Policies & Procedures

Miracle Grow

LEARNING ACADEMY

Where God's Tiny Miracles Grow and Thrive



Table of Contents

Introduction to Our Policies and Procedures....4
Working With and Communicating With Families....5
Family Handbook....5
Family Orientation....5
Family Conferences and Connection to Community Resources....6
Communication with Families....6
Family Engagement and Feedback....7
Parent Rights....7
Parental Permissions....7
Grievance Procedure....7
Transitions....8
Education....9
Program Mission, Vision, and Philosophy....9
Classroom Arrangement and Learning Areas....9
Required Postings....10
Daily Schedule....10
Nap and Rest Time....10
Curriculum and Lesson Planning....11
Assessment and Documentation....11
Children With Special Needs and Individual Child Care Program Plans....12
Supporting Home Languages....12
Technology and Screen Time....12
School-Age Program....12
Health and Safety....13
Health Care Summary and Immunizations....13
Illness, Exclusion, and Communicable Disease....13
Medication Administration....14
Allergy Prevention and Response....14
Incident, Accident, and Injury Reporting....15
First Aid, CPR, and First Aid Kits....15
Bloodborne Pathogens and Bodily Fluids....15
Diapering and Toileting....15

Handwashing and Hygiene..... 16
Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting..... 16
Nutrition and Meal Service..... 17
Outdoor Play and Physical Activity..... 17
Transportation and Community Walk Safety..... 18
Field Trips..... 18
Animals..... 18
Emergency Preparedness and Response..... 18
Missing or Separated Child Procedure..... 20
Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting..... 20
Supervision and Risk Reduction..... 22
Definition of Supervision..... 22
Supervision During Transitions..... 22
Supervision in Bathrooms and Toileting Areas..... 23
Supervision During Diapering and Use of Elevated Changing Table..... 23
Supervision During Outdoor Play and Community Activities..... 23
Risk Reduction Plan Implementation..... 23
Guidance and Discipline..... 25
Philosophy of Behavior Guidance..... 25
Positive Guidance Strategies..... 25
Behavior Redirection and Support..... 25
Persistent Unacceptable Behavior..... 26
Separation From the Group..... 26
Physical Restraint..... 26
Prohibited Discipline Practices..... 26
Family Communication Regarding Behavior..... 27
Suspension and Expulsion Policy..... 27
Program Fit..... 27
Staffing and Supervision of Staff..... 28
Staff Qualifications and Roles..... 28
Background Studies..... 28
Staff-to-Child Ratios and Distribution..... 28
Staff Orientation and Training..... 28

Supervision of Staff and Performance Expectations....29
Substitute and Relief Staff....29
Volunteers and Students....29
Staff Accountability and Professional Conduct....29
Drug and Alcohol Policy....30
Use of Personal Electronic Devices....30
Child Records and Confidentiality....31
Required Child Records....31
Record Storage and Security....31
Access to Child Records....31
Confidentiality Practices....31
Record Retention....32
Enrollment, Attendance, and Release of Children....33
Enrollment Requirements....33
Attendance Tracking and Head Counts....33
Arrival and Drop-Off Procedures....33
Departure and Pick-Up Procedures....33
Late Pick-Up....34
Staff Acknowledgment....35

Introduction to Our Policies and Procedures

Miracle Grow Learning Academy has developed these policies and procedures to ensure the health, safety, supervision, and well-being of all children in care and to comply with the requirements of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Care Center Licensing Rules and Regulations (Minnesota Rules, chapter 9503, and Minnesota Statutes, chapter 245A).

These policies and procedures provide clear guidance to staff regarding program expectations, daily practices, and required safety measures. They are designed to support consistent decision-making, reduce risk, and promote a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate learning environment for preschool and school-age children.

All staff are required to review these policies and procedures during orientation and annually thereafter. Staff are expected to always follow these policies while children are in care. Ongoing training and supervision are provided to ensure staff understand and correctly implement all policies and procedures, including the program's Risk Reduction Plan.

These policies and procedures are reviewed at least annually by the Owner/Director and administrative team and are updated as needed based on changes in licensing requirements, program operations, facility conditions, or identified risks. Policies may also be revised following incidents, licensing feedback, or recommendations from consultants or regulatory authorities.

A copy of the Policies and Procedures Manual is available to staff, families, and licensing representatives upon request. Families are informed of relevant policies through the Family Handbook and during the enrollment process. Where this manual and the Family Handbook address the same topic, they are intended to match; staff should bring any difference to administration so it can be corrected.

Brandy Henry, Owner/Director

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Working With and Communicating With Families

Miracle Grow Learning Academy recognizes families as essential partners in each child's growth, development, and well-being. Open, respectful, and consistent communication between families and staff is fundamental to creating a safe, supportive, and nurturing learning environment.

The program is committed to maintaining clear communication practices that promote collaboration, transparency, and trust. Staff communicate regularly with families regarding program expectations, daily routines, child progress, health and safety matters, and any concerns that may arise. All communication is conducted in a respectful, culturally responsive manner that honors each family's values, background, and language preferences.

Family Handbook

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides each family with a Family Handbook upon enrollment. The handbook is available in electronic or printed format and contains important information regarding program policies, procedures, and expectations.

The Family Handbook includes, but is not limited to, information related to hours of operation, health and safety practices, supervision, behavior guidance, meals and nutrition, outdoor play, field trips, emergency procedures, communication practices, and parent rights. The handbook is designed to support clear communication between the program and families and to ensure families understand program operations and expectations.

Families are required to review the Family Handbook during the enrollment process. Parents or legal guardians acknowledge receipt and understanding of the handbook by signing the Family Orientation or Enrollment Acknowledgment form.

The Family Handbook is reviewed at least annually by the Owner/Director and administrative team and is updated as needed to reflect changes in licensing requirements, program operations, or policies and procedures.

Family Orientation

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides an orientation for each family prior to or at the start of a child's enrollment whenever possible. The purpose of the orientation is to familiarize families with the program, classroom environment, policies and procedures, and daily routines to ensure a smooth transition into care.

The family orientation includes a review of key program information such as supervision practices, health and safety procedures, arrival and departure routines, communication methods, emergency procedures, and expectations for families and staff. Families are also introduced to their child's classroom, teaching staff, daily schedule, and communication tools used by the program.

Orientation checklist. Staff use the Family Orientation Form to make sure each family is shown or told about:

- The Family Communication Board, newsletters, lesson plans, and the daily schedule
- Their child's teacher and cubby
- The sign-in/sign-out process and Playground app
- The importance of current emergency contacts and authorized pick-ups
- Required health paperwork, medication procedures, and allergy plans
- Hours of operation, late pick-up, and parking/drop-off procedures

- Their child's routines, special needs, and developmental goals (Getting to Know Your Family Form, completed within 10 days of enrollment)

Families are given the opportunity to ask questions and share important information about their child, including health needs, allergies, routines, and developmental considerations. Completion of the family orientation is documented through a signed orientation or enrollment acknowledgment form and maintained in the child's file.

Family Conferences and Connection to Community Resources

Miracle Grow Learning Academy values ongoing collaboration with families to support each child's growth and development. Family conferences are offered quarterly and as needed and may be requested by families or initiated by teaching staff or administration. At least 30 minutes is set aside for each conference, and a Conference Form is completed and kept in the child's education file.

Conferences provide an opportunity to discuss a child's development, learning progress, social-emotional growth, behavior, and any concerns that may arise. Conferences are conducted in a respectful, collaborative manner and focus on supporting the child's success at home and in the program.

When appropriate, families may be offered information about community resources that support children and families, such as early childhood screening, developmental services, behavioral supports, family support programs, or other community-based resources. Referrals are shared as information only and do not replace medical, mental health, or educational evaluations.

Referral process. When a teacher or family has a concern about a child's development, health, behavior, or mental health, the teacher documents observations and meets with the family to discuss options (the child's health care provider, the school district's Early Childhood Special Education or Help Me Grow, or a community agency). The family and teacher agree on a follow-up plan, and the Site Supervisor helps the family connect with resources. Written parental consent is obtained before any information is shared with an outside agency.

Participation in conferences and use of community resources is voluntary. All information shared during conferences and referrals is handled confidentially and in accordance with program confidentiality policies.

Communication with Families

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to maintaining open, respectful, and consistent communication with families. Effective communication supports strong partnerships, promotes continuity of care, and ensures the health, safety, and well-being of each child.

Staff communicate with families regularly regarding their child's daily experiences, routines, activities, and any health or safety concerns. Communication may occur through in-person conversations, electronic messaging through Playground, daily reports, newsletters, conferences, phone calls, or email, depending on the nature of the information being shared.

Confidential information regarding children and families is shared only with authorized individuals and handled in a respectful and private manner. Staff are expected to communicate in a culturally responsive and professional way that honors each family's values, background, and language preferences.

Families are encouraged to communicate openly with teaching staff and administration and to share information that may affect their child's care, such as changes in routine, health concerns, or family circumstances.

Family Engagement and Feedback

Miracle Grow Learning Academy invites families to take part in the life of the program. Family events and celebrations are offered throughout the year, and families are welcome to volunteer in classrooms or share their culture and talents with children.

At least once a year, the program asks families to evaluate the program through a survey. Feedback is also welcomed at any time through conversations, Playground, and email. Family feedback is reviewed by administration and used in the annual review of policies, procedures, and program goals.

Parent Rights

Miracle Grow Learning Academy recognizes parents and legal guardians as partners in their child's care and education. Families are treated with respect and dignity and are encouraged to actively participate in their child's early learning experience.

Parents have the right to:

- Be informed about their child's development, daily experiences, and program activities
- Review program policies, procedures, and the Child Care Program Plan
- Visit the program and observe their child during hours of operation
- Participate in conferences, meetings, and program events
- Be informed of health, safety, and supervision practices
- Raise questions, concerns, or grievances without fear of retaliation
- Access licensing information and contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services if needed
- Review their child's records

Information regarding parent rights, including licensing contact information and grievance procedures, is provided to families upon enrollment and is available for review at any time.

Parental Permissions

Written parental permission is obtained at enrollment, and kept in the child's file, for: field trips and neighborhood walks; transportation; photographs and media; application of sunscreen and insect repellent; posting of allergy and special diet information; and release of information to outside agencies. A separate written permission is obtained before each occasion of research, experimental procedure, or public relations activity involving a child. Families may add or revoke permission at any time in writing.

Grievance Procedure

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to addressing family concerns in a respectful, timely, and professional manner. Families are encouraged to communicate concerns openly so they may be resolved collaboratively and in the best interest of the child.

When a concern arises, families are encouraged to follow the steps below:

1. **Classroom-Level Discussion:** Parents are encouraged to first discuss concerns related to their child or classroom directly with the child's teacher.
2. **Administrative Review:** If the concern is not resolved, parents may request a meeting with the Site Supervisor (Vanessa Urzua, 651-336-9200), who will review the concern and schedule a meeting within two (2) business days.
3. **Director Review:** If a satisfactory resolution is still not achieved, the concern may be brought to the attention of the Owner/Director, Brandy Henry, 470-257-8469.

4. **Licensing:** Families always have the right to contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Care Licensing Division, at (651) 431-6500 or PO Box 64242, St. Paul, MN 55164-0242.

Families may raise concerns without fear of retaliation, and no child will be negatively affected because a family brings forward a concern. All grievances are documented with the date, time, people involved, and resolution, and are kept confidential among those with a need to know. Information regarding how to contact DHS Child Care Licensing is provided in the Family Handbook and posted in the center. Staff grievance procedures are in the Employee Handbook.

Transitions

Staff support children and families through transitions into care, between classrooms or age groups, and into kindergarten. Teachers share information with families ahead of time, use the Getting to Know Your Family Form and conference notes to plan supports, and introduce children gradually to new spaces and adults when possible. For children moving on to kindergarten, teachers share kindergarten-readiness information and, with family permission, assessment information that may help the child's new school.

Education

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides a developmentally appropriate, child-centered learning environment that supports the social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative growth of preschool and school-age children. The program recognizes that children learn best through hands-on experiences, meaningful relationships, and play-based exploration guided by caring and responsive educators.

The educational program is designed to meet the individual needs of each child while fostering curiosity, independence, confidence, and a love for learning. Teaching staff plan learning experiences that are engaging, inclusive, and responsive to children's interests, developmental levels, and cultural backgrounds.

The curriculum aligns with Minnesota's Early Learning Standards (Early Childhood Indicators of Progress) and supports school readiness by promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, language development, and social skills. Ongoing observation and assessment are used to inform instruction, guide planning, and support each child's growth and development.

Program Mission, Vision, and Philosophy

Mission. Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, inclusive, and affordable learning environment where every child feels valued and supported. We accomplish this by building strong relationships with families, centering each child's individual needs, using intentional and developmentally appropriate curriculum, and consistently following safety protocols and best practices.

Vision. We envision a thriving community where children develop emotional awareness, confidence in their abilities, and a meaningful connection to nature, learning, and one another. Our goal is for children to grow into compassionate, curious, and capable learners who feel a strong sense of belonging.

Educational Philosophy. The educational philosophy of Miracle Grow Learning Academy is grounded in developmentally appropriate practice and play-based learning. Children learn best through active exploration, hands-on experiences, and positive interactions with responsive adults. Teaching staff create engaging learning environments that encourage curiosity, creativity, problem-solving, and independence.

Instruction is guided by observation, assessment, and family input to ensure learning experiences meet each child's individual needs and interests. The program values diversity, equity, and inclusion and strives to create classrooms that reflect the cultures, languages, and experiences of the children and families served.

Core Values. Integrity, Kindness, Curiosity, Optimism, Belonging, Responsibility, Joy, Respect, Collaboration, Growth, and Service. Staff model these values and reinforce them through daily routines, classroom experiences, and interactions.

Classroom Arrangement and Learning Areas

Miracle Grow Learning Academy classrooms are intentionally arranged to support developmentally appropriate learning, active supervision, and child safety. Classroom environments are designed to promote independence, engagement, and positive interactions while allowing staff to maintain sight and sound supervision of all children at all times.

Furniture and learning materials are child-sized, age-appropriate, and arranged to avoid blind spots, running paths, or overcrowded areas. Classroom layouts are reviewed regularly to ensure clear visibility, safe movement, and easy access for both children and staff.

Learning areas are organized to support a variety of developmental domains and learning styles. These areas may include, but are not limited to, literacy, dramatic play, blocks and construction, art and

creativity, science and exploration, math and manipulatives, sensory experiences, music and movement, and quiet or calming spaces. Materials are accessible to children and rotated regularly to maintain interest and support learning goals. Materials, books, and images reflect the cultures, languages, and families of the children enrolled.

Classroom environments are kept clean, organized, and free of hazards. Required postings, safety information, and classroom schedules are displayed in accordance with licensing requirements. Staff are responsible for maintaining the classroom environment and reporting any safety concerns to administration promptly.

Required Postings

The following are posted and kept current:

- Center license and most recent licensing inspection results (Family Communication Board)
- Owner/Director and DHS Licensing contact information and the grievance procedure
- Daily schedule and weekly lesson plan for each classroom
- Emergency procedures, evacuation routes (primary and secondary), shelter areas, and emergency phone numbers in each room
- Special diet and allergy list (with parent permission), handwashing procedure, and diapering procedure
- Menus and CACFP information, including the “And Justice for All” poster
- Maltreatment of Minors mandated reporting information

Daily Schedule

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides a daily schedule that balances child-initiated and teacher-guided activities while supporting the developmental needs of preschool and school-age children. The schedule is designed to offer consistency and predictability while remaining flexible to meet the individual needs of children and the group.

The daily schedule includes time for arrival and departure routines, meals and snacks, handwashing, toileting or diapering as needed, large and small group activities, free choice play, outdoor or large motor activities, rest or quiet time, and transitions between activities. Activities are planned to support social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative development.

Teachers provide advance notice before transitions and support children through transitions in a calm and organized manner. Schedules may be adjusted as needed to accommodate weather conditions, special events, or children’s needs while maintaining appropriate supervision and ratios at all times.

Each classroom posts a written daily schedule that is accessible to families. Picture schedules may be used to support children’s understanding of routines and expectations.

Nap and Rest Time

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides a daily rest or quiet time that supports the developmental needs of preschool and school-age children. Rest time is designed to allow children an opportunity to relax, recharge, and engage in quiet activities in a calm and supportive environment.

Preschool children are provided with individual cots or mats for rest. School-age children who do not sleep are offered quiet activities such as reading, puzzles, or other calm activities while remaining in the supervised rest area. Children are never forced to sleep. In accordance with Minnesota Rules, part

9503.0050, a child who has completed a nap or rested quietly for 30 minutes is not required to remain on a cot and is offered quiet activities.

At least one staff person remains within sight and hearing of all children at all times during rest. Additional staff required to meet ratio and distribution requirements remain in the building and are able to return immediately if children awaken or supervision needs change. As children wake, staff adjust positioning and supervision to maintain appropriate ratios and active supervision.

Rest areas are arranged to allow clear visibility of all children. Lighting is sufficient for supervision while supporting a calm atmosphere. Cots and mats are spaced and arranged to allow staff access to all children.

Safe Rest Practices

- Children rest on individual mats or cots arranged to allow clear visibility and staff access.
- Cots are placed directly on the floor, are not stacked while in use, and have a clear aisle on at least one side.
- Rest takes place in a quiet area separated from children who are engaged in active play.
- Each child has separate bedding, which is labeled and washed weekly and whenever soiled or wet.
- Children's faces are never covered by blankets.
- The program does not serve infants and does not use cribs. Safe sleep policies specific to infants do not apply to this program.

Curriculum and Lesson Planning

Miracle Grow Learning Academy uses a planned, developmentally appropriate curriculum to guide teaching and learning for preschool and school-age children. The program uses the research-based 123 Learn curriculum framework. The curriculum supports school readiness and promotes growth across all developmental domains, including social-emotional, cognitive, language, physical, and creative development.

Teaching staff develop written lesson plans that reflect the curriculum framework and align with Minnesota's Early Learning Standards (Early Childhood Indicators of Progress). Lesson plans are designed to be flexible and responsive to children's interests, abilities, and developmental levels. Activities are adapted as needed to support inclusion and individual learning needs.

Lesson planning includes a balance of child-initiated and teacher-guided activities, indoor and outdoor experiences, large and small group learning, and opportunities for exploration and play. Teachers intentionally plan activities that support smooth transitions, active engagement, and appropriate supervision. Cooking activities and activities involving common food allergens are noted on the lesson plan.

Lesson plans are reviewed and updated regularly and are made available for administrative review and family reference as appropriate.

Assessment and Documentation

Miracle Grow Learning Academy uses ongoing observation and documentation to support children's learning and development. Assessment practices are developmentally appropriate and are used to inform lesson planning, classroom experiences, and individualized support for children.

Teaching staff observe children during daily routines, play, and planned activities to gain insight into their interests, strengths, and areas of growth. Observations may be documented through notes, checklists,

work samples, photographs, or other approved methods. Documentation is used to guide instructional decisions and ensure learning experiences are responsive to each child's developmental needs.

Assessment information is shared with families through quarterly conferences, informal communication, and written documentation as appropriate. Families are encouraged to contribute input and share observations from home to support a comprehensive understanding of their child's development. Teachers meet with each new family within 10 days of enrollment to review the Getting to Know Your Family Form and set initial goals. Teachers are trained on the assessment tool during orientation and annually.

All assessment records and documentation are maintained in a confidential manner and shared only with authorized individuals in accordance with program policies and applicable privacy requirements.

Children With Special Needs and Individual Child Care Program Plans

Children with special educational, mental health, or health needs are welcome. The program makes reasonable accommodations and works with families and specialists so children receive needed services. An Individual Child Care Program Plan is developed with the family, teachers, and specialists for any child who needs one, and teachers working with the child review and follow it.

When a child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), administration schedules a meeting with the family (and, with permission, the school district) to review the plan and decide how the program will support the child.

Supporting Home Languages

Teachers support each child's home language by learning key words from families, including books, labels, songs, and materials in children's home languages when possible, welcoming families to share their language and culture, and using interpreters or translated materials for important communication when needed.

Technology and Screen Time

Passive screen time (videos or television) is limited, must connect to the current topic of study, must be on the lesson plan, and always has an alternate activity available. Interactive technology may be used intentionally as a learning tool. Center devices are used for work purposes only, such as documentation, lesson planning, Playground, and family communication. Photos and videos of children are shared only as permitted by each family's media permission.

School-Age Program

The program provides before- and after-school care for school-age children. Each child's transportation plan (school bus or an outside transportation provider) is confirmed with the family before care begins and kept on file. Children arriving by bus or transportation provider are received by an MGLA staff member, signed in, and counted; school-age children do not enter the building independently. If an expected child does not arrive, staff notify administration and contact the family right away.

Full-day care may be available on school release days and during summer, based on enrollment, staffing, and space; families request school release care at least one week in advance. During after-school care, children have a designated time and space for homework or quiet activities.

Health and Safety

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to maintaining a safe, healthy, and supportive environment for all children in care. The program follows Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements and implements policies and procedures designed to prevent injury, reduce the spread of illness, and promote the physical and emotional well-being of preschool and school-age children.

Health and safety practices are integrated into daily routines and include active supervision, cleanliness and sanitation, safe food handling, proper medication administration, emergency preparedness, and age-appropriate health practices. Staff are trained on health and safety procedures during orientation and receive ongoing training to ensure consistent implementation.

Families are encouraged to partner with the program by sharing relevant health information, following illness and exclusion guidelines, and communicating concerns promptly. Health and safety policies are reviewed regularly and updated as needed to reflect changes in licensing requirements or program operations.

Health Care Summary and Immunizations

A current immunization record (or a medical exemption, or a notarized non-medical exemption as allowed by Minnesota law) is required before a child begins care. A Health Care Summary signed by a licensed health care provider is required within 30 days of the child's start date. Administration tracks due dates, reminds families of updates, and keeps records in the child's file. Children without required documentation may be excluded until it is received. During an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, children who are not immunized may be excluded as directed by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Illness, Exclusion, and Communicable Disease

Miracle Grow Learning Academy works to prevent the spread of illness and communicable disease by following Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements and recommended public health practices. Children must be healthy enough to participate comfortably in daily activities, including indoor and outdoor play.

A child must be excluded from care (Minnesota Rules, part 9503.0080) if the child:

1. Has a reportable illness or condition that the Minnesota Department of Health has determined to be contagious, and a physician has determined has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the health risk to others
2. Has chicken pox, until the child is no longer infectious or the lesions are crusted over
3. Has vomited two or more times since arrival that day
4. Has had three or more abnormally loose stools since arrival that day
5. Has contagious conjunctivitis or pus draining from the eye
6. Has a bacterial infection such as strep throat or impetigo and has not completed 24 hours of antibiotic treatment
7. Has unexplained lethargy
8. Has lice, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated and contagious to others
9. Has a temperature of 100°F (axillary) or higher of undiagnosed origin, before fever-reducing medication is given
10. Has an undiagnosed rash or a rash attributable to a contagious illness or condition
11. Has significant respiratory distress

12. Is not able to participate in program activities with reasonable comfort
13. Requires more care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children

Children who become ill while in care are supervised and separated from the group as needed until they can be picked up by a parent or authorized individual. Staff notify the family immediately, and the family must pick up the child within one (1) hour. Staff complete an Illness/Exclusion Form and record the illness on the Illness Log.

Families are required to notify the program of any communicable disease diagnosis so appropriate health precautions can be taken. When required, the program will notify families of potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality. Reportable diseases are reported to the Minnesota Department of Health as required.

Children may return to care once exclusion criteria are met, symptoms have resolved, and the child is able to participate fully in program activities. Documentation from a healthcare provider may be required in certain circumstances.

Staff follow appropriate handwashing, cleaning, and sanitizing procedures to reduce the spread of illness. These procedures are reviewed regularly and reinforced through staff training.

Medication Administration

Miracle Grow Learning Academy administers medication to children only when necessary and in accordance with Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements. Medication is administered only with written authorization from a parent or legal guardian and in accordance with the instructions provided on the medication label or by a licensed healthcare provider.

All prescription and non-prescription medications must be provided in their original containers, clearly labeled with the child's name, dosage instructions, and expiration date (and, for prescriptions, the date and prescriber's name). Non-prescription medications that are dosed by weight require written authorization from a health care provider. Medications are stored in locked containers or cabinets inaccessible to children at all times. Medications requiring refrigeration are stored in a separate, locked container within the refrigerator.

Medication is administered only by staff who have received required training. Each administration is documented, including the date, time, dosage, and name of the staff person administering the medication. Parents are notified of medication administration as required.

Emergency medications, such as inhalers or EpiPens, are stored according to licensing requirements and are readily accessible to trained staff while remaining inaccessible to children, and go with the child on walks, field trips, and evacuations.

Sunscreen and insect repellent are applied only with written parental permission, following label directions.

Allergy Prevention and Response

Before admitting a child with a known allergy, the program obtains documentation of the allergy from the parent or the child's health care provider and develops an Individual Child Care Program Plan (allergy plan). The plan includes:

- A description of the allergy and specific triggers
- Avoidance techniques
- Symptoms of an allergic reaction

- Procedures for responding to a reaction, including medication, dosage, and the health care provider's contact information

All staff working with the child review, sign, and follow the plan. The plan is kept in the classroom, in the food service area, and in the child's file, and goes with the child on walks, field trips, and during transportation. The Site Supervisor updates each plan at least annually, and staff are retrained and sign off on any update. If a child has an allergic reaction, staff follow the plan, call 911 when epinephrine is given or symptoms are severe, notify the family, and complete an incident report.

Incident, Accident, and Injury Reporting

Miracle Grow Learning Academy documents all accidents, injuries, and incidents involving children while in care in accordance with Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements.

When an incident occurs:

- Staff provide immediate care and supervision
- Administration is notified as appropriate
- An incident or accident report is completed the same day
- Families are notified promptly — immediately for any head injury or injury needing medical attention

Incident reports include the date, time, location, description of the incident, action taken, and staff involved. Reports are shared with families and maintained in the child's record. Serious incidents are reported to DHS as required — including the death of a child or any injury requiring treatment by a physician, which must be reported to DHS Licensing within 24 hours. Administration reviews the Accident Log regularly to identify patterns and update the Risk Reduction Plan.

First Aid, CPR, and First Aid Kits

All staff complete pediatric first aid and pediatric CPR training (including infant and child CPR and obstructed airway procedures) within 90 days of starting work and keep certification current. At least one staff person trained in first aid and CPR is present at all times, including on walks and field trips.

First aid kits are kept in each classroom and taken on every walk, field trip, and evacuation. Kits are checked monthly using the First Aid Inventory and restocked as needed, and include gloves, bandages, gauze, tape, scissors, tweezers, cold packs, a CPR barrier, and emergency contact information.

Bloodborne Pathogens and Bodily Fluids

The program maintains a Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan. Staff are trained upon hire and annually. Staff use disposable gloves when contact with blood or bodily fluids is possible, clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately, place contaminated items in a sealed bag, and wash hands thoroughly afterward. Any staff exposure is reported to administration right away so follow-up care can be offered.

Diapering and Toileting

Miracle Grow Learning Academy supports preschool and school-age children in developing toileting independence while maintaining safe, sanitary, and respectful diapering and toileting practices. Diapering and toileting procedures follow Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements and recommended health practices.

Preschool children who are not fully toilet trained may be diapered as needed. Diapering is completed using an elevated changing table. Staff maintain continuous hands-on supervision, keeping one hand on the child at all times. Children are never left unattended on the changing table. All diapering supplies are prepared in advance to ensure staff do not step away during diapering.

Diapering steps (posted at the changing area):

1. Wash hands, gather supplies, cover the surface, and put on gloves
2. Place the child on the table (one hand on the child at all times); remove the soiled diaper and clean front to back
3. Remove gloves; put on a clean diaper (use new gloves for any ointment, with permission); dress the child
4. Wash the child's hands and your own; return the child to the group
5. Dispose of soiled items in a covered, lined container; clean and disinfect the surface; wash hands
6. Record the change and share any concerns with the family

Proper hand hygiene is followed before and after diapering or toileting assistance. Surfaces are cleaned and sanitized after each diaper change according to approved procedures. Soiled diapers are disposed of in a covered container, and soiled clothing is handled in a sanitary manner and returned to families as appropriate.

Staff support children with toileting in a respectful and developmentally appropriate manner, encouraging independence while providing assistance as needed. Children are supervised at all times during toileting to ensure safety and dignity. Children are never punished for toileting accidents.

Handwashing and Hygiene

Miracle Grow Learning Academy follows proper handwashing and hygiene practices to reduce the spread of illness and promote a healthy environment for children and staff. Handwashing procedures follow Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements and public health recommendations.

Children and staff are required to wash their hands with soap and running water at key times, including upon arrival, before and after meals or snacks, after using the restroom or being diapered, after outdoor play, after contact with bodily fluids, and whenever hands are visibly soiled.

Staff actively supervise and assist children with handwashing as needed to ensure proper technique, including using soap, scrubbing hands, rinsing thoroughly, and drying with disposable towels or approved hand-drying methods. Staff model good hygiene practices throughout the day.

Handwashing sinks are accessible to children, and supplies such as soap and paper towels are maintained at all times. When handwashing sinks are not immediately available during community activities, staff use appropriate hand hygiene alternatives as permitted by licensing guidelines.

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains a clean and sanitary environment to reduce the spread of illness and protect the health and safety of children and staff. Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting procedures follow Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements and approved health practices.

Classrooms, bathrooms, and common areas are cleaned routinely throughout the day. High-touch surfaces such as tables, door handles, light switches, faucets, and toys are cleaned and sanitized or disinfected as appropriate. Toys and materials are cleaned regularly and immediately if they become contaminated.

Only approved cleaning and disinfecting products are used. Products are used according to manufacturer instructions and stored in locked cabinets or areas inaccessible to children at all times. Staff ensure that cleaned and disinfected surfaces are dry and safe before children return to the area.

Cleaning schedules and procedures are reviewed regularly and reinforced through staff training. Children are supervised at all times during cleaning activities to prevent access to cleaning products or residue. Daily opening and closing checklists are completed in Classroom Panda.

Nutrition and Meal Service

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides nutritious meals and snacks that support the growth and development of preschool and school-age children. Food service practices follow Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements and applicable health guidelines. Meals and snacks meet USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements; the program participates in CACFP through its sponsor, Providers Choice, and keeps required meal counts and records.

Meals and snacks are planned to be age-appropriate and balanced. Children are supervised at all times during meals and snacks to ensure safety, support positive eating habits, and prevent choking or food-sharing that may pose a risk to children with allergies. Meals are served family-style when developmentally appropriate, and staff sit with children and model healthy eating. Drinking water is offered throughout the day. The program is peanut-safe and does not serve pork.

Food is prepared, handled, and served in a sanitary manner. Staff follow proper handwashing procedures before food handling and ensure that food contact surfaces are clean and sanitized. Hot foods and beverages are handled safely and kept out of children's reach until ready to be served at appropriate temperatures. Food temperatures are checked and recorded on the Food Temperature Log when meals are delivered.

Food allergies and dietary restrictions are documented and communicated to all relevant staff. Allergy information is posted discreetly in classrooms and food service areas. Staff take precautions to prevent cross-contamination and ensure children are not served foods to which they are allergic.

Food from home. Outside food is not permitted unless approved by administration. Approved alternate meals must meet CACFP meal pattern requirements and be labeled with the child's first and last name and the date. Celebration treats must be commercially prepared and pre-packaged.

Outdoor Play and Physical Activity

Miracle Grow Learning Academy provides preschool and school-age children with regular opportunities for outdoor play and physical activity to support physical health, motor development, and overall well-being. Outdoor play is considered an important part of the daily schedule whenever weather and conditions permit.

The program does not have an on-site outdoor play space. Outdoor play occurs at a public park located within walking distance of the center (Hamline Park). Children are escorted to and from the park through supervised community walks that follow established safety and supervision procedures (see Transportation and Community Walk Safety).

Staff position themselves throughout the outdoor play area to maintain sight and sound supervision of all children. Playground boundaries and safety rules are reviewed with children prior to outdoor play. Before children play, staff check the area and equipment for hazards such as broken glass, needles, animal waste, standing water, or damaged equipment, and keep children away from any hazard.

Outdoor play may be modified or canceled due to weather conditions, safety concerns, or environmental hazards. Staff use the Child Care Weather Watch chart to decide whether it is safe to go outside on very hot or cold days, and children do not go outside during lightning or severe weather. Families who do not want their child to go outside must provide a note from the child's health care provider.

Transportation and Community Walk Safety

Miracle Grow Learning Academy does not transport children using program-owned or staff vehicles. When transportation is provided by a contracted transportation provider (for example, for field trips or home-to-center rides), the provider must meet DHS and Minnesota child passenger safety requirements, and staff confirm each child's name and count at boarding and arrival. School-age children arriving by school bus are received by staff as described in the School-Age Program section.

When children leave the building for community activities, including walks to the nearby public park, the program follows established community walk safety procedures. Children are escorted by staff in small, controlled groups while maintaining required staff-to-child ratios. Staff are positioned at the front, middle, and end of the group to ensure continuous sight and sound supervision. Head counts are conducted before leaving the center, during transitions, upon arrival at the destination, periodically during the activity, and before returning to the center. Children may wear identifying shirts or safety vests during community walks.

Children are instructed on pedestrian safety rules, including staying with the group, using sidewalks, stopping at intersections, and following staff directions. Staff ensure safe street crossings and remain alert to traffic and environmental hazards at all times.

Emergency contact information and a first aid kit are carried during community walks, along with an attendance list, any required emergency medications and allergy plans, and a charged phone. Community activities may be modified or canceled due to weather conditions, safety concerns, or other identified risks.

Field Trips

Field trips require signed parental permission, kept in the child's file. Families are notified in advance of each trip with the date, location, departure and return times, transportation, and whether a meal will be served. Staff bring the attendance list, emergency contacts, first aid kit, required medications and allergy plans, and a phone. Required ratios are maintained, head counts are taken at every transition, and children may wear matching shirts or vests for easy identification.

Animals

Pets are not kept in the program except contained fish or insects, or certified service or therapy animals. Any visiting animal must be in good health, families are notified in advance, children with allergies are protected, and children wash hands after contact.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains emergency preparedness and response procedures to protect the health and safety of children and staff in the event of an emergency. Emergency procedures follow Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements and are designed to ensure prompt, calm, and effective responses. Detailed procedures are kept in the written Emergency Preparedness Plan, which is reviewed at least annually.

Emergency situations may include, but are not limited to, fire, severe weather, power outages, medical emergencies, missing or separated children, lockdown situations, and other threats to safety. Staff are

trained on emergency procedures during orientation and receive ongoing training as needed, including use of a fire extinguisher, shutting off utilities, lockdown procedures, and the location of emergency supplies.

Emergency drills are conducted regularly as required by licensing and are documented. Fire drills are conducted and recorded on the Fire Drill Log as required by DHS and the State Fire Code, and tornado drills are conducted monthly from April through September and recorded on the Tornado Drill Log. During all emergencies and drills, staff maintain supervision of children, conduct head counts, and follow established procedures to ensure all children are accounted for.

Emergency contact information for each child is readily accessible at all times, including during community activities and field trips. Families are notified as soon as possible following an emergency or drill, as appropriate.

Emergency evacuation routes, shelter-in-place locations, and emergency contact numbers are posted in classrooms and common areas in accordance with licensing requirements.

Fire or Evacuation

1. Sound the alarm and call 911 once safely outside.
2. Take the attendance list, emergency contacts, first aid kit, emergency medications, and phone.
3. Lead children out using the primary route (secondary route if blocked); close doors behind you. Do not stop for belongings.
4. Go to the outdoor meeting spot (the Saint Paul Public Library parking lot), do a name-to-face count, and report any missing child to the person in charge immediately.
5. If the building cannot be re-entered, move to the relocation site (1558 Minnehaha Ave W, Saint Paul, MN 55104) and notify families through Playground.

Small fires may be put out with a fire extinguisher only by trained staff and only if it is safe — remember PASS: Pull, Aim, Squeeze, Sweep.

Tornado or Severe Weather

1. When a tornado warning is issued, move children to the designated shelter area (the preschool restroom) away from windows.
2. Bring the attendance list, emergency contacts, first aid kit, medications, flashlight, and phone; take a name-to-face count.
3. Have children crouch low and cover their heads; stay until the warning ends.
4. After the storm, check for injuries and hazards and contact families if needed.

Lockdown or Shelter-in-Place

1. Call 911 if there is a threat in or near the building.
2. Bring children into the nearest secure room; lock doors, turn off lights, close blinds, and keep children quiet and away from doors and windows.
3. Take a name-to-face count and remain in place until law enforcement or administration gives the all-clear.
4. Notify families through Playground once it is safe.

Power, Heat, or Water Loss and Severe Winter Weather

If heat, water, power, or safe conditions are lost, administration decides whether children can safely remain or must be picked up. Families are notified through Playground, and staff remain with children until every child is picked up. Decisions to close or delay opening for severe weather are made by the

Owner/Director based on temperature and wind chill, road conditions, local school district closures, and staffing, and are communicated to families through Playground as early as possible.

Medical Emergencies

Staff call 911 first, provide first aid and CPR until help arrives, and then contact the family. A staff member goes with the child if transported (bringing the emergency contact information and health records) while ratios are maintained for the rest of the group. An incident report is completed and DHS is notified as required.

Missing or Separated Child Procedure

Miracle Grow Learning Academy takes the safety and supervision of children very seriously. If a child is suspected to be missing or separated from the group, staff respond immediately and follow established procedures to locate the child as quickly as possible.

If a child cannot be located, staff will take the following steps:

1. **Immediate Head Count:** Staff conduct an immediate head count and verify attendance records to confirm which child is missing.
2. **Search of Immediate Area:** Staff quickly and thoroughly search the classroom, bathrooms, hallways, playground area, and any nearby spaces the child may have accessed.
3. **Notify Administration:** The Site Supervisor or Owner/Director is notified immediately.
4. **Secure Remaining Children:** Staff ensure all other children remain supervised and safe while the search continues.
5. **Contact Emergency Services:** If the child is not located promptly (within 5 minutes), local law enforcement is contacted by calling 911.
6. **Notify Parents/Guardians:** The child's parent or legal guardian is notified as soon as possible.

These procedures apply both within the facility and during community activities, including neighborhood walks and park visits. All incidents involving a missing or separated child are documented and reviewed to identify corrective actions and prevent future occurrences. DHS Licensing is notified as required.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to protecting the health, safety, and well-being of all children in care. All staff are mandated reporters under Minnesota law and are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect immediately (no later than 24 hours), following the DHS Maltreatment of Minors Mandated Reporting Policy.

If a staff member has reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected, the staff member must make a report immediately to the appropriate authorities, including the local child protection agency or law enforcement, as required by Minnesota statutes. Suspected maltreatment that occurs in the program is reported to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Licensing Division. Reports must be made regardless of the suspected perpetrator and without conducting an internal investigation.

Staff are required to notify the Owner/Director that a report has been made; however, notification to administration does not replace the legal obligation to report, and staff do not need permission from a supervisor before making a report. No staff member will be retaliated against for making a good-faith report of suspected abuse or neglect.

Staff receive training on mandated reporting requirements during orientation and through ongoing professional development, and review the DHS mandated reporting policy each year in November. Phone

numbers for reporting are posted with the emergency numbers in each classroom. Documentation related to mandated reporting training is maintained in staff records.

Supervision and Risk Reduction

Miracle Grow Learning Academy is committed to providing continuous, active supervision of all children to ensure their safety, well-being, and protection at all times. Supervision and risk reduction practices are implemented consistently across all areas of the program, including classrooms, restrooms, hallways, outdoor environments, and during community activities.

Supervision is defined in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 245A.02, subdivision 18, as the responsibility of staff to be accountable for the child's care, be within sight and hearing of the child, and be able to intervene to protect the child's health and safety. Risk reduction strategies are used to identify, assess, and minimize potential hazards related to the physical environment, daily routines, transitions, and activities.

The program's Risk Reduction Plan is reviewed during staff orientation, reinforced through ongoing training, and reviewed annually or as changes occur to the facility, program operations, or identified risks.

Definition of Supervision

Supervision at Miracle Grow Learning Academy means that staff are actively monitoring children, positioned to see and hear them, and able to respond immediately to protect children's health and safety. Supervision is continuous and applies during all activities, including play, learning activities, meals, rest time, toileting, transitions, outdoor play, and community activities.

Active supervision includes, but is not limited to:

- Staff positioning themselves to maintain clear sight and sound supervision of all children
- Frequent name-to-face head counts and attendance verification
- Awareness of children's activities, behaviors, and interactions
- Anticipating and preventing unsafe situations
- Promptly responding to children's needs and behaviors

Children are never left unattended. Supervision responsibilities are shared among staff and adjusted as needed to maintain required ratios and distribution. Staff always know how many children are in their care, and children do not walk through hallways or common areas of the building alone.

Supervision During Transitions

Transitions are recognized as higher-risk times and require increased staff attention. Transitions include, but are not limited to, moving between classrooms or activity areas, bathroom trips, mealtimes, rest time, arrival and departure, and transitions to and from outdoor or community activities.

During transitions:

- Staff conduct head counts before, during, and after transitions
- Staff position themselves at the front, middle, and end of moving groups when applicable
- Children are instructed on expectations and safety rules prior to transitions
- Staff ensure doors, gates, and restricted areas are secured
- Staff verbally hand off children (by name and count) when responsibility moves from one staff person to another

Transitions are planned and paced to prevent rushing, overcrowding, or confusion. Staff remain alert and engaged throughout all transitions to maintain active supervision.

Supervision in Bathrooms and Toileting Areas

Children are supervised at all times while using bathroom and toileting areas. Staff position themselves to maintain sight and hearing of children while respecting privacy and dignity.

Preschool children using individual or classroom bathrooms are supervised through proximity, verbal check-ins, and visual supervision as appropriate. School-age children may use the restroom independently when developmentally appropriate, with staff awareness of their location and frequent check-ins.

Staff ensure:

- Bathroom areas are free of hazards
- Children do not access restricted items
- Transitions to and from bathrooms are supervised
- Head counts are conducted before and after bathroom use

Supervision During Diapering and Use of Elevated Changing Table

For preschool children who require diapering, Miracle Grow Learning Academy uses an elevated changing table. Diapering procedures prioritize child safety, hygiene, and active supervision.

During diapering:

- Staff maintain continuous hands-on supervision, keeping one hand on the child at all times
- Children are never left unattended on the changing table
- All supplies are prepared in advance
- The safety strap is used as designed
- The changing area is positioned so the staff member can still see and hear the rest of the group, or another staff member supervises the group

Staff remain focused on the child during the entire diapering process to prevent falls and injuries.

Supervision During Outdoor Play and Community Activities

Because the program does not have an on-site outdoor play area, outdoor play occurs at a nearby public park. Community activities, including walks to and from the park, are considered higher-risk and require enhanced supervision practices.

During outdoor play and community walks:

- Staff maintain required staff-to-child ratios
- Children are supervised at all times
- Staff position themselves strategically throughout the group and play area
- Head counts are conducted before departure, during transitions, upon arrival, periodically during activities, and before returning to the center

Outdoor boundaries and expectations are reviewed with children prior to each outing. Outdoor activities may be modified or canceled due to weather conditions, environmental hazards, or safety concerns.

Risk Reduction Plan Implementation

Miracle Grow Learning Academy has developed and implemented a written Risk Reduction Plan as required by Minnesota Statutes, section 245A.66, to identify and minimize risks to children. The plan addresses risks related to the physical plant, environment, supervision, daily routines, transitions, and community activities.

Staff are trained on the Risk Reduction Plan during orientation and are expected to follow all risk reduction strategies consistently. The Risk Reduction Plan is reviewed annually and updated as needed based on changes to the facility, licensing feedback, incidents, or identified risks.

Daily safety checks. Staff complete a daily safety check of classrooms, bathrooms, and common areas, looking for hazards such as unsecured cleaning products or medications, damaged furniture or toys, tripping hazards, uncovered outlets, cords within reach, and propped or unsecured doors. Hazards are fixed right away or reported to administration and blocked off until repaired.

Guidance and Discipline

Miracle Grow Learning Academy uses positive, developmentally appropriate guidance strategies to support children's social-emotional development, self-regulation, and positive behavior. The program recognizes that children are learning how to express emotions, solve problems, and interact with others, and staff guide behavior in a respectful and supportive manner.

Guidance practices are designed to promote a safe learning environment, teach appropriate behavior, and support each child's individual needs. Discipline is never used as punishment. All guidance and discipline practices follow Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Care Center Licensing requirements (Minnesota Rules, part 9503.0055).

Philosophy of Behavior Guidance

Miracle Grow Learning Academy believes that positive relationships and consistent expectations are the foundation of effective behavior guidance. Staff work to understand the reasons behind children's behavior and respond in ways that teach skills rather than punish.

Guidance strategies focus on helping children:

- Develop self-control and emotional regulation
- Learn problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills
- Build empathy and respect for others
- Understand expectations and boundaries

Staff use calm, respectful communication and model appropriate behavior at all times.

Positive Guidance Strategies

Staff use a variety of positive guidance techniques appropriate to the child's age and development. These strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- Setting clear, consistent expectations
- Redirecting children to appropriate activities
- Offering choices to support independence
- Modeling appropriate language and behavior
- Encouraging problem-solving and peer communication
- Acknowledging positive behavior
- Providing calm reminders and guidance

Staff remain patient and supportive while helping children learn appropriate behaviors.

Behavior Redirection and Support

When challenging behavior occurs, staff respond promptly and calmly to ensure the safety of all children. Redirection is used to guide children toward appropriate behavior and activities.

Staff may:

- Redirect a child to a different activity
- Offer a calm-down space within the classroom that the child may choose to use, while remaining supervised (a child is separated from the group only as described in Separation From the Group)
- Provide support to help children express feelings appropriately
- Collaborate with families to support consistent guidance strategies

Behavior concerns are addressed in partnership with families, focusing on understanding the child's needs and supporting positive development.

Persistent Unacceptable Behavior

When a child's behavior requires an increased amount of staff time, staff will:

1. Observe and document the behavior and the staff response on the Behavior Tracking Form.
2. Help the child understand the expectation, remind the child of the rules, and support the child in finding more positive ways to behave.
3. Give the family a written or verbal consultation and document it.
4. If the behavior continues, hold a conference with the family to develop a written behavior support plan that includes the child's strengths, goals, and positive support strategies, and consider a referral (see Family Conferences and Connection to Community Resources).
5. Review progress with the family and update the plan as needed.

Separation From the Group

A child may be separated from the group only when less intrusive methods of guiding the child's behavior have been tried and were ineffective, and the child's behavior threatens the well-being of the child or other children (for example, repeatedly hitting or kicking others, throwing objects, or climbing or jumping from shelving). When separation is used:

- The child stays in an unenclosed part of the classroom where the child can be continuously seen and heard by staff, and returns to the group as soon as the child regains control.
- The staff member calls for assistance if needed so all other children remain supervised.
- The staff member completes a Separation Report (with a copy for the family) and records the separation in the Separation Log, including the child's name, the date and time, the staff person, and the less intrusive methods tried first.
- If a child is separated three or more times in one day, the family is notified and this is noted in the log.
- If a child is separated five or more times in one week, or eight or more times in two weeks, staff and the family meet to develop a plan to address the behavior (Minnesota Rules, part 9503.0055, subparts 4 and 5).

"Time-out" is not used as a routine discipline practice.

Physical Restraint

Physical restraint (holding a child) is used only when necessary to protect the child or others from immediate harm, uses the least amount of force needed, and ends as soon as the danger has passed. Each use of restraint is documented on the Separation/Restraint Form, administration is notified, and the family receives a written copy explaining why it was necessary. Mechanical restraints are never used.

Prohibited Discipline Practices

Miracle Grow Learning Academy strictly prohibits all forms of physical or emotional punishment. Staff are never permitted to use discipline practices that are humiliating, frightening, or harmful.

Prohibited practices include, but are not limited to:

- Corporal punishment or physical discipline, including spanking, rough handling, shoving, hair pulling, ear pulling, shaking, slapping, kicking, biting, pinching, or hitting

- Physical restraint, except as described in Physical Restraint above
- Emotional abuse, including name calling, ostracism, shaming, making derogatory remarks about a child or the child's family, and using language that threatens, humiliates, or frightens a child
- Threatening or intimidating language, including threatening the loss of affection
- Withholding food, rest, or bathroom use, or depriving a child of light, warmth, clothing, or medical care
- Humiliating, shaming, or ridiculing a child
- Punishment related to toileting accidents
- Separating a child from the group except as described in Separation From the Group, or isolating a child without supervision
- Using mechanical restraints, such as tying

All staff are trained on appropriate guidance practices and prohibited discipline during orientation and through ongoing training.

Family Communication Regarding Behavior

Miracle Grow Learning Academy communicates openly with families regarding children's behavior and social-emotional development. Staff share information respectfully and focus on problem-solving and support.

Families are notified of ongoing behavior concerns and are invited to collaborate on strategies that support the child's success in the program. Behavior concerns are never used to stigmatize a child. Exclusion is considered only as a last resort, as described in the Suspension and Expulsion Policy.

Suspension and Expulsion Policy

Miracle Grow Learning Academy works to prevent and limit the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures. Exclusion may be considered only when:

- A child's behavior is unsafe and puts the child, other children, or staff at risk despite consistent intervention;
- A parent or family member threatens a child, family, or staff member; or
- A family does not participate in the referral process or behavior support plan.

Before exclusion is considered, the following steps must occur: the child's behavior and staff interventions are documented; a referral form is completed; a behavior support plan is developed with the family; and teachers, administration, and the family consult with an early childhood coach or mental health consultant when available.

Immediate suspension may occur if a child's behavior poses an imminent risk to safety. Any decision to exclude is made by the Owner/Director, documented, and communicated to the family in writing. When exclusion is necessary, the program helps the family access services and identify an alternative placement. This policy complies with federal and state civil rights laws.

Program Fit

The program may discontinue care if it is unable to meet a child's needs while maintaining the safety and well-being of the group. These decisions are made thoughtfully, documented, and communicated clearly, with notice and transition support whenever possible, consistent with the Family Handbook.

Staffing and Supervision of Staff

Miracle Grow Learning Academy ensures that qualified, trained, and appropriately supervised staff are present at all times to meet the needs of preschool and school-age children. Staffing practices follow Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Care Center Licensing requirements and support safe supervision, positive interactions, and high-quality care.

Staff are hired, trained, supervised, and evaluated to ensure consistent implementation of program policies, procedures, and the Risk Reduction Plan. Administrative staff provide ongoing oversight, guidance, and support to ensure staff are meeting program expectations and maintaining a safe learning environment.

Staff Qualifications and Roles

Miracle Grow Learning Academy employs staff who meet DHS licensing qualifications for their assigned roles. Staff roles may include teachers, assistant teachers, aides, substitutes, and administrative staff.

Each staff member is assigned responsibilities based on qualifications, experience, and licensing requirements. Staff are expected to understand their role in supervising children, implementing curriculum, maintaining safety, and following all program policies and procedures.

Background Studies

Every staff person, substitute, volunteer, and student who may have direct contact with children must have a cleared DHS background study (NETStudy 2.0) before working with children, and may not be left alone with children until cleared as allowed by law. Background study documentation is kept in each personnel file.

Staff-to-Child Ratios and Distribution

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains required staff-to-child ratios and group size limits at all times, as outlined by Minnesota DHS licensing rules. Ratios are maintained during all program activities, including arrival and departure, meals, rest time, outdoor play, transitions, and community activities.

Age Group	Age Range	Staff-to-Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size	Licensed Capacity
Preschool	33 months to kindergarten	1:10	20	24
School-Age	Kindergarten through 12 years	1:15	30	16

Staff distribution is planned to ensure children are supervised in all areas of the facility. Additional staff may be assigned during higher-risk times such as transitions, outdoor play, and community walks to ensure adequate supervision and safety. When age groups are combined (such as at opening and closing), staffing follows DHS rules for mixed-age groups.

Staff Orientation and Training

All staff receive orientation prior to working alone with children. Orientation includes a review of program policies and procedures, supervision expectations, health and safety practices, emergency procedures, mandated reporting responsibilities, and the Risk Reduction Plan. Orientation is documented on the Staff Orientation Form, and onboarding videos and checklists are completed in Classroom Panda.

Staff participate in ongoing training as required by DHS licensing and program standards. Required training includes:

- Pediatric first aid and pediatric CPR within 90 days of hire, kept current
- Abusive Head Trauma prevention (required for staff caring for children under school age) before caring for children and as required thereafter
- Maltreatment of Minors mandated reporting, upon hire and annually
- Risk Reduction Plan, upon hire and annually
- Child development, behavior guidance, and the program's guidance policies
- Allergy prevention and response, medication administration, and bloodborne pathogens
- Emergency preparedness, including fire extinguisher use
- Drug and alcohol policy
- Annual training hours as required by DHS for each position

Training is documented on the Training Log and maintained in staff personnel files. Ongoing professional development supports staff growth, program quality, and consistent implementation of policies and procedures.

Supervision of Staff and Performance Expectations

Administrative staff provide ongoing supervision and support to ensure staff follow program policies and procedures and maintain appropriate supervision of children. Supervision may include classroom observations, feedback, meetings, and performance reviews.

Staff are expected to follow all supervision, guidance, health, and safety policies at all times. Concerns related to supervision or performance are addressed promptly through coaching, additional training, or corrective action as appropriate.

Substitute and Relief Staff

Substitute and relief staff are used as needed to maintain required ratios and supervision. Substitute staff receive orientation to essential policies and procedures prior to supervising children, including supervision expectations, emergency procedures, and prohibited practices. Substitute staff are supervised by administrative staff and are expected to follow all program policies and procedures while working in the center.

Volunteers and Students

Volunteers and practicum students must complete a background study and volunteer orientation before working with children, are supervised by staff at all times, are not counted in ratios unless qualified and assigned, and follow all program policies, including confidentiality and prohibited practices.

Staff Accountability and Professional Conduct

All staff are expected to maintain professional conduct at all times. Staff are responsible for adhering to program policies, maintaining confidentiality, and supporting a respectful and inclusive environment for children, families, and colleagues.

Failure to follow policies and procedures may result in corrective action, up to and including termination, in accordance with program policies and applicable laws.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The license holder, staff, substitutes, volunteers, students, and subcontractors who are responsible for children may not use alcohol or illegal drugs, misuse prescription medication, or be under the influence of any substance that impairs their ability to care for children while on duty or on the premises. Anyone suspected of being impaired will be removed from contact with children immediately and the situation documented. Staff receive training on this policy at orientation; full details are in the Employee Handbook.

Use of Personal Electronic Devices

Staff personal electronic devices, including cell phones and smart devices, may not be used for personal purposes while supervising children.

Devices may be used only for program-related purposes such as documentation, communication with administration, or emergency situations. Personal calls, texting, and social media use are prohibited during supervision times. Staff may not take or share photos or videos of children on personal devices.

Staff must remain actively engaged with children at all times.

Child Records and Confidentiality

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains accurate, complete, and confidential records for each child enrolled in the program. Child records are managed in accordance with Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing requirements and are used to support the health, safety, and well-being of children in care.

The program is committed to protecting the privacy of children and families. Access to child records is limited to authorized individuals, and all records are stored securely to prevent unauthorized access, loss, or disclosure.

Required Child Records

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains required records for each enrolled child. These records may include, but are not limited to:

- Enrollment information and contact details
- Emergency contact information and authorized pick-ups
- Health and immunization records, including the Health Care Summary
- Allergy and medical information, including Individual Child Care Program Plans
- Medication authorization forms and administration records
- Incident and accident reports
- Attendance records
- Signed acknowledgments and permissions
- Separation and restraint reports, behavior plans, and referral consents
- Custody orders or legal documents, if applicable
- CACFP enrollment and income eligibility forms

Records are reviewed regularly to ensure they are current and complete, using the Child File Checklist.

Record Storage and Security

Child records are stored securely in locked cabinets, password-protected electronic systems, or other secure methods that prevent unauthorized access. Physical records are kept in designated areas accessible only to authorized staff.

Electronic records are protected through appropriate security measures, including password protection and restricted access. Staff are responsible for safeguarding records and ensuring confidentiality at all times.

Access to Child Records

Parents or legal guardians have the right to review their child’s records upon request. Access is provided in a reasonable timeframe and in a manner that protects the confidentiality of other children and families.

Only authorized staff, licensing representatives, and regulatory authorities may access child records as permitted by law. Information is shared only on a need-to-know basis. Information is released to outside agencies or individuals only with written parental authorization, unless disclosure is required by law.

Confidentiality Practices

All staff are required to maintain confidentiality regarding child and family information. Confidential information is not discussed in public areas or shared with unauthorized individuals.

Staff receive training on confidentiality requirements during orientation and through ongoing professional development. Breaches of confidentiality are addressed promptly and may result in corrective action.

Record Retention

Child records are retained for the time periods required by Minnesota DHS licensing regulations and, for food program records, by Providers Choice. Records are disposed of securely when no longer required to be maintained, using methods such as shredding or secure electronic deletion.

Enrollment, Attendance, and Release of Children

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains clear enrollment, attendance, and release procedures to ensure the safety and supervision of all children in care. These procedures follow Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Care Center Licensing requirements and are designed to ensure children are released only to authorized individuals and that accurate attendance records are maintained at all times.

Enrollment Requirements

Prior to a child's enrollment, Miracle Grow Learning Academy requires completion of all enrollment documentation. Required enrollment materials may include, but are not limited to, enrollment forms, emergency contact information, health and immunization records, allergy information, medication authorizations (if applicable), and signed acknowledgments of program policies.

Children may not attend the program until all required enrollment documentation is completed and on file, except that the Health Care Summary may be submitted within 30 days of the start date. Children receiving CCAP may not attend until a current authorization is received.

Attendance Tracking and Head Counts

Miracle Grow Learning Academy maintains accurate daily attendance records for all children. Attendance is verified upon arrival and departure and is updated throughout the day as needed in Playground.

Staff conduct head counts regularly, including but not limited to:

- Upon arrival and departure
- During transitions
- Before and after outdoor play or community activities
- During emergency drills or actual emergencies

Attendance records and head counts are used together to ensure all children are accounted for at all times.

Arrival and Drop-Off Procedures

Children must be signed in by a parent or authorized individual upon arrival. Staff visually verify the child's arrival and ensure the child transitions safely into the classroom. Children may not enter the building or classroom on their own.

Parents are responsible for ensuring staff are aware of their child's arrival and for communicating any relevant information such as health concerns, schedule changes, or special instructions.

Departure and Pick-Up Procedures

Children are released only to parents, legal guardians, or individuals authorized in writing by the parent or legal guardian on the Emergency Contact Form or in Playground. Staff verify the identity of individuals picking up children when necessary by checking photo ID against the child's record. Changes to authorized pick-ups must be made in person or in Playground; phone calls and text messages are not accepted. If a court order limits custody or visitation, a copy must be on file, and staff follow it.

Children remain under staff supervision until they are released to an authorized adult. If an unauthorized individual attempts to pick up a child, the child will not be released, and administration will be contacted immediately.

Unauthorized Person

1. Check photo ID and compare it to the child's Emergency Contact Form.
2. If the person is not authorized, calmly explain that you can only release the child to people listed on the form.
3. If the person becomes upset or argumentative, call a supervisor to assist; call 911 if there is any threat to safety.
4. Call the parent to arrange pick-up by an authorized person, and document what happened.

Intoxicated, Incapacitated, or Impaired Adult

1. Tell the adult, privately and calmly, that you are not able to release the child to them because of safety concerns.
2. Call a supervisor to assist if the person is upset or argumentative.
3. Offer to call another parent, emergency contact, or a ride service for the adult and child.
4. If the adult insists on leaving with the child or attempts to drive, call 911.
5. Document the incident. As mandated reporters, staff must report to the appropriate authorities when a child is taken by someone who is intoxicated or incapacitated.
6. If a person who is the subject of a maltreatment report attempts to pick up a child, follow the directions of law enforcement or the agency that received the report and do not release the child to that person.

Late Pick-Up

Families are expected to pick up children by the program's scheduled closing time of 6:00 p.m.

1. A staff member remains with any child who has not been picked up.
2. At closing, staff call the parents, then the emergency contacts.
3. A late fee of $15 per child for every 15 minutes is charged, as described in the Family Handbook, and documented on the Late Pick-Up Form.
4. If no parent or emergency contact can be reached or arrives within 30 minutes of closing, staff notify administration and contact the appropriate authorities (local law enforcement or county child protection) to ensure the child's safety.

Repeated late pick-ups may result in additional corrective actions as outlined in the Family Handbook.

Staff Acknowledgment

I have received, read, and understand the Miracle Grow Learning Academy Policies and Procedures Manual. I agree to follow these policies and procedures, and I understand that I will review them annually and whenever they are updated.

Staff Name (print)

Staff Signature

Position

Date