



2023-2024 Preschool Parent Handbook



**Cecil F. Gilkerson Community Activities
Center
305 South Dogwood Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
(540)433-2474**

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Philosophy & Goals

The mission of Harrisonburg Parks & Recreation Preschool is to provide a safe and nurturing environment designed to promote learning opportunities for our children. Through creative and meaningful play activities, the program promotes the healthy social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of each child. A positive self-concept will be developed, and creativity and self-expression are encouraged. Emphasis is placed on self-discipline by providing limitations and rules.

Administration

Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Preschool is administered by the Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation. The program is staffed by two Part-Time teachers, one Preschool Coordinator, and the Youth Services Specialist, employed by the Parks and Recreation Department. The current teachers have over 10 years (or more) of experience working with preschool age children. The program has met all minimum standards for licensure by the Virginia Department of Education Child Day Program division and these standards can be reviewed by any parent upon request.

Contact information for the administration is as follows:

Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation
305 S. Dogwood Drive
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801
Phone (540)433-2474
Fax (540) 433-9169

Recreation and Special Events Manager: Matthew Little

Youth Services Specialist: Amber Craig

Amber's email: Amber.craig@harrisonburgva.gov

Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Preschool Coordinator: Lauren Simmons

Lauren's email: Lauren.simmons@harrisonburgva.gov

Registration

All children must be registered before admission to the program. Registration is held on an ongoing basis starting on March 6th throughout the upcoming school year or until the program is full. The fee is payable at the time of registration. The program is offered to children of **city residents** who are **fully potty trained** and who are or will be **3 years** of age by September 30th and to children who are or will be **4 years** of age by September 30th of the current school year.

Before a child can enter the program, the parent must provide the following information:

1. Birth certificate
2. Completed registration form
3. Completed health and immunization record
4. Payment of fee

Registration for the 2023-2024 preschool year will be held on **March 6th, 2023** for children previously enrolled in the program and their siblings. We will open registration to the public on **March 20th, 2023**.

Hours of Operation

4-year-old Preschool Program:

September 6th, 2023 – May 17th, 2024

Monday / Wednesday / Friday school days

9:30 am – 12 noon

4-year-old open house will be held Wednesday, August 30th, 2023, from 9:30-10:30 am

3-year-old Preschool Program:

September 5th, 2023 – May 16th, 2024

Tuesday / Thursday school days

9:30 am – 12 noon

3-year-old open house will be held Thursday, August 31st, 2023, from 9:30 – 10:30 am

Our schedule and calendar follow the Harrisonburg City schools schedule and calendar; we are closed when the schools are closed.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

Your child must be brought to the classroom by a parent or other adult. No child may be released without the parent or written permission by a parent for another adult to pick up the child. If the child is not picked up by 12:15 pm, a parent will be called and/or any other emergency numbers listed on the registration form.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Section 63.2-1509 of the code of Virginia requires any person providing full or part-time participant care to report any suspected participant abuse or neglect within 24 hours. The Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation program ends at 12:00 noon with late pickup ending at 12:15 pm. If any child is picked up after 12:15 pm with no prior phone call, it is considered child neglect, and can be reported to social services.

A late-arriving child may locate the group by checking the posted schedule outside of the classroom or asking a staff member at the reception desk.

A head count of children is taken on an ongoing basis and always when children are taken from one location to another such as to and from restrooms, gym, playground, etc.

Sample Daily Schedule

The following is a sample schedule. The current schedule is always posted outside of the preschool classroom on the bulletin board.

9:30 – 9:45 am	Arrival / Table Toys
9:45 – 10:00 am	Morning meeting (group time)
10:00 – 11:00 am	Center time
11:00 – 11:10 am	Story & Songs (group time)
11:10 – 11:20 am	Snack time
11:20 – 11:30 am	Bathroom
11:30 – 12:00 noon	Outside or gross motor play (playground, gym, or tumble room)
12:00 noon	Dismissal

Storage of Personal Items

Each child will be assigned their own storage space or “cubbie” when they arrive the first day. All personal items will be kept in their “cubbie”. Any items that are left behind will be kept in a safe place until the child’s next visit.

Potty Training and Bathroom Policy

For entry into the preschool program, a child must be considered fully potty trained. For our program, this includes ability to pull up / pull down pants (take clothes on / off), sit independently on the toilet, and use appropriate wipes. **At this time, we cannot take a child at preschool who may be wearing a pull up or diaper due to licensing regulations.**

Food Policy

A snack will be provided by the Recreation Department each day. A monthly snack schedule will be posted outside the classroom. Snacks will include fruits, vegetables, grains, spreads, cheese, or theme-related foods. Juice, milk, or water will be offered daily. Currently, our preschool is a strict nut-free facility.

If parents would like to bring a snack on birthdays or for other special occasions, they should inform the teachers a week ahead of time. Parents are more than welcome to provide a snack any day if they so desire.

Inclement Weather Policy

Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Preschool will not meet when Harrisonburg City Schools are closed due to inclement weather. Please listen to local radio or television stations for announcements of school closings. You can also call (540)433-2474.

Exception to this policy: If city schools start later than usual, due to severe weather, we will start at our regular time. However, if due to inclement weather, the city offices open at 10:00 am or later, preschool will be closed.

Illness and Severe Injury

If a child becomes ill or is running a fever, the teachers will contact the parents about picking up their child as soon as possible. The child will be separated from the other children and remain supervised by the teachers.

An injury requiring medical attention will result in the parents being contacted. If parents cannot be reached, the teachers will contact one or both emergency numbers listed on the registration form. In case of emergency medical treatment being required, the parent will be instructed to meet the staff at the appropriate medical facility, and the teachers will bring the registration form with “authorization to obtain care”.

Medications

If a child must have medications on hand for emergencies only. Emergency medications include medication for an allergy or asthma only. Our staff is trained to deal with epinephrine injections, inhalers, and oral allergy medication. WE ARE NOT AUTHORIZED TO GIVE ANY FURTHER MEDICATION. To administer the aforementioned medicines, please provide the following:

- Written permission to administer the medication signed by a parent and the child's doctor.
- Provide the original prescription label on the medicine.
- Medicine must be in the original container.
- Make sure the name of the child on the prescription and the child receiving the medication are the same.
- The dosage written on the permission form **MUST MATCH** the dosage on the prescription label.

Only prescription medicine will be given. Teachers do not apply things such as sunscreen, bug spray, or lotions of any kind. If parents wish for their child to have something of this nature, they should apply before they arrive to school.

Medications will be kept in a locked cabinet in the preschool room and/or in the Preschool Coordinator's office. Any medical authorization note will be kept with the child's personal file. **Teachers are required and have received training on administering medications as noted on this page of the manual through the course AMAT.**

Discipline

Disciplinary action may be used as a tool to modify behavior of disruptive children. Discipline is usually in the form of a verbal warning, redirection, and a short "time out" in which the child is placed in a chair away from (but within sight of) other children. Time out does not exceed the age in which the child is in minutes (e.g., a 3-year-old would receive a 3-minute time-out, etc.) When disciplinary actions arise, the following steps are taken to prevent further incidents:

1. Parent / guardian are notified if action is severe or repeated.
2. Conference with parent and staff to try to remedy the situation.
3. Possible suspension from the program with a referral to other programs better suited to the child's needs.

The following actions or threats thereof are forbidden:

1. Physical punishment, striking a child, roughly handling, or shaking a child, restricting movement through binding, or tying, forcing a child to assume an uncomfortable position, or exercise as punishment.
2. Enclosure in a small, confined space or any space that the child cannot freely exit themselves.
3. Punishment by another child.
4. Separation from the group so that the child is away from hearing and vision of a staff member.

5. Withholding or forcing of food or rest.
6. Verbal remarks which are demeaning to the child.
7. Punishment for toileting accidents; and
8. Punishment by applying unpleasant or harmful substances.

Staff Development and Training

Background Checks:

All staff who will work with children at Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Preschool will be required to complete a criminal background investigation every five (5) years.

CPR and First Aid:

Certification in child CPR and standard First aid must be renewed every two (2) years.

Staff is subject to random drug and alcohol testing by professional staff at Sentara RMH as required by Harrisonburg City.

Staff is mandated to completed sixteen (16) hours of training annually by VDOE Child Care Licensing which related to childcare, curriculum, safety issues, programming, and supervision of children.

Periodic training in the following is required by staff, per licensing guidelines:

Daily Child Health Observation

Medication Administration

Department of Social Services Mandated Reporter Training

Suspected Child Abuse

Any childcare professional is required by law to report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect. Training is available from many sources in identification, procedure, and treatment. Professionals are protected from litigations. Teachers have received instruction in daily health observation of children as well as mandated reporting procedures.

Injury Prevention Plan

- Playground area is maintained and checked by the Parks and Recreation Maintenance staff, our certified playground safety inspector, and by preschool teachers on a regular basis. Mulch is raked and checked before use by children.
- Two-way radios **or** cell phones are taken with staff outside to the playground.
- There is always site and sound supervision of all children while children are at Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Preschool. Head counts are taken on an ongoing basis while outside, before coming in, and again once inside.
- The staff will meet on a regular basis to review injuries and discuss prevention measures.
- The condition of all rooms in use by the preschool program is maintained with safety in mind. Floors are always dry, electrical outlets are covered, children are not allowed to run, or climb excepts in the gymnasium, playground, or tumbling room with supervision. All safety regulations outlined in the Virginia Department of Education (VA DOE)

Standards for Licensure are followed.

Playground Safety Plan

When taking children to the playground, there will always be a ratio of one (1) teacher per ten (10) children with at least two (2) teachers present. The children will receive instruction on properly lining up and staying in a line to and from the playground. To ensure safety from vehicular traffic, one teacher shall walk ahead and check for traffic before opening the door and allowing the children to cross to the playground. Teachers will place themselves at various locations on the playground to enable them to have sight of all children.

A first aid kit and two-way radio **or** cell phone will be taken outside with the group. A head count of children will be taken on an ongoing basis the entire time children are outside, before coming in, and once again when arriving inside the building.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

The staff will practice procedures for various types of emergency evacuations throughout the year. These include fire, tornado, earthquakes, hazardous material spills, flood, and intruder evacuations.

Evacuation plans will include the following:

- 1) assembly points based on the type of emergency.
- 2) essential documents (e.g., attendance sheets, phone numbers, medications, etc.)
- 3) communication with two-way radios **or** cell phones
- 4) flashlights, fresh batteries, and battery-powered radio when applicable

Emergency evacuation routes are posted in each room and open areas of the building. They depict primary and secondary routes of egress. They also depict shelter-in-place rooms in the building.

In the event of fire, Security Concepts will contact the Emergency Operations Center.

The preschool teachers will conduct a **Fire Evacuation Drill each month** with the children. A mock alarm will sound, and the children will proceed to the main entrance for preschool and sit at the end of the sidewalk while teachers take attendance.

The teachers will also conduct **Shelter-In-Place drills each semester** (tornado, earthquake, hazmat, other emergency as applicable). They will sound a mock alarm and take the children to the craft room which is location in the interior of the building and has no windows. Teachers will communicate with other staff by means of two-way radios **or** cell phone.

For an **intruder drill**, the teachers will sound a mock alarm and gather the children in the corner of the classroom nearest the closet. The location is not visible from the door. The door will be locked, and the lights turned off. Teachers will communicate with other staff by means of two-way radios **or** cellphone.

Emergency Preparedness Plan (continued)

If an emergency occurs and the children must evacuate the grounds, they will be taken to Thomas Harrison Middle School. Teachers will then call parents from cell phones to pick up their child. Harrisonburg Transportation will pick up the children and take them to Thomas Harrison Middle School.

There is available, upon request, a detailed Emergency Preparedness Plan that has been approved by Michael L. Landis, Assistant Fire Marshal for the City of Harrisonburg.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Teachers will keep this list of numbers with the two-way radios **or** cell phone and First Aid Kit:

Police: (540)434-4436
Thomas Harrison Middle School: (540)434-1949
Transportation Department: (540)432-0492
Community Activities Center: (540)433-2474
Parks and Recreation Athletics Office: (540)433-9168

Asbestos

The Community Activities Center was built in 1977 and contains some building materials that have been identified as containing asbestos. In 1995, these materials were identified in ceilings and floors and have been removed, encapsulated, or action was taken to abate any risk to human health. Periodic surveillance by a licensed operator is conducted.

Sick Child Policy, as outlined by VDOE

Below you will find the generic sick policies defined by the Child Care Division under VDOE (Virginia Department of Education).

A good policy is to ask yourself— “If my child were healthy, would I want them near someone with these symptoms?”

We require that you keep your child home if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- Fever: A fever during the night or the morning of including a temperature of 100 degrees or higher. **Children must be fever free, without medication assistance, for 24 hours before returning to school.** (Example: if a child leaves preschool at 11 am on a Monday with a fever, they are not eligible to return to school until Wednesday because of the 24 hour rule).
- Stomachache: They have had one or more episodes of vomiting, diarrhea, or both—in the last 24 hours.
- Sneezing/running nose: They are sneezing a lot, and the drainage from their noses is not clear in color.

- Sore throat: They complain of a sore throat, have tender, swollen glands, and/or a fever of 100 degrees or higher.
- Cough: they cough frequently, cough up mucus, and/or the cough sounds like a bark or is accompanied by a sore throat or wheezing.
- Earaches: they have constant or severe pain. They want to “hold or guard” their ear with their hand.
- Rash: if they have a rash that blisters, develops pus, or is uncomfortable.

Please use your good judgment (not your child’s) when insisting your child stay home sick. Thank you for helping us keep all our children at school as healthy as they can be.

Licensing Information

Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Preschool is licensed under the Virginia Department of Education Child Care Licensing guidelines (sometimes referred to as VA DOE in this handbook).

VA DOE began the transition from the Department of Social Services in Fall 2021. Their new website is listed here: <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/cc/>

You may contact the licensing coordinator in charge of our program through this website for further questions not answered in this handbook.