

Child Development Dayhomes

# Parent Handbook



Peace of Mind

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*Child Development Dayhomes of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that our office and dayhomes in the Fort McMurray area are located on Treaty 8 territory, a traditional meeting grounds, gathering place, and travelling route to the Cree, Dene and Dane-zaa (Beaver), and Métis. We acknowledge all the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.*

*We acknowledge the traditional lands upon which we live, work and play. We recognize that all Albertans are Treaty People and have a responsibility to understand our history so that we can honour the past, be aware of the present and create a just and caring future. CDDH celebrates and values the resiliency, successes, and teachings that Alberta's Indigenous people have shown us since time immemorial. There is much work to do to honour the TRC calls to action and CDDH remains committed to this work until Truth and Reconciliation is realized for all Indigenous peoples, families and especially children.*

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to offer “peace of mind” to parents while they are away from their children.

## PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We believe children are capable leaders in their own learning. Our practice is guided by the Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework “Flight”. Alongside children, adults are co-learners and support a co-inquiry program based on observations of children and Dayhome Program Educator invitations to play (provocations). Children learn best when actively engaged and participating in play-based activities that are responsive to their interests. Our curriculum emerges over time and is guided by children’s interests and everyday experiences. Dayhome Program Educators are encouraged to create play spaces that are appealing, inviting and comfortable for you and the children. Dayhome Program Educators create routines that are flexible to children’s changing needs and interests. It is through the intentional design of space, time, and materials that we support positive behaviors. Through a strong practice of relationships, we develop and maintain positive, respectful, and responsive relations with children, families, Dayhome Program Educators, and colleagues. It is through those relationships that we support, collaborate, and inspire each other. Through documentation we provide windows for families into their child’s day that are respectful of the child’s well-being. To support children to participate fully in the program we engage with community partners to enhance children’s participation and learning.

### **Approval Process**

Screening of a potential Dayhome Program Educator is done over 3-4 in home interviews. The following is a list of requirements to be completed prior to a dayhome approval:

- Criminal Record Check for everyone in the home 18 years old and over which includes a vulnerable sector search.
- Child Intervention Record Checks for everyone in the home 18 years old and over
- Medical clearance
- Valid first aid certificate in childcare
- Safety checks twice a year covering over 70 items.
- At least 3 references
- Childcare professionals assess the suitability of the Dayhome Program Educator and the environment to ensure high quality childcare.
- Review and signing of the Child Guidance Policy: A Practice of Relationships by all adults in the home.
- Review and signing of a contract with the agency, agreeing to meet all government and agency policies, standards, and expectations.
- Signing of the Oath of Confidentiality and Code of Ethics
- Completed evacuation and emergency procedure plan.
- Nutritious snacks and meals provided by the Dayhome Program Educator in accordance with the Canada Food Guide
- Responsive Learning Environment creation to support children's physical, social, emotional, creative, and intellectual development.

The agency offers ongoing support, training, motivation, and encouragement to all Dayhome Program Educators in the following ways:

- Providing regular unannounced monitoring visits for support monthly
- Supporting Dayhome Program Educators who care for children with special needs in their Dayhomes.
- Ongoing phone support
- Dayhome Program Educator networking opportunities
- Dayhome Program Educator financial incentives
- Access to the Family Childcare Training Home Study Program
- Ongoing training opportunities for professional development (conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.) *Parents are welcome to attend as well.*
- Monthly online newsletters for Dayhome Program Educators and for families
- Individual training plans and goal setting
- In home quality enhancement workshops
- Quality Enhancement group workshops
- Access to our resource and literacy libraries
- Appreciation events

- Starter kit of supplies for new Dayhome Program Educators including open ended loose parts and resource books.
- \$2,000,000 liability insurance coverage for each child placed in the Dayhome.
- Financial aspects handled.
- Dayhome Program Educator phone list for emergencies or back-up care
- 24-hour emergency phone line for Dayhome Program Educators and Parents
- Recognized licensed agency.

Communication between parent, Dayhome Program Educator, and agency staff is of the utmost importance. Please feel free to contact your Childcare Consultant about any childcare questions, comments, or concerns that you may have.

As a Family Dayhome Agency we are funded and contracted through the Region 9 Child and Family Services. For more information you may call 780-743-7449 or visit <https://www.alberta.ca/childrens-services.aspx>.

Child Development Dayhomes is a licensed agency ensuring the highest quality care. As an agency we are monitored by Children's Services. We set standards of excellence with the purpose of achieving a high standard of practice. By choosing Child Development Dayhomes you are ensuring optimum childcare. We believe children learn and grow best in programs that provide quality care and activities.

## A NEW BEGINNING: TRANSITIONING INTO A DAYHOME

Transitions can be defined as the movement between one activity, relationship, or place and another new or familiar activity, relationship, or place. Children experience many transitions within a day and throughout the early years. Transitions are embedded in daily living and mark important milestones for each child's learning and development. As Dayhome Program Educators support and respect each child's relationship with his or her family, they help each child to build new and trusting relationships.

Be patient with the transitions that come with daily drop off routines; some children (and adults!) take longer than others to adjust to their new surroundings and routine. Bringing familiar items from home may help your child transition, for example, a favorite toy or a family photo album. It is also important to talk to your child about where you are going and that you will be back to pick them up. Having a consistent schedule aid in children being able to transition into new routines. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Childcare Consultant.

## KEEPING UP TO DATE

You must advise the agency whenever changes occur in:

- Home address or telephone number
- Place of employment/school or business/school number(s)
- Emergency contact person(s) or telephone number(s)
- Who can and cannot pick up your child?
- Working hours
- Contract changes, i.e., part time care to full time care.

## ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Your child's attendance is recorded daily on an Internet-based program called TimeSavr. When your child is dropped off, your Dayhome Program Educator will log your child in. At pick-up time, your child will be logged out. Your Dayhome Program Educator may print out a weekly or monthly report, asking you to sign your child's attendance record on a weekly or monthly basis. TimeSavr is used to calculate your Dayhome Program Educator's payment, to calculate possible credits to parents (or debits for extra days) and to complete the Fort McMurray and Area Child and Family Services-Region 9 reports.

## HOURS OF CARE

Care for your child in the Family Dayhome includes your regular working hours plus travel time.

At the commencement of services, you are asked to state the hours of care needed. These are your agreed contracted hours. Should you need to change these times, you must discuss your new needs with your Dayhome Program Educator and fill out a Change of Services form. **Daily care should not exceed 9 1/2 hours.**

## RELEASE OF CHILD

In an emergency, if you cannot pick up your child, you must notify the Dayhome Program Educator and arrange for one of your emergency contacts to pick up your child. Your Dayhome Program Educator will ask for photo identification before releasing your child. To protect you and your child, unless otherwise specified, the Dayhome Program Educator will only release your child to you or the person(s) you have designated as emergency contacts.

Anyone who is not identified on the child's registration forms for emergency pickup can pick up the child with the parent or guardian's permission in writing (i.e.: text message to educator). This individual must bring photo ID when picking up the child. Persons picking up children must be **18 years or older** and bring valid photo identification. Children who are transported to or from school must either be taken to/from the school or bus stop by the educator, approved backup provider (i.e., spouse or adult child), or a designated person **18 years or older**. Please note that not all dayhome educators will be able to accommodate school-age drop-offs and pickups, and these arrangements must be discussed prior to registration or starting school.

## NUTRITION

According to the Canada Food Guide, each home will provide:  
(Portions according to Canada food guide, all 4 food groups to be served daily)

### Snack = 2 Food Groups

### Meal = 3 Food Groups

| Length of time in care | Meal or snack required |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 to 4 hours           | 1 snack                |
| 4 to 6 hours           | 1 meal and 1 snack     |
| 6 to 8 hours           | 1 meal and 2 snacks    |
| More than 8 hours      | 2 meals and 2 snacks   |

Please ensure that your child has an adequate breakfast prior to arriving each morning, as this meal is **not always provided**. No candy, gum or special snacks are to be sent with your child unless prior arrangements have been made with your Dayhome Program Educator.

It is the parent's responsibility to provide baby food for their child until the child can eat regular table food. **Bottles of milk are supplied by the parent.**

Please note: Any child who requires a special diet must have this supplied by the parent.

Food and drink provided by families must follow recommendations of the Canada Food Guide. Your Dayhome Program Educator must supplement food and drink provided by families in the event they do not meet the recommended Canada Food Guide.

## CLOTHING

An extra set of clothing should be left at the Family Dayhome. Please supply clothing appropriate for the weather conditions. This includes snow pants, mitts, hats and scarves in cold weather and a sun hat and sunscreen during warm weather.

If the child is in diapers, you are responsible for an adequate supply for necessary changes. For convenience, please take a bag of diapers to the Family Dayhome. Each Dayhome Program Educator has preferences, so please discuss this issue fully with them.

Please change diapers and wash children in the morning before taking them to the Family Dayhome.

## DIAPER CREAM, SUNSCREEN AND BUG SPRAY

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing diaper cream, sunscreen and bug spray for their child. Educators may only apply products supplied by the parent/guardian and labeled with the child's name. Written authorization is required for the use of diaper cream.

## ILLNESS

### Children's Illness Policy:

| If your child has this symptom, do not bring the child to the dayhome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Please stay home until...                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fever/Chills<br>*According to the Canadian Pediatric Society, normal temperatures for children are below. Anything higher is considered a fever. • Rectal: 36.6-38.0°C (97.9-100.4°F)<br>• Mouth: 35.5-37.5°C (95.9-99.5°F)<br>• Underarm: 36.5-37.5°C (97.7-99.5°)<br>• • Ear (not recommended in infants): 35.8-38.0°C (96.4-100.4°F) | The child has been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.                                                                                          |
| Cough/Shortness of Breath<br><br>Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea<br><br>Congestion/Sore throat/Painful Swallowing<br><br>Unexplained Loss of Appetite/Lethargy/Unable to participate.<br><br>Muscle/Joint Aches/Headache                                                                                                                       | If the symptom is improving after 24 hours, they may return to the dayhome if well enough to do so and it has been at least <b>24 hours</b> since the symptom started. |
| Pink Eye – Bacterial                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 24 hours after treatment has started or the eye no longer has discharge.                                                                                               |

|                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pink Eye - Viral                                                                               | When symptoms are cleared.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| New/unexplained rash                                                                           | After seeing a doctor and/or calling 811 for advice to ensure it is not contagious to others. <b>A physician's note may be required.</b>                                                                                                       |
| Head Lice                                                                                      | When first treatment is completed, and bugs and nits are picked from the child's hair, so hair is clear. Complete head checks of all members of the household. Please complete the second treatment 7-10 days after first treatment.           |
| Runny Nose<br>Please make your best judgement when deciding to send your child to the dayhome. | Your dayhome educator may ask you not to bring the child or to pick up the child if the runny nose is consistent throughout the day and needs to be consistently wiped and/or it interferes with daily routines and caring for other children. |

The child cannot return to the dayhome premises until the dayhome program educator is satisfied that the child no longer poses a health risk to others in the program (**e.g., the parents provide a physician's note**, or the parents declare that the child is symptom-free).

There are no reductions in fees when your child is absent from the dayhome due to illness. You must arrange for your child to be picked up immediately if notified by the dayhome educator that your child has fallen ill or is showing symptoms at the dayhome.

### **Educators Illness Policy:**

Educators cannot operate the dayhome if they or anyone in their household has symptoms. **For educator's children or children who live in the dayhome have symptoms, please see the CDDH illness policy for children.**

If an educator or member of their household 18 years and older has any of the following **symptoms**, the dayhome cannot operate. If the symptom is improving after 24 hours, they may re-open the dayhome if well enough to do so and it has been at least 24 hours since the symptom started.

- ❖ New onset of cough or worsening chronic cough

- ❖ Fever
- ❖ New or worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- ❖ Sore throat/painful swallowing
- ❖ Chills
- ❖ Feeling unwell, fatigue, or severe exhaustion
- ❖ Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- ❖ Conjunctivitis (pink eye) – dayhome can re-open 24 hours after treatment has started.
- ❖ New unexplained rash

## INJURY OR SEVERE ILLNESS

If medical attention is required, the Dayhome Program Educator will contact you (or your emergency contact) and the Agency immediately and arrange to take your child to the nearest hospital or emergency medical clinic. Should it be necessary to transport your child by an emergency vehicle, you will be required to bear the cost of any emergency transportation.

## MEDICATION

Since our priority is the children's health and safety, we facilitate medication policies that are informed by Alberta Health Standards. If your child has a current prescription of specialized/emergency/ongoing medication, we require that this medication is on-site at the dayhome in case of any emergency while the child is in care and that the specialized medication form/anaphylaxis emergency plan form has been appropriately filled out. It is the primary responsibility of the parents/guardians to ensure the medication is current and not expired, as the educator cannot accept expired medication. The educator cannot take the child until the proper medication has been provided, and there will be no reduction in pay for absence due to expired medication.

You are responsible for ensuring that the Dayhome Program Educator fully understands how and when to give any medication. A Medication Record Form must be completed and signed by you before medication can be administered by the Dayhome Program Educator. Your Family Dayhome Program Educator is **NOT ALLOWED** to give medication without written authorization. This signed Medication Record protects both your child and the Dayhome Program Educator. **You must provide information in writing to your Dayhome Program Educator about when medications and herbal remedies were given to the child prior to arriving at the dayhome.**

Prescription medication must be in the original container, clearly labeled with the date, child's name, amount, and time of dosage and any other instructions ordered by the doctor.

The administration of over-the-counter medications or non-prescription medication to children in Family Dayhomes is **not allowed**, as these may have adverse effects on some children.

## INCLUSION POLICY

### **Our Mission is to provide “Peace of Mind” for Parents and Dayhome Program Educators**

We strive to provide quality, inclusive childcare to families so they can have “peace of mind” while away at work or attending school. Child Development Dayhomes believes in community inclusion and in the belief that “we all belong”. All children have the right to high quality childcare. Child Development Dayhomes strives to provide a welcoming community where each member experiences the feeling and reality of belonging. It is our goal to support all children to participate in the program and to nurture each child's well-being. Children are placed in an inclusive dayhome environment that honors the child's need for interactive play with peers along with their special requirements. We pride ourselves in providing and advocating for inclusive childcare.

## CHILD GUIDANCE POLICY; A PRACTICE OF RELATIONSHIPS

All Dayhome Program Educators, anyone 18 years and older residing in the dayhome, and all emergency backup caregivers have signed the following child guidance policy:

*Creating an environment to support children's positive behaviour.*

Intentional environmental design and nurturing relationships between children and Dayhome Program Educators are essential to support children's positive behaviour. Attention to the design elements of Responsive Environments (Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette & Thomas, 2014) – time, space, materials, and participation – can help minimize challenging behaviours and give Dayhome Program Educators a better opportunity to build relationships with children. When relationships between adults and children are such that children feel respected and understood, they are more likely to meet behaviour expectations.

Remember not to underestimate the power of outdoor play. There is good evidence that daily outdoor play in natural environments is crucial to children's mental and physical health.

Children love to play outdoors. The outdoors is where children get to be children. They have a kind of freedom outdoors that we cannot give them inside. They can run and jump and shout. The outdoors absorbs the noise and mess of children's normal active play. Adults do not have to control children's natural boisterousness outdoors. Children can be in control and interestingly, the experience of being in control is what helps children to develop self control. Outdoor play reduces stress. Contact with nature improves the stress response systems in the brain. It frees the mind, the body, and the spirit, all at once. Being outdoors is calming and soothing for children. This feeling of peacefulness strengthens emotional resilience, which in turn contributes to greater emotional self control. Spending time outside reduces restlessness in children, and increases concentration, focus, and attentiveness.

*Design elements that contribute to a responsive childcare environment and positive child guidance are:*

- ❖ Time: The daily schedule and how routines and transitions are implemented have an impact on children's behaviour. Our schedule and expectations regarding time need to be flexible to accommodate children's changing needs. There should be large blocks of free play time in the daily schedule so that children can fully explore the environment and engage in complex play. Routines are consistent yet flexible and transitions should be carried out with minimal time spent waiting. Children should receive ample warning about upcoming transitions. There will be a balance of indoor and outdoor play throughout the daily routine and in all seasons.
- ❖ Space: Playspace environments should be appealing and inviting with enough space so that children can play comfortably with a group or independently. Focus on de-cluttering the space so that it does not overstimulate the children. Consider space for large gross motor play, building spaces and quiet areas.
- ❖ Materials: Materials for the children are inviting and stimulating. There should be a focus on open-ended and loose parts such as recycled and natural materials to provoke children's thinking and less close-ended and plastic materials. Opportunities for messy play such as water, sand and other sensory play materials should be offered regularly.
- ❖ Programming: Programming is based on children's interests and develops over time (emergent curriculum) rather than pre-planned adult-directed activities. The co-inquiry process will support a program based off observations of children individually and in small groups, as well as Dayhome Program Educator provocations (invitations to play).

- ❖ Relationships: Dayhome Program Educators are sensitive observers who model caring interactions and strive to build a sense of community. They know how to support children's play through their involvement and cultural perspective. They understand how to create a positive verbal environment through their listening and communication skills. They have knowledge of strategies to use when responding to challenging behaviour. They work to understand the child in the context of family and cultural community and honour children and families' first languages. Children are involved in the discussions about rules and expectations so that they are aware of what is expected of them.

Children's behaviour is influenced by their overall development, socio-cultural environment at home, as well as the children and Dayhome Program Educator in the dayhome environment. We accept each child and family as unique and strive to support children to grow and develop socially, emotionally, physically, culturally, and intellectually.

### **Guidance Strategies**

Our overall approach for guiding children's behaviour is positive, focused on problem solving and the child's learning, and is considered "best practices". Community values such as caring for others and respect will be foundational. The Child Guidance Policy will be communicated to parents as part of the Parent Handbook and communicated to Dayhome Program Educators during the approval procedure. It will also be communicated to children through inclusive guidance strategies used in the dayhome.

*Children's emotional health and well-being are best nurtured when there is:*

- ❖ Involvement with families, modelling and encouraging positive social behaviours.
- ❖ Respect and learning about the family's first language and culture.
- ❖ Respect for each child's feelings, individual and developmental needs, and cultural backgrounds
- ❖ Recognition of both individual child's needs and the group's needs
- ❖ A sense of security and trust between Dayhome Program Educator and child and among other children
- ❖ Understanding that each child is unique and valued.

*In general, Dayhome Program Educators may avoid difficulties and create an environment for solving differences by:*

- ❖ Setting clear limits and expectations that are appropriate for the child's age and ability.

- ❖ Reinforcing positive behaviours and emphasizing caring for others as a value
- ❖ Giving choices and helping children with problem-solving
- ❖ Being firm but flexible
- ❖ Listening to and acknowledging children's feelings and frustrations
- ❖ Anticipating needs and possible problems (i.e.: having sufficient and suitable play materials)
- ❖ Recognizing differences in age, temperament, and experience (i.e.: toddlers are not expected to share)

*When a child is displaying undesirable behaviour, the approach used by Dayhome Program Educators is reasonable under the circumstances and the Dayhome Program Educator will assure the child that though the behaviour is not acceptable, the child is still highly valued.*

1. Acceptable strategies: These include a continuum of approaches that range from those with least to most intervention needed such as:

- ❖ Ignoring the inappropriate behaviour when it does not put the child, others, or property in jeopardy.
- ❖ Using "I" messages to convey the reason for an Dayhome Program Educator's concern about the behaviour (i.e.: I am worried the markers will dry up if we do not put the lids back on)
- ❖ Offering choices (i.e.: At clean up time – "would you like to help clean up the book area or the cars?")
- ❖ Turning the problem back to the child and facilitating problem-solving (i.e.: "what can we do if you both want to play with that red car?")
- ❖ Using a contingency to guide behaviour (i.e.: "as soon as your hands are washed, you can eat snack")
- ❖ Providing logical consequences that do not involve punishment (i.e.: child helps re-build a tower they knocked down)
- ❖ Redirecting or distracting the child to another activity (i.e.: let's go see what everyone is up to in the block area)
- ❖ When children are upset, Dayhome Program Educators will acknowledge strong feelings and desires using active listening (i.e.: "You were hoping it would be your turn next, weren't you?")

2. Unacceptable Interventions:

- ❖ ANY form of physical abuse, punishment, or neglect
- ❖ Belittling the child, calling names, or using any other degrading comments
- ❖ Not providing the basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, safety
- ❖ Isolating the child from the group or segregating them (i.e.: timeouts)

### **Persistent Challenging Behaviours**

If a child displays inappropriate behaviour that is serious or repetitive, this will need to be discussed with the child's family so that Dayhome Program Educators, childcare consultants, and families can develop a consistent, supportive, and positive plan to support the child's positive behaviour. If parents are interested, we can assist them in a community referral. Dayhome Program Educators will use the following strategies to support positive behaviours and diminish challenging behaviours:

- ❖ We will look at ways to adapt the learning environment to specifically support this child's positive behaviour using the design elements of time, space, materials, and programming.
- ❖ We will role model the dispositions and behaviours they want to nurture in children. The Alberta Curriculum Framework for Early Learning & Child Care dispositions of caring, playing, participating, seeking, and persisting (Makovichuk et al, 2014) will be intentionally role modeled by Dayhome Program Educators.
- ❖ Observations will be used to recognize and encourage the child's strengths and dispositions for learning.
- ❖ Learning stories will capture and celebrate a child's positive dispositions and new learning.
- ❖ Dayhome Program Educators will use encouragement, kind words and caring actions to build a strong relationship with the child.
- ❖ Descriptive feedback will be used to notice and reinforce a child's positive behaviours (i.e.: "Wow! You built that block tower so high!" and avoid using non-specific praise such as "good job").
- ❖ We will use problem-solving instead of punishment. Dayhome Program Educators and children will talk through the situation and brainstorm possible solutions together.
- ❖ We will use redirection if children are displaying undesirable behaviours.
- ❖ If a child causes physical or emotional harm to self or others, the child will be gently moved away from the situation to give time and space for the child to calm down. The Dayhome Program Educators will keep the child in sight and

sound always and provide materials for the child so that they are not segregated from the environment. They will talk with the child about alternative, appropriate behaviours and may need to review expectations.

## OUTDOOR WEATHER POLICY

Our program will provide the children with a minimum of 30 minutes of outside activity per day. Every day, children should come to the dayhome with adequate outdoor clothing for all weather. In winter this includes:

- Winter jacket
- Waterproof mittens
- Ski pants or snowsuit
- Warm hat or toque
- Winter boots

Children will stay inside in extreme weather conditions, which are:

- 1) Tornado watch/warning-spotting of green sky and funnel clouds
- 2) An outside temperature of -23 degrees Celsius and/or temperature with a wind chill to make it -23 degrees Celsius. In summer, an outside temperature of +28 degrees Celsius
- 3) Heavy rain, hail, or snowfall
- 4) High and or wind gusting over 29km per hour
- 5) Poor air quality due to smoke from forest fires as per Air Quality Health Index (see below).

### **Air Quality Health Index for children:**

Low Risk 1-3: Enjoy your usual outdoor activities

Moderate Risk: 4-6: Reduce outdoor play time, reschedule strenuous outdoor activities (long walks, biking, etc.) If you have children with asthma or other breathing-related sensitivities, please do not take the children outside.

High/Very Risk: 7-10+: Reschedule outdoor activities/plans. Children should not go outside.

### **Extreme Temperatures:**

In extreme heat, be sure to schedule outdoor activities to the cooler hours of the day, limit duration of outdoor play to one hour or less in shaded areas and take the proper precautions to prevent heat stroke and heat exhaustion (adequate water, hats, sunscreen).

\*If walking children to school or a bus stop is part of your daily routine and the temperature is colder than -25° Celsius, including the wind chill factor, please discuss options with the parents.

## **The Benefits of Daily Outdoor Play**

By Dr. Jane Hewes, Chair, Early Learning & Child Care Program, MacEwan University

Ever wonder why we bundle children up to go outdoors twice a day - even in the winter? Wouldn't it be easier just to keep the children inside? Easier – perhaps, but better? No! There is good evidence that daily outdoor play in natural environments is crucial to children's mental and physical health.

Children love to play outdoors. The outdoors is where children get to be children. They have a kind of freedom outdoors that we cannot give them inside. They can run and jump and shout. The outdoors absorbs the noise and mess of children's normal active play. Adults do not have to control children's natural boisterousness outdoors. Children can be in control and interestingly, the experience of being in control is what helps children to develop self-control. Self-control is one of the most important and least understood aspects of school readiness.

### **What are the benefits of active outdoor play in natural environments?**

- Outdoor play reduces stress. Contact with nature improves the stress response systems in the brain. It frees the mind, the body, and the spirit, all at once.
- Being outdoors is calming and soothing for children. This feeling of peacefulness strengthens emotional resilience, which in turn contributes to greater emotional self-control.
- Being outdoors reduces restlessness in children, and increases concentration, focus, and attentiveness.
- Children who play outdoors regularly do not get sick as often as children who spend more time inside.
- Being outdoors builds physical resilience and stamina.
- The sensory environment outdoors feeds children's growing brains. It engages all the senses. Leaves flutter and rustle, birds sing, the snow crunches, the sun feels warm, the wind tickles. We know that young children, especially toddlers, need rich, diverse sensory environments for play. We bring natural materials indoors as much as possible, but there is nothing like being outside.
- Children are more active outdoors. Natural landscapes offer important opportunities for physical development. Walking up and down a small slope builds balance in toddlers. The uneven surfaces of the rocks and pathways invite

preschoolers to develop strength and balance and coordination.

- There are incredible learning opportunities outside. The outdoors invites exploration and discovery – bugs move, the wind makes the leaves flutter, birds build nests, rain makes puddles, snow is building material for forts.

**Playing outdoors every day in all kinds of weather assists children in creating the habits they need to lead a happy, healthy, active life. It is important in fostering an attitude in caring for the environment.**

## YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

### Ages and Stages Questionnaire

Also known as the ASQ or ASQ-SE (for social-emotional development), it was originally developed for parents to use after their children were released from the NICU. Parents were able to monitor their child's development at home, rather than having to go back and forth to the hospital. The ASQ monitors 5 domains of development:

1. Communication
2. Gross Motor
3. Fine Motor
4. Problem Solving
5. Personal-Social

Why screen? The ASQ is a first-level screening tool to identify children that may require further assessment. It can also be used to identify additional supports (such as specific activities and/or supplies) to children and families before referring to other resources such as speech and language, occupational therapists, etc. It is suggested that screening should be implemented for all children, so children requiring support are not missed. Regular screening is also important as it is "preventative maintenance"; suggested ages for screening are 9 months old, 18 months old and between 24-30 months old (3 times before 3rd birthday). If you are interested in the ASQ or would like more information, please contact Lindsay at [lindsay@childdev.com](mailto:lindsay@childdev.com) or 780-444-2288.

## EMERGENCY LINE

Our office hours are Monday to Friday 7am to 5pm. If you need to contact office staff outside of these hours, an emergency contact number will be listed on our voicemail.

## LOCKDOWN PROCEDURE FOR DAYHOMES

The Lockdown procedure must be implemented when you suspect or have been notified from emergency personnel/police, that there is a situation that may result in harm to the persons on the dayhome premises. This may include but is not limited to a potential shooting, a hostage incident or an unauthorized or suspicious person on the premises.

**Step 1.** Lock all doors and windows; close all the blinds/curtains.

**Step 2.** Turn off all lights in the home.

**Step 3.** Gather all the children, move to a room/space without windows so you cannot be seen.

**Step 4.** Take your phone and put it on silence, bring the travel first aid kit with the children's medical consent cards and emergency medication.

**Step 5.** Call 911 if required.

**Step 6.** Keep children as calm or quiet as possible. Have quiet activities, snacks and water stored in the secure area you plan to use in the event of a lockdown.

**Step 7.** Remain indoors until you receive further instruction from emergency personnel/police.

**Step 8.** Notify the agency as soon as lockdown procedure is over.

**Step 9.** Parents/guardians must be notified once lockdown procedure is over.

## BACK-UP CARE AND SHORT-TERM PLACEMENTS

Should your regular Family Dayhome be unavailable please contact your Childcare Consultant if you require back up care. Your Dayhome Program Educators also has a list of agency-approved Dayhomes in their area.

**Backup Care** is defined as using 10 days or less in another dayhome with our agency.

**A Short-Term Placement** is defined as 11 days or more with another dayhome with our agency but have plans to return to your regular dayhome. If you will not be attending back up care the following day you must contact the Dayhome Program Educator or agency by phone by 9pm the night before. Otherwise, you will still be charged for the full day.

Child Development Dayhomes has a 24-hour emergency phone number stated on the agency voicemail.

NOTE: We do our very best to provide back-up care, however we cannot guarantee alternative arrangements due to age ratios and the number of homes with available spots in your area.

**Please complete prior to care and leave with the back-up Dayhome Program Educator of your choice: a completed “Parent Agreement Form - Back-Up” with all your child’s medical information on it. The Dayhome Program Educator must log your child in and out on TimeSavr every day your child is in their care.**

In the event of an emergency, your Dayhome Program Educator may have an in-home emergency backup caregiver. Parents must meet emergency backup caregivers and give written permission prior to all back up caregiver situations.

## PAYMENT POLICIES

Parents agree to pay for services rendered based on amount stated on the Preauthorized Payment Plan form. It is understood that Child Development Dayhomes may change these fees with one month written notification to you.

Please note:

- There will be no fee reduction for child illness or holidays.
- There will be no refunds when a Dayhome is closed less than 10 days due to illness or educator holidays. Families are encouraged to contact the agency to find back up care.
- Agency fees are not pro-rated.
- A one-time, non-refundable registration fee of \$150 is required per family. Families previously registered with our agency are not required to pay this fee again.
- The deposit is non-refundable but will go towards the first month’s fees.

Parents agree to **pay for services in advance** on the first of each month through the pre-authorized payment plan (EFT) and have provided a void cheque or banking information.

Should a payment be late or returned to us NSF the following policies will be in effect:

- On the **1st** working day of the month a \$20.00 late fee will be charged
- There will be a \$25.00 charge for each NSF payment.

Our Dayhome Program Educators depend upon us to collect their fees. We will make every effort to contact you regarding a payment problem. It is important to communicate openly so we can assist you if we can. If we are unable to reach a mutual solution then, as a last resort, your childcare will be suspended until payment is received.

Communication and agreement about your drop-off and pick-up times are important. These times are outlined on your Parent Agreement form. If your child(ren) is/are picked up late or after contracted hours, Dayhome Program Educators can charge a late fee of \$1/minute/child. Late fees will be added to your fees withdrawn at the beginning of the next month.

Should you leave care with an outstanding balance on your account, we will call you to make a payment arrangement. As a last resort, we will send your account to a collection agency. All costs incurred on a client/agency/solicitor basis will be your responsibility and there is a statute of limitations of 6 years on this account. If we have had to suspend your childcare due to a balance owing, two weeks' notice will be added to your account and paid to your Dayhome Program Educator upon receipt.

Parents agree to give **two weeks written notice of termination** unless there are extenuating circumstances. You are responsible to pay this notice. This policy is in effect immediately upon registration. Should you register your child and decide not to go through with placement you are responsible for paying for two weeks.

Please note that Dayhome Program Educators are not required to work on statutory holidays but are entitled to be paid for them. These are included in your fees.

## HOLIDAYS

**Please note that there is NO REDUCTION in fees for your family's holiday time.**

Dayhome Program Educator's full-time fees will apply to school age children needing full time care in the summer.

If a Dayhome Program Educator is away/closed for more than 10 days, the contract between the Dayhome Program Educator and parent is terminated until parents and Dayhome Program Educator re-contract.

## STATUTORY HOLIDAYS

The following is a list of designated days that a Dayhome may close. It is not a requirement that operators provide alternate care on designated holidays. If you need care on a statutory holiday, please check with your Dayhome Program Educator as far in advance as possible.

|                              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Christmas Day                | December 25, 2025  |
| Boxing Day                   | December 26, 2025  |
| New Year's Day               | January 1, 2026    |
| Family Day                   | February 16, 2026  |
| Good Friday                  | April 3, 2026      |
| Easter Monday                | April 6, 2026      |
| Victoria Day                 | May 18, 2026       |
| Canada Day                   | July 1, 2026       |
| Civic Holiday                | August 3, 2026     |
| Labour Day                   | September 7, 2026  |
| Truth and Reconciliation Day | September 30, 2026 |
| Thanksgiving Day             | October 12, 2026   |
| Remembrance Day              | November 11, 2026  |
| Christmas Day                | December 25, 2026  |
| Boxing Day (in lieu)         | December 28, 2026  |
| New Year's Day               | January 1, 2027    |

## CONTRACT CHANGES

For contract changes including change of payment, days of care, hours of care, switching to another dayhome within the agency, and short-term contracts, parents/guardians must give **one month notice** and complete a Change of Services form.

## TERMINATION OF CARE POLICY

The Agency and the Dayhome Program Educator must be advised **at least TWO WEEKS in advance** when you plan to terminate the Family Dayhome Contract unless there are extenuating circumstances. We encourage you to use the Change of Services Form. Your Dayhome Program Educator has a supply at their Dayhome, or you can call the office, and we can email one to you. If enough notice is not given, you will be expected to pay two weeks fees in lieu of notice. If your Dayhome Program Educator is going to cease caring for your child, they are required to give at least **one month's** written notice to you and the Agency, unless there are extenuating circumstances. During this period, if you make new childcare arrangements, you are not obligated to continue care with your Dayhome Program Educator.

## PRE-AUTHORIZED PAYMENT PLAN

### **How do I apply for the Pre-Authorized Payment Plan?**

Just complete our Pre-Authorized Payment application form, include a void cheque and email it to our office. If you have a savings account, please visit your branch and have a bank representative complete the form or fill out the application form and attach a bank statement that includes your bank number, transit number, and account number.

### **How will I know what deductions are being made from my account?**

On the **first working day of each month**, your monthly contracted amount will be deducted. If you have a credit on your Child Development Dayhomes account, your Pre-Authorized Payment Deduction will be adjusted to reflect this. If you have incurred any additional costs your next Pre-Authorized Payment will be increased to reflect this.

**\*\* Please note that we will do our best to get your credit to you in month following, however we cannot guarantee this due to time constraints at month end.\*\***

### **What if I move, or change banks?**

If for any reason you need to change your Pre-Authorized Payment Plan just phone, fax, e-mail, or visit our office **at least 5 days** prior to your next Pre-Authorized Deduction and we will make the changes immediately.

When you are no longer in care with the agency, any credits owing to you will be deposited into your bank account in the month following the termination of the childcare contract.

## PARENT SUPPORT

Dayhome Program Educators are required to post weekly activity and menu plans on their bulletin boards for parents to view and provide feedback.

Parents and Dayhome Program Educators are encouraged to use communication strips or books for ongoing discussion regarding the child(ren). This communication is a great way for parents to be involved in decisions related to their child(ren).

Parents may provide feedback to the agency at any time by calling the agency or filling out the parent survey on our website. Child Development Dayhomes takes all concerns and complaints very seriously. Please submit complaints in writing to the agency. All complaints and critical incidents are documented, investigated, and reported to the

Government Child and Family Services Authority. Complaints and critical incidents are documented on the Dayhome Program Educator profile and performance assessments.

Every month, the Agency posts a newsletter for parents and Dayhome Program Educators on our website. You can access the newsletter at <http://www.childdev.com/fortmcmurray/newsletter>. Be sure to watch the newsletter for important memos, childcare tips, activity and recipe ideas, community events, announcements of upcoming childcare workshops and conferences that you are welcome attend, and more.

Child Development Dayhomes is affiliated with many community services; please contact your Childcare Consultant if you need any community connections or referrals. Dayhome Program Educators access community services and resources such as libraries and park programs during field trips and outings.

Dayhome Program Educator profiles are available for parents to see on their bulletin board.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All our Dayhome Program Educators will be supplied with the necessary paperwork and emergency information required to care for your child. These documents will always be kept confidential. Your Dayhome Program Educator has signed an Oath of Confidentiality contract.

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Child Development Dayhomes Fort McMurray (CDDHFM) understands its staff and affiliated dayhome educators use social media platforms and online communities. Social media platforms allow users to post messages and upload media content such as photographs and videos on the Internet. We encourage you to use social media to connect with CDDHFM in a professional and positive manner. CDDHFM is active on the following websites and social media sites:

Child Development Dayhomes website: [www.childdev.com](http://www.childdev.com)

Facebook: [facebook.com/CDDHFortMcMurray](https://facebook.com/CDDHFortMcMurray)

Twitter: [twitter.com/ChildDevFM](https://twitter.com/ChildDevFM)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/child-development-dayhomes](https://linkedin.com/company/child-development-dayhomes)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@childdevelopmentdayhomes>

Instagram: [Instagram.com/childdevfm](https://instagram.com/childdevfm)

Kijiji: [www.kijiji.com](http://www.kijiji.com)

Google My Business – Child Development Dayhomes Fort McMurray

CDDHFM staff and educators agree to respect the privacy of our clients (children and parents) and must get your consent for all materials (photography and media) posted on the CDDHFM website, affiliated websites, or social media platforms; consent is also required from former clients (parents and children). CDDHFM is not liable for any content posted on any Internet site by educators or staff.

## STORYPARK

Child Development Dayhomes views documentation/learning stories of children as an important and vital way to communicate to families of children in our care how and what children are learning throughout their time in our dayhomes. Documentation is an accreditation standard and with the recent implementation of the Alberta Curriculum Framework ([www.childcareframework.com](http://www.childcareframework.com)) we hope to make it a meaningful way to see your child grow and develop in so many ways! Storypark is not meant to replace face to face interactions between parent and Dayhome Program Educator about a child's day, but to enhance communication. If you leave the agency, you will get to keep your child's profile with Storypark forever (for free) and continue to add to it if you choose to. Storypark also has a mobile app you can download in the Google Play store called "StoryPark for Families."