resource list for families individually and posted on our parent information board.

Children in our program will receive developmentally appropriate oral health educational activities and practices that includes:

- Information on plaque
- The process of dental decay
- Diet influences on teeth, including the contribution of sugar-sweetened beverages and foods to cavity development
- The importance of good oral hygiene behaviors
- Water offered at each snack time for rinsing mouth after eating
- Promotion of healthy foods per the CACFP
- If a child requires the use of a sippy cup or a bottle, it will only be used for snack time and if the child is thirsty throughout the day.

We work with I-Smile to provide dental screenings for our students at no cost to families. This is offered twice per year, depending on the availability of state funding to these programs.

In the event of a dental emergency, our staff will follow the following protocol:

- Toothache: Rinse the mouth with warm water to clean it out. Place a cold compress or ice wrapped in a cloth on the outside of the cheek. Call and go to the dentist as soon as possible. Do NOT use heat or place aspirin on the tooth or gum tissue.
- Broken tooth: Rinse the mouth with warm water to clean the area. Place a cold compress on the face to reduce swelling. Call and go to the dentist as soon as possible. If possible, bring the broken tooth fragment with you to the dentist.
- Knocked-out tooth: If it is a baby tooth, call the dentist as soon as possible. Do NOT attempt to put a baby tooth back in the socket. If it is a permanent tooth, rinse it gently in cool water. Do NOT scrub it or clean it with soap. If possible, put the tooth back in the socket and hold it there with clean gauze or a washcloth. If the tooth cannot be put back in the socket, place the tooth in a clean glass with milk, saliva, or water. Take the tooth and go to the dentist immediately.
- Bitten lip or tongue: Clean the area gently with a cloth and apply direct pressure to the bleeding area. If swelling is present, apply a cold compress. If bleeding does not stop, go to a hospital emergency room immediately.
- Objects wedged between teeth: Try to remove the object with dental floss, guiding the floss carefully to avoid cutting the gums. If using floss does not work, call the dentist. Do NOT try to remove the object with a sharp or pointed object.

- Possible fractured jaw: Try to remove the object with dental floss, guiding the floss carefully to avoid cutting the gums. If using floss does not work, call the dentist. Do NOT try to remove the object with a sharp or pointed object.

## **Water Activities** IQPPS 5.7, 9.15

Throughout the school year, we provide a water table in the classroom for children to stand and play with their hands in the water. During water play children engage in active experiences with science and math concepts. Children with sores on their hands are not allowed to participate with others in the water table to ensure that no infectious diseases are spread. Children are not allowed to drink the water during water play activities. When the activity period is complete, the water table is drained and refilled with fresh water before a new group of children comes to participate. Outdoor water play is limited to tubs and buckets or containers as well as the water table. We do not participate in swimming pool activities. Staff supervise all children by sight and sound in all areas with access to water in tubs, buckets, and water tables. If we are around any type of water, children are always within an adult's arm's length away.

## **Animals and Pets in the Classroom**

If you, as a parent or legal guardian, want to bring your family pet to share with your child's classroom you are welcome. However, all animals must remain outside the school buildings during the visit. We will ensure that the animal does not create an unsafe or unsanitary condition. Any animal should appear to be in good health and have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animal is fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) and suitable for contact with children. We will ensure staff and children practice good hygiene and hand washing when meeting the animal and after meeting the animal. Teaching staff will supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior when near animals.

Any children allergic to the pet will not be exposed to the animal. Reptiles are not allowed because of the risk for salmonella. Classroom teachers are responsible for checking requirements have been met.

## **First Aid Kit** IQPPS 9.12; 441 IAC 109.10(9)

First Aid kits are located in each preschool classroom. They are inaccessible to children, but readily available for adult use. They are fully equipped according to guidance from [Caring for Our Children](#). Following each use of the First Aid kit, the contents will be inspected and missing or used items replaced immediately. The First Aid kit will be inspected monthly. The first aid kit is taken to the outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from the site.

## **Fire Safety** IQPPS 9.13

A fire extinguisher is installed in the preschool classroom and throughout our building with tags indicating annual service dates. The fire alarm system is serviced annually. Smoke detectors, fire alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors are evaluated monthly. A written log of testing dates and battery changes is maintained and available upon request. Fire drills are conducted monthly and [recorded on a log](#).

## **Medical Emergencies and Notification of Accidents or Incidents** 441 IAC 109.10(10)

Serendipity Preschool has in place a “Safety Procedures Booklet” that describes the following situations and procedures to follow:

- Emergency phone numbers
- Fire procedures
- Utility Failures (electric power failure, water line break, gas line break)
- Severe weather
- Bomb threats
- Physical Threats/Armed Intruder
- Evacuations
- Accidental Injury or Illness procedures for life threatening and non-life-threatening situations

This booklet is posted by the telephone and included in the first aid kit. The booklet will be reviewed by each staff member at the beginning of each school year and when changes are made to it.

If your child receives a minor, non-life-threatening injury during their time at preschool, our teacher will assess the situation and apply first aid as needed. Minor cuts and scrapes will be treated with soap and water and bumps will be treated by applying ice to the injured area. Any incident or injuries will be documented on an “Injury and Illness” form and a copy will be given to the parent within 24 hours of the incident.

All staff will have immediate access to a device that allows them to summon help in an emergency. The telephone numbers of the Fire Department, Police Department, Hospital, and Poison Control will be posted by the phone. Emergency contact information for each child and staff member will be kept readily available. The list of emergency telephone numbers, and copies of emergency contact information and authorization for emergency transport will be taken along anytime children leave the facility in the care of facility staff. Emergency phone numbers will be updated twice a year. It is the parent’s responsibility to notify the preschool of any change in phone number or address.

In the event of a serious injury as defined in Iowa Code 702.18 to a child or incidents resulting in a significant change in the health status of a child will be verbally reported

to the parents, guardians, and legal custodians immediately. Serious injuries shall be reported to the Department of Health and Human Services within 24 hours of the incident. Serious injuries will be documented and information maintained in the child's file as required in 441 IAC 109.9(2). Serious injuries include:

- Disabling mental illness.
- Bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death, causes serious permanent disfigurement, or causes protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ.
- Any injury to a child that requires surgical repair and necessitates the administration of general anesthesia.
- Includes, but is not limited to, skull fractures, rib fractures, metaphyseal fractures of the long bones of children under the age of 4 years.

## **Lost or Missing Child**

In the event there is a lost or missing child while at preschool, we will take the following actions:

- Take attendance of children via roster (Completed by staff member #1, while staff member #2 completes the next three actions)
- Call the Norwalk Police Department (Completed by staff member #2)
- Call parents of missing child (Completed by staff member #2)
- Call DHS (Completed by staff member #2)
- Complete an Incident Report (Completed by staff member #2)
- During this time, staff member #1 will be keeping other children busy with an activity so as to not upset them or let them know about a potential problem. If a child is not found within 15 minutes, parents of all children will be notified via telephone call AND REMIND texting app to pick up their children.
- During this time, staff member #3 will be actively searching for the missing child.

To prevent a lost or missing child, we will always maintain one adult over ratio for supervision purposes. We count children often using name-to-face counting. We have Serendipity t-shirts that children wear on field trips. We talk with children about what to do in the event they get separated from our group. To ensure no child is overlooked, we always have our extra staff perform a search of our program/facility, buses (for field trips), etc.

## **Strangulation Policy**

Strings and cords (such as those that are parts of toys and those found on window coverings) long enough to encircle a child's neck will not be accessible to children in our program.

Straps/handles on purses/bags used for dramatic play will be removed or shortened. Ties, scarves, necklaces, and boas used for dramatic play will only be used by children under close supervision of preschool staff.

Clothing strings on children's clothing, necklaces and scarves can catch on playground equipment and strangle children. Due to this, hood and neck strings from all children's outerwear, including jackets and sweatshirts, pacifiers, will be requested to be removed by parents/guardians. The preschool will recommend the use of alternative closures (e.g., snaps, buttons, hook and loop, and elastic) to parents/families.

Lanyards worn by staff or children are only permissible on breakaway-type loops.

Window blinds and draperies will not have looped cords. Tension or tie-down devices are installed to hold cords tight.

## **Inclement Weather**

Serendipity Preschool follows the closing decisions of the Norwalk Community School District where inclement weather is concerned. If Norwalk Schools are closed, there will be no preschool. If Norwalk Schools are delayed because of weather conditions, there will be no morning preschool. If there is an early dismissal because of weather conditions, there will be no afternoon preschool. Weather related cancellations will be made up after the third class is canceled.

In the event of a blizzard or snow-related emergency while your child is at preschool, we keep extra food and water on-hand in our facility, so children can be cared for while they are here. A roster with each child's name is located at our safe shelter area in our facility and we will be counting children and taking attendance via our rosters at the following times during an emergency event AND a drill:

- During evacuation
- Upon arrival to our safe place
- Every 15 minutes we spend in our safe place
- Upon return to our classroom or as children are released to their parent

We conduct tornado and fire drills once per month, on the last Monday and Tuesday of each month. Our [drills are logged](#) in a binder in our classroom. During these drills and in the event of an actual emergency, we will take our first aid kit, our backpack which includes a phone, emergency numbers, student contact information, emergency medications and extra food and water. Children will be counted and attendance by name will be taken via roster at the following times during an emergency AND a drill:

- During evacuation
- Upon arrival to our safe place
- Every 15 minutes we spend in our safe place
- Upon return to our classroom or as children are released to their parent

## **Protection from Hazards and Environmental Health** IQPPS 9.11, 10.5

Before children arrive at school, the preschool director and/or teachers will complete the following daily safety checklist indoor and outdoor:

- All safety plugs and electric outlets covered, heat/AC, water temperature, and toilets, etc. in working order.
- All cleaning supplies/poisons out of children reach and are stored properly.
- Classroom and materials checked for cleanliness/broken parts, etc. including playground.
- Supplies checked - first aid kit, latex gloves, soap, paper towels, etc.
- Daily monitoring of the environment - spills, sand, etc. Other serious problems are reported to the church.
- Upon arrival, each child is observed by the teacher for signs of illness or injury that could affect the child's ability to participate in the daily activities.

Program staff protects children and adults from hazards, including electrical shock, burns, or scalding, slipping, tripping, or falling. Floor coverings are secured to keep staff and children from tripping.

The preschool classroom building has been evaluated for radon and other hazards that could impact children's health with documentation on file. The Church maintains the building's heating, cooling, and ventilation systems in compliance with national standards for facility use by children. An annual statement is kept on file.

The program maintains facilities, so they are free from harmful animals, insect pests, and poisonous plants. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents skin contact, inhalation, and other exposure to children.

### **Smoke Free Facility** IQPPS 9.15; 441 IAC 109.10(11) as amended by HF 2212(16)(t) Section 6

In compliance with the Iowa Smoke free Air Act of 2008, Serendipity Preschool's building and grounds are smoke free. A "No Smoking" sign meeting the law's requirements is posted at the entrance to the preschool classroom building to inform people that they are entering a non-smoking place. Smoking and the use of tobacco products on company property, at all times including school sponsored and non-school sponsored events, is strictly prohibited. This policy extends to all employees, students, and visitors. Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with written personnel policies contained in the employee handbook, enforced by administration. Visitors failing to abide by this policy are required to extinguish their smoking material, dispose of the tobacco/nicotine product or leave the premises immediately. It is the responsibility of the administration to enforce this policy. Employees are not permitted to wear clothing that smells of smoke when working.

[Please see our Tobacco and Nicotine-free Policy here.](#)



## **Child Protection Policies** IQPPS 10.6, 10.7; 441 IAC 109.4(4)

The health and well-being of every child in our care is of the utmost importance and the protection of children is our responsibility. An applicant or volunteer for temporary or permanent employment with the preschool program involves direct interaction with or the opportunity to interact and associate with children must execute and submit a criminal record check. In addition, no person with a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect will come in contact with children in the program or have responsibility for children.

The program has a written preschool board policy for reporting child abuse and neglect as well as procedures in place that comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws. The policy includes requirements for staff to report all suspected incidents of child abuse, neglect, or both by families, staff, volunteers, or others to the appropriate local agencies. Staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone unless it is proven that the report is malicious. All teaching staff complete “Mandatory Reporter: Child and Dependent Adult Abuse” at least every five years and within six months of employment.

The preschool does not tolerate employees physically, or sexually abusing or harassing students. Students who are physically or sexually abused or harassed by an employee should notify their parents, legal guardians, teacher, director, or another employee.

## **Access Policy** 441 IAC 109.4(2) 441 IAC 109.5(1)

Centers are responsible for ensuring the safety of children at the center and preventing harm by being proactive and diligent in supervising not only the children, but other people present at the facility.

1. Any person in the preschool who is not a staff member, substitute, or subcontracted staff or volunteer who has had a record check and approval to be involved with childcare 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 childcare.
  - It is imperative that centers not allow people who have not had a record check assume childcare responsibilities or be alone with children. This relates both to child safety and liability to the center.
2. Persons who do not have unrestricted access will be under the direct “supervision” and “monitoring” of a paid staff member at all times and will not be allowed to assume any childcare responsibilities. The primary responsibility of the supervision and monitoring will be assumed by the teacher unless he/she delegates it to the teacher assistant due to a conflict of interest with the person.

- “Supervision” means to oversee an individual engaged with children in an activity or task and ensure that they perform it correctly.
  - “Monitoring” means to oversee ensuring proper conduct of others.
3. Serendipity Preschool staff will approach anyone who is in the preschool premise without their knowledge to ask what their purpose is. If staff is unsure about the reason, they will contact the director to get approval for the person to be on site. If it becomes a dangerous situation staff will follow the “intruder in the center” procedures. Non-agency persons who are on the property for other reasons such as maintenance, repairs, etc. will be monitored by paid staff and will not be allowed to interact with the children on premise.
  4. 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 692A):
    - Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or function as a contractor or volunteer at the childcare center.
    - Shall not be on the premise of the preschool without the written permission of the center director, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender’s own minor child or ward to and from the center. The center director is not obligated to provide written permission and must consult with their DHS licensing consultant first. If written permission is granted it shall include the conditions under which the sex offender may be present, including:
      - The precise location in the center where the sex offender may be present.
      - The reason for the sex offender’s presence at the facility.
      - The duration of the sex offender’s presence.
      - Description of how the center staff will supervise the sex offender to ensure that the sex offender is not left alone with a child.
      - 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.

## **Substance Abuse**

Persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol will not be permitted on the premises of Serendipity Preschool. At no time will children be released to a person under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If an intoxicated person attempting to pick up a child is not the parent or legal guardian of the child, but on the approved pick-up list, preschool staff will contact guardians to make other arrangements. If an intoxicated person attempting to pick up a child is the parent or legal guardian of the child, all measures will be taken to keep the child safe.

## Staff

### **General Information and Teacher Qualifications** IQPPS 5.2, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 10.11; 441 IAC 109.7(1)

Serendipity Preschool has written personnel policies that define the roles and responsibilities, qualifications, and specialized training required of staff and volunteer positions. The policies outline nondiscriminatory hiring procedures and policies for staff evaluation. Policies detail job descriptions for each position, including reporting relationships; benefits; and resignation, termination, and grievance procedures. Personnel policies provide for incentives based on participation in professional development opportunities. The policies are provided to each employee upon hiring.

Hiring procedures include completion of the following checks: criminal-record check, free from history of substantiated child abuse or neglect check, education credentials, verification of age, completion of high school or GED, personal references, and a current health assessment. Additional educational qualifications vary by position.

Teachers that are part of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program hold an Iowa teaching license issued by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) and must hold an early childhood endorsement that reflects their current teaching assignment. Assistant Teachers part of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program have a CDA.

Assistant Teachers-teacher aides in other programming at Serendipity Preschool (staff who implement program activities under direct supervision) have a high school diploma or GED and 50% of assistant teachers-teacher aides have at least a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) or equivalent. 100% of assistant teachers-teacher aides who do not have at least a CDA are enrolled in a program leading to a CDA or equivalent, are actively participating in the program, and are demonstrating progress toward the CDA or equivalent. College-level course work is from regionally accredited institutions of higher education may include distance learning or online coursework.

All teaching staff have specialized coursework or professional development training in the program's curriculum as well as in communication and collaboration skills that prepare them to participate as a member of a team. All teachers and assistant teachers-teacher aides have specialized professional development training in how to accurately use the program's assessment procedures for assessment of child progress and program quality. Their training is used to adapt classroom practices and curriculum activities.

Each Serendipity Preschool staff member will complete at least the following required training during their first year of employment:

- Ten contact hours of training from one or more of the following topical areas: child development, guidance and discipline, developmentally appropriate practices, nutrition, health and safety, communication skills, professionalism, business practices, and cross cultural competence. Training received for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), first aid, mandatory reporting of child abuse, and universal precautions shall not count toward the ten contact hours.
- Staff who have completed a comprehensive training package of at least ten contact hours offered through a child care resource and referral agency or community college within six months before initial employment shall have the first year's ten contact hours of training waived.

Following their first year of employment, all staff shall:

- Maintain current certification for Iowa's training for the mandatory reporting of child abuse; infant, child and adult CPR; and infant, child and adult first aid.
- Receive six contact hours of training annually from one or more of the following topical areas: child development, guidance and discipline, developmentally appropriate practices, nutrition, health and safety, communication skills, professionalism, business practices, and cross-cultural competence.
- Center directors and on-site supervisors shall receive eight contact hours of training annually from the topical areas. c. Initial training obtained as identified as minimum health and safety training may be counted towards annual training hours during the year of employment in which it is taken. d. Training identified in paragraph 109.7(1)"e" shall not count towards annual professional development more than once.

## **Health Assessment and Safety of Staff IQPPS 10.5**

The preschool program maintains current health information from documented health assessments for all paid preschool staff and for all volunteers who work more than 40 hours per month and have contact with children. A current health assessment (not more than one-year-old) is received by the program before an employee starts work or before a volunteer has contact with children. The health assessment is updated every two years. Documented health assessments include:

- Capacities and limitations that may affect job performance
- Documentation by a licensed health professional of TB screening. For those who have a positive TB skin test and who develop a persistent cough or unexpected fever, immediate assessment by a licensed physician is required. For those who have increased risk of TB according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), documentation is required annually by a licensed health professional showing that the employee is free from active TB disease.

Confidential personnel files, including applications with record of experience, transcripts of education, health-assessment records, documentation of ongoing professional development, and results of performance evaluation, are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the preschool office.

Upon arrival at school, each staff member is observed by other staff members for signs of illness or injury that could affect the staff's ability to participate comfortably in the daily activities. Staff will be excluded if they are not able to fulfill their daily duties, if the illness requires more care than staff are able to give themselves without compromising the needs of the children we are caring for; or if keeping the staff at work poses an increased risk to the staff or to other children or adults with whom the staff will come in contact.

There are many occupational hazards early childhood staff are exposed to, including:

- **Infectious Disease:** Early childhood professionals acquire infectious diseases at a faster rate than adults who do not work with children. To prevent this, all staff take Universal Precautions training once per year and practice good handwashing and sanitation procedures. Staff members are required to have up-to-date physicals and recommendations for vaccinations are given at the time of hire.
- **Musculoskeletal Injuries:** These types of injuries involve supporting structures in our bodies including spinal discs, nerves, tendons, and muscles. Risk factors for early childhood professionals include heavy lifting (children, furniture), sitting on the floor or in child-sized chairs with insufficient back support, kneeling, squatting, and reaching a variety of heights. To prevent this, our staff is encouraged to exercise regularly, wear proper footwear, use stepping stools for reach of high places, assume a squatting or kneeling position instead of bending over, use proper sitting posture and use proper lifting and carrying techniques.
- **Exposure to Toxic Materials:** Cleaning products required for use of cleaning and sanitation can pose a risk to health of the adult using the cleaners. To prevent this, we are sure to use only recommended safe levels of cleaners and we use only non-toxic materials for art and activities. We use latex-free protective gloves to prevent latex allergy issues.
- **Stress:** Stress in early childhood programs is especially important because it not only affects the health and safety of the staff members themselves, but also affects the quality of care they are able to provide to young children. Staff under too much stress may be unable to offer the praise, nurturing, and direction young children need for optimal development. To prevent this type of stress, our staff members are encouraged to exercise regularly, take a short break, when needed (while maintaining ratio in our classroom), prioritize, set limits, use appropriate resources, and get support.

## **Serendipity Staff Orientation** IQPPS 6.1; 441 IAC 109.4(2)

Employees must know their role and duties. New preschool teaching staff will be required to participate in an initial orientation program that introduces them to fundamental aspects of the program operation including:

- Program philosophy, mission, and goals
- Expectations for ethical conduct
- Individual needs of children they will be teaching or caring for
- Accepted guidance and classroom management techniques
- Daily activities and routines of the program
- Program curriculum
- Child abuse and reporting procedures
- Program policies and procedures
- Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards and Criteria
- Regulatory requirements

The director should provide the new employee with a review of the employee's responsibilities and duties, explain payroll procedures and employee benefits.

## **Staffing Patterns and Schedule**

The preschool program follows staff regulations and certification requirements. Our program follows requirements for staffing for Iowa's Quality Preschool Program Standards of always maintaining an adult/child ratio of at least 1:10 in the four-year-old class, and one 1:8 in the three-year-old class. The director will maintain lists of current substitutes for both the preschool teacher and the preschool teaching assistant in case of absence. If one of the teaching staff needs to temporarily leave the classroom, the person will communicate to the director to arrange for coverage to maintain the adult/child ratio.

Staff are provided space and time away from children during the day. Should staff work directly with children for more than four hours, staff are provided breaks of at least 15 minutes in each four-hour period. In addition, staff may request temporary relief when they are unable to perform their duties.

## **Staff Professional Learning** 441 IAC 109.7(237A), 441 IAC 109.7(1)

Personnel policies provide for incentives based on participation in professional development opportunities. All teaching staff continuously strengthen their leadership skills and relationships with others and work to improve the conditions of children and families within their programs, the local community, and beyond. Teaching staff are encouraged to participate in informal and formal ways in local, state, or regional public-awareness activities. They may join an early childhood group or organization, attend meetings, or share information with others both at and outside the program.

Teaching staff will be informed of professional development activities provided by Child Care Resource and Referral, the local Empowerment areas, and the area education agency. Staff are expected to attend all staff training and meetings throughout the year. Training will focus on early childhood topics relevant to the program and community.

### **Evaluation and Professional Growth Plan** IQPPS 6.6, 10.11, 10.14

All staff are evaluated at least annually by the director. Staff also evaluate and improve their own performance based on ongoing reflections and feedback from supervisors, peers, and families. From this, they develop an annual individualized professional development plan with the director and use it to inform their continuous professional development.

## **Community Relationships**

### **Community Relationships** IQPPS 8.3, 8.4

Serendipity Preschool understands that relationships within our community are valuable and necessary. We use our knowledge of the community and the families it serves as an integral part of the curriculum and children's learning experiences.

Our Universal Preschool staff participate in common professional development opportunities with the community's Universal Preschool Program partners, AEA, Childcare Resource & Referral, and more.

Our teachers are members in early childhood educational associations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).