

24-25 Express Childcare Parent Handbook

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Mission and Values

The Express Childcare Program is committed to providing quality, convenient childcare for the children of Spokane Public Schools in a safe, nurturing and enriching environment. We value:

Children First -- We put children first, respecting each child as a valued and unique individual with distinct interests and opinions.

Commitment to Families -- We see ourselves as partners with parents and schools in ensuring the best care for children.

Respect for Diversity -- We honor diversity and recognize that we are better when we are diverse.

Sensitivity to Children -- We are sensitive to children's varying abilities and learning styles.

Enrollment Policy

Express Childcare programs are open, on a space available basis, to elementary students ages 5 to 12 who are enrolled in Spokane Public Schools. Children must be potty-trained, able to participate in a group setting, be able to follow directions independently and adhere to program rules and expectations to participate in the Express Program.

Families currently enrolled and whose accounts are current are advised of the opportunity to re-enroll for the following school year before enrollment is open to other families of Spokane Public Schools. Siblings of children currently enrolled may also be enrolled during this period.

If there is no waiting list during the school year, vacancies in the Express Program are open to any student currently attending the school with vacancies.

Program Hours

Express operates from 6:30AM. until school begins and after school until 6:00PM and follows the Spokane Public Schools school year schedule for days school is closed. The program will open normal hours for late start days. During early release days, the Express program will begin after school is released. Locations and hours can be found online at www.SpokaneSchools.org/express or by calling (509)354-7312.

School Break and Summer Schedules

During Spring Break, full-day Express is offered at select sites to currently enrolled students. Information regarding break programs and available sites is available three weeks prior to the break. A full-day summer program is also offered at select sites to any incoming student Grades 1 through 6 enrolled in Spokane Public Schools. A separate enrollment is required for both programs.

Program Closures

Express will be closed for the following holidays: Veterans Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, SPS Winter Break, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, and Juneteenth. In addition, Express will also be closed on Elementary Progress Conference Days, Semester Break Day, and Non-Student School Break Days. Check the school calendar for specific dates.

Emergency School Closures

Express will close during periods of emergency school closures (weather and other emergencies). School closures are broadcast on local TV and radio stations. When school is delayed 2 hours, Express will start at 8:00AM.

Daily Schedule

A typical daily afternoon schedule for School Age Express includes group meeting time to review the day's plan, snack time, free choice, planned enrichment activities, outside or gym time and homework time. Before school schedules include quiet time, free choice activities, breakfast, and outside/gym time. Schedules vary from school to school to best fit the unique needs of each school community. Schedules are posted at each site.

Program Curriculum

Express staff believe that children learn best through hands-on experiences. Activity centers provide a variety of developmentally appropriate choices. Activities are planned to foster growth and development of the whole child. Staff-initiated enrichment activities such as story-time, cooking, science, art, music, and games are offered. Group meeting time is held daily for sharing, discussion, and planning. Homework and reading time are included daily. Outdoor play and snacks round out the day.

Homework

Quiet space is available at each site for school-age children to work on homework and study. At least 20 to 30 minutes of quiet homework time is provided daily.

Hand Washing Policy

Children and staff are to wash hands when entering program, before and after eating or preparing food, after toileting, after coming in contact with body fluids, and after coming in from outside, as needed.

Supervision During Transition

Children are supervised at all times by Express staff while participating in Express. During transition between rooms or inside/outside time, staff maintain checklists, do headcounts, and communicate to ensure the safety of each child. After school, Express children report to and are signed in by the Express staff each day. If a child does not arrive after school on a scheduled day, Express staff begin to check-in with other school personnel. If the child is not located, the parent/guardian is called. If the child is still not located, the parent is asked to call 911 and report the child missing.

The Express staff also notify Spokane Public Schools Security Officers who are available to help if needed.

Program Staff

Express staff are well qualified and meet all Washington State Licensing requirements required by DCYF. All staff receive on-going training to assure quality care for your children. Each staff person is required to have a minimum of 10 hours of training per year related to childcare as well as annually complete a series of SafeSchools Trainings directed by Spokane Public Schools.

Program Quality

All Express sites are licensed by the State of Washington and follow all DCYF licensing policies and procedures. Express program standards are consistent with national and state accreditation standards.

Snack/Meals

Express provides a daily nutritious afternoon snack that adheres to licensing guidelines. All school-age children can participate in their school's breakfast/lunch program or bring a sack lunch from home. A dietary form must be signed by a doctor and parent/guardian for a child to receive a substitute for the daily meal or snack due to allergies, etc.

During Express Spring Break Program, children must bring a lunch. As during the school year, sack lunches cannot be refrigerated or heated, so please use an ice pack if packing perishables. A light breakfast and afternoon snack will be served.

During Express Summer Program, children will participate in the district's summer meal program for breakfast and lunch. An afternoon snack will be served.

Field Trips

Express may occasionally participate in field trips during the school year, and during summer program on a daily basis. Your permission for field trips was given on the Online Signature Form. In addition, we will require your signature of permission for each individual field trip. Please pay attention to site flyers or postings for individual site field trip information. If it is inconvenient for your child to attend the planned field trip, we will be unable to provide care for your child on that day, as all staff will be needed for the trip.

Personal Belongings

Children do have a place to store their belongings at Express, but please mark all belongings and do not send money, toys, any technology or anything of value that might get lost, stolen or broken. Express is not responsible for broken, lost or stolen items. There is a Lost & Found Box at each site. Please remind your child to take everything home every day! What to bring:

School Year

- Water bottle
- Jacket or coat (weather permitting we will be going outside often)

Summer

- Swimming suit
- Towel
- Waterproof sunscreen (Express staff are not allowed to apply sunscreen without a district medication form.)
- Hat and/or sunglasses
- Labeled water bottle
- Sturdy walking shoes (every day) No flip flops!
- Socks
- Waterproof jacket
- Extra clothing (weather changes quickly)
- Backpack

Please make sure that all items are labeled with the child's name or initials for identification.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

Express provides childcare for children in a group setting that includes organized activities to enhance children's school and life experiences. We welcome children with special needs into our program who can participate in a group setting, follow directions independently, potty-trained and adhere to program rules and expectations. Please identify any health concerns or special needs your child may have when enrolling so we can determine if accommodations can feasibly be made for your child to be successfully included in our program. If it is determined that the necessary accommodations can be made, additional time may be required to implement those accommodations before start of attendance. These arrangements will be made by the program supervisor in collaboration with the parent/guardian to ensure a safe, quality, experience for your child(ren) in Express.

Non-Religious Activities

Express activities and curriculum are in accordance with Spokane Public Schools district policies for non-religious instruction.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Communication and Support

Please take the time to talk with your site director and staff about your child's daily activities. Keep the communication lines open for your child's best interest. If you'd like to share a particular talent, have access to needed supplies, resources or have suggestions, please let the site director know.

Program Information Board

The program information board posts monthly schedules, staff names and hours, snack menus, curriculum, resources, licensing information, programing policies and procedures, and special messages. Please reference this regularly for updates.

Visiting the Program

Parents or guardians are welcome to visit the program with their own child any time during normal operating hours. Non-enrolled siblings are welcome when accompanying the parent/guardian. Friends and acquaintances are not permitted to visit the site during program hours.

The registering parent may request in writing that another parent not be given access. Such a request will be honored to the extent feasible and will require legal documentation. Express does not release documentation including sign-in and out records without a subpoena or other court order. Child records are kept secure and confidential. These records are available to the child's registered parent/guardian upon request.

CHILD BEHAVIOR

Behavior Guidance Policy

The goal of the Express Behavior Guidance Policy is to help children learn to make good choices, problem solve and resolve conflict. We strive to create a caring community where children know:

- I belong here
- I am safe
- I matter and everyone else does, too
- When we have problems, we can work them out
- Together we can do wonderful things

We will create clear boundaries and expectations for behavior to encourage and guide good decision making. When a child's behavior becomes disruptive to the program, we will:

- Talk with the child/ren to understand the issue or behavior
- Provide logical consequences which may include some quiet "think time," choosing another activity, or being directed by the staff to another activity
- Share with the parents regarding the situation/incident, our process, and solutions

If a child's behavior creates a serious concern for his/her own or others' safety, a child may be suspended from the program. These behaviors include harassment, leaving a designated area without permission, and verbal or physical violence. If behavior continues it could result in termination from program.

School or Home Conflicts

Any conflicts your child may have at school or home will affect his or her behavior during Express. Please keep us informed of such conflicts, so that we can be sensitive to your child's needs. We would like to work as a team with the school and family. This will enable us to provide the best environment for your child's growth and development.

In all events, if the unacceptable behavior continues, or is endangering the child's or others' safety, then Express may suspend or terminate care for the child or children involved.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Practices Concerning an Ill Child

Please do not send your child to Express or school if he or she is ill. If your child becomes ill while at Express and cannot participate in the program, he/she will be given a quiet place to rest, and you will be notified. Children who have a fever or any contagious illness will not be allowed to remain at the site, and you will be asked to pick up your child.

The following are examples of symptoms that might indicate the need for your child's exclusion from our program:

- A fever of 100.4 degrees F or higher in the last 24 hours. Your child should be fever free (without the use of fever reducing medicines) for 24 hours before returning to school.
- A consistently goopy, runny nose.
- Drainage from the eye and/or redness of the eyelid or skin around the eye.
- A bad cough – one that you wouldn't want your well child to be around.
- A sore throat, especially with fever or swollen glands in the neck.
- Shortness of breath or other problems with normal breathing.
- A child that seems ill – unusually tired, pale, or difficult to awaken, headache or body aches; seems confused or irritable, and/or lacks normal appetite.
- A rash that is associated with fever or severe itching.
- Vomiting with/without diarrhea within the last 24 hours. Your child should be free of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school. NOTE: A child who has one episode of bloody diarrhea or two episodes of diarrhea at school must be sent home and cannot return until the diarrhea has resolved. Some diarrhea may be associated with bacteria or virus. If your child has severe diarrhea you should contact your health care provider.
- Your child needs to remain at home for 24 hours after starting an antibiotic.
- Any contagious condition such as chicken pox, influenza, COVID-19, whooping cough, or gastroenteritis.
- Too tired or sick to participate in daily activities
- As directed by your health care provider.

If your child has any of the above symptoms, he or she will not be accepted into care. If they develop these symptoms during the day, we will require a parent or guardian to pick up the child from the program.

Medication Management

Spokane Public School district medication policies are followed in Express. State licensing requirements do not permit medication administration without written authorization from the parent/guardian and physician. Any medication brought to the site must be in its original container and clearly labeled with the child's name and given to the site director. This medication will be stored in a locked box and administered only by an authorized staff member. Students with healthcare plans will not be allowed to start Express without the healthcare plan on file and emergency medication on site. All emergency medications will be kept in an unlocked area not accessible to children during program hours and locked during non-program hours.

Signing Your Student In and Out

It is a state licensing requirement that each child be signed in/out of the program each day by a authorized adult. Parents and/or those adults (18 years or older) authorized to pick up the child as noted on the enrollment form must sign in/out with a provided PIN Code. PIN Codes will be provided when program registration is complete.

The site staff will sign in/out the children as they leave for or return from school.

Children may only be picked up by an adult authorized either on the enrollment form or with a written notice from the parent to the Express billing staff. If you have a last-minute change, please call the Express site and leave a message for the site director.

If someone unfamiliar to the Express staff will be picking up your child, Express will require that adult to show a picture ID. In the event that the adult does not have identification, the child will not be released until Express staff has contacted the parent/ guardian.

Children may not sign themselves in or out.

Legal documentation (such as a court order or restraining order) must be provided if a parent/guardian is not allowed to pick up a child. Express staff cannot prevent the release of a child to a parent without legal documentation instructing otherwise.

Transportation

Transportation to and from other Spokane Public Schools sites is provided only for those schools participating in the Express program and designated as transport sites. Transportation will be provided to and from field trip locations.

Child Pick Up & Unsafe/Condition of Parent

Express respects the rights of parents to access their own child. However, if Express staff feel a parent is in an unsafe condition to drive or otherwise leave with their child (such as under the influence of drugs or alcohol), the Express staff may suggest for the parent to call the other parent, a friend, relative, or a cab. The Express staff may also call 911 for assistance and to report the incident. If the situation occurs repeatedly, services will be discontinued.

Emergency Procedures

Parents sign a Medical Release and Emergency Care statement during registration through the Online Signature Form, giving Express permission to seek medical attention for the child in the event of an emergency. Parents are required to update Express on any change of home, work, or medical phone numbers.

In the event of an emergency and the parent or designated person cannot be reached, 911 will be called and the child will be transported by ambulance at the parent's expense.

In Case of Accident

Immediate first aid will be provided by a first aid trained Express staff member to a child who sustains a minor injury (scrape, scratch, insect bite, etc.) and will be reported to the parent/guardian at pick-up time. A member of the staff will contact parents if there is a severe injury. Depending on the severity of the injury, parents may choose to have their child remain in care or pick up their child as soon as possible if medical care is necessary. All injuries will be documented.

Pesticide Application Policy

Parents will be notified of any pest or weed control spraying at least 48 hours in advance. All areas that are sprayed for pests or weed control will be clearly marked.

Children will not play on the sprayed area for 24 hours following application.

Program Health Care Plan

A complete copy of the Health Care Plan for the Express Program including communicable diseases, cleaning, blood borne pathogen procedures and injury prevention is available at each Express site in the Site Program Manual.

Emergency Response Plan

Each school has an Emergency Disaster and Crisis Plan to guide schools in dealing with extraordinary incidents including natural disasters, catastrophic accidents, and man-made threats to the school community. Site disaster plans are located in each room of the school, including Express rooms and available for review to parents.

Mandatory CPS Reporting

Express staff shall protect the child in care from child abuse, neglect, or exploitation, as required under chapter 26.44 RCW.

Corporal punishment will not be permitted on the Express premises by anyone, including parents and staff. This includes biting, jerking, shaking, slapping, hitting, kicking, and verbal or any other means of inflicting pain. Washington State Law requires Express members to report suspected incidents of abuse and neglect. In doing so, they have immunity under the law for good-faith reporting.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Spokane Public Schools Express program is committed to providing an environment that is free from all forms of harassment. Express is an equal opportunity program and does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, color, national origin, gender, age, marital status or disability.

PROGRAM BILLING AND REGISTRATION

Contract Terms and Conditions

Express fees /co-payments are due by the 1st and must be received in full by the Express Billing office by the 5th of that same month. Payments received after the 5th, will be assessed a late payment fee of 10% of the unpaid balance not to exceed \$50 per month, charged to the family account. Childcare services will be interrupted on accounts where payment in full is not made by the 25th of the current month. The interruption will be effective the first of the following month. If childcare is interrupted, your child will not be allowed to attend Express until your balance is paid in full and a written request to return is made to Express Billing. Re-enrollment is conditional upon Express approval and available space. Payment for childcare is due in full for the current month at time of registration if enrolling on or after the 5th of the month.

Schedule and program change requests must be received by the billing office in writing (letter/e-mail/fax), by the 23rd day of the current month and will take effect the following month. Schedule and program changes will be accommodated based on available space. There is a minimum requirement of three morning or three afternoon sessions per week and six consecutive weeks of enrollment. This is a set, non-flexible weekly schedule for the school year, unless a schedule change is received. Please note that there is a required minimum two-day processing period once completed enrollment forms and deposit or DCYF authorization is received by the Express Billing office.

Registration Fee

There is a \$50 non-refundable registration fee per child due at time pre-registration for the upcoming school year to reserve your spot(s). For agency assisted families, the fee will be credited and applied to any co-payments due, or refunded once we receive notification from the authorizing agency that you are approved. If the child(ren) is/are withdrawn and re-enrolled to start more than sixty days later, another registration fee will be charged.

Withdrawal

Written notification (letter/e-mail/fax) of withdrawal is required in the Express Billing office ten business days prior to withdrawal effective date. The account will continue to accrue charges until written notification is received in the Express Billing office. The parent or guardian is responsible for all charges up to and including the effective withdrawal date. Final payment on accounts is due ten days after the final statement date.

Extra Usage

Parents/Guardians will be charged an additional fee for each session used outside of those indicated on their billing contract. Extra usage will be determined based on available space and will require prior approval from the site director. Fees will be charged on a per session basis.

There is no sibling discount for extra usage charges. Switching days or programs will be charged as extra usage. Extra usage charges will appear on future billing statements.

Late Pick Up/Early Drop Off

An additional fee of \$5 for each five minutes or portion thereof will be charged per child for child(ren) picked up after the end of each program or dropped off prior to the start of each program. Overuse of non-emergency late pick-up or drop-off could result in withdrawal from program.

Sibling and Other Discounts

The discount rate for siblings is 15% calculated on the sibling whose contract is of equal or lesser value. Discount does not apply to full day rates.

A 25% discount will be applied for December and April monthly fees. A 50% discount will be applied for June monthly fees.

Express issues ten months of tuition throughout the school year with credits totaling one month to account for all breaks and holidays throughout the school year. Tuition is a standard monthly rate regardless of the number of days in each month, so discounts are provided in December, April, and June. These discounts do not directly correlate to the non-school days during these specific months – these are the months Express has chosen to provide the annual discounts, so families only pay for nine months of tuition instead of ten.

Absence Credit

There is no vacation or illness credit, or before and/or after school activity credit.

State/Other Agency Assistance

Families receiving childcare assistance whose registration paperwork is submitted prior to agency approval, must pay a \$50 per child registration fee at time of registration to reserve their spot(s). Once we receive notification from the authorizing agency that you are approved, your account will be credited with the deposit towards your monthly co-pay or refunded. DSHS will be informed if co-payments are delinquent; this may result in a termination of subsidies. Childcare will not be provided without agency authorization or the completion of a parent payment contract. ***Please refer to Contract Terms and Conditions for specific payment information.***

Note: Five consecutive absences from any program without proper parent communication may result in removal from program.

Past Due Accounts

Accounts are considered past due if the account is not paid by the 5th of each month and care will be interrupted. Past due accounts will not be allowed to re-enroll until the account has been paid in full and a request to return is made to Express Billing. Re-enrollment is conditional upon Express management approval and available space. If payment arrangements have not been made with the Billing Supervisor, the collection process will be followed as per District Policy.

Dishonored Checks

Parents/Guardians will receive written notice if a check has been dishonored by our bank. There is a \$25 fee for a dishonored check. Childcare will be denied if the dishonored check is not redeemed. Dishonored checks are redeemable only for cash, money order or cashier's check.

Collection Accounts

Accounts that have been referred to a collection agency per District Policy will be allowed to re-enroll provided the debt has been satisfied with the collection agency and written notice is received from the collection agency. Re-enrollment is conditional upon Express manager approval and will require future payments to be made on the 1st of each month.

Bankrupt Accounts

Past due accounts that have filed bankruptcy will not be allowed to re-enroll in Express.

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