

# Three Rivers Community Schools

## Norton Elementary GSRP Family Handbook 2025-2026



[www.helpmegrowstjoe.org](http://www.helpmegrowstjoe.org)

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PROGRAM OVERVIEW</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ADMISSION POLICY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>WITHDRAWAL POLICY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SCHEDULE OF OPERATION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SNOW DAYS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>ATTENDANCE POLICY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CURRICULUM</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHILD ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHILD AND FAMILY REFERRALS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PARENT INVOLVEMENT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>FOOD PROGRAM AND NUTRITION POLICY</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>DISCIPLINE</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>BITING POLICY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PARENT NOTIFICATION OF THE LICENSING NOTEBOOK</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>HEALTH POLICY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>EXCLUSION POLICY FOR ILLNESS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>MEDICATIONS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PARENT NOTIFICATION FOR ACCIDENTS, INCIDENTS &amp; ILLNESS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>STAFF, PARENT, AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING POLICY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>10</b>
SELF-TRANSPORT:	10
BUSSING:	10
<b>ANTI-DISCRIMINATION/GRIEVANCE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TYPICAL DAILY ROUTINE (W/ TIMES)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>PARENT INFORMATION SHEET FOR CACFP</b>	<b>12</b>

## **PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT**

We believe every child is unique in terms of life experience, developmental readiness, and cultural heritage. We also recognize that parents are their child's first teachers. Partnership between family and school is essential to the optimal growth and development of young children. Our aim is to provide a safe, nurturing, stimulating environment that accommodates and embraces differences. Our goal is to promote the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of each child through a consistent daily schedule.

We use HighScope Curriculum which is aligned with Early Childhood Standards of Quality for PreKindergarten (ECSQ-PK) and supports our belief that children learn through the integration of learning and play, as children learn best by doing. We strive for a balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Child assessment is on-going and teachers develop meaningful experiences based on the needs of each child. Given opportunities to explore the world around them, your children become active, involved learners.

Teacher-child interactions are based around acceptance, respect and trust. Positive guidance is used to encourage caring relationships in our program. We believe that when children feel safe, they gain self-confidence and are able to make independent choices.

Our program is evaluated throughout the year using the Classroom Coach, who looks at areas such as the learning environment, teaching and learning routines, adult-child interactions, and Curriculum, planning, assessment, and family engagement. In addition, our program works with our families as partners, seeking their input about the education of their children. Our teachers believe in on-going communication with parents, administration, and colleagues.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

GSRP is Michigan's state funded preschool program for four-year old children with factors that may place them at risk of educational failure. Participation in GSRP helps strengthen positive child outcomes. Through advisory committees, parents assist to evaluate and make recommendations about the program.

The Michigan State Board of Education criteria for GSRP requires adherence to the program implementation manual and the Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten. GSRP programs must also implement or use an approved comprehensive curriculum, an approved ongoing child assessment tool and the Preschool Program Quality Assessment.

## **ADMISSION POLICY**

The Great Start Readiness Program is a preschool program for children who are four years old by September first of the year they enroll. The program is funded by a grant from Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) and is provided for children and families residing within the State of Michigan. To be eligible for the program children must meet grant criteria. This is determined by information provided on the enrollment forms by parents or guardians. Most classes will consist of 16-20 children. Remaining eligible applicants will be placed on a waiting list and considered for enrollment if space becomes available during the school year. Upon admission to the program, parents must complete a child information card, provide a copy of immunizations and a health appraisal form completed and turned in within 30 days.

## **WITHDRAWAL POLICY**

Parents may withdraw their child at any time during the year by informing the classroom teacher, the principal or the center director. The Great Start Readiness program is licensed by the State of Michigan under the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing. Families are required to assist the staff in obtaining all information and paperwork necessary for program compliance.

Children may be excluded when a short term injury or contagious illness endangers the health and/or safety of the affected child or other children. Children will NOT be excluded or expelled because of the

need for additional medical or behavioral support or assistance with toileting.

## **SCHEDULE OF OPERATION**

The Great Start Readiness Program runs in conjunction with the local school district's daily schedule. We run school from Monday - Thursday with the hours of 8:25 am - 3:21 pm. A minimum of 2 home visits and 2 parent/teacher conferences will take place within the district's calendar school year. The initial home visit will occur after the child is enrolled but before the child begins the classroom program. Because of this, each GSRP will have a later start date for students than their district's start date. The last parent/teacher conference will occur before the district's school year ends. Because of this, each GSRP will have an earlier end date for students than their district's end date. A school year calendar will be given to parents at the orientation/home visit. Our program runs Monday-Thursday. Friday is designated for staff professional development, planning and various home/school connections.

## **SNOW DAYS**

Occasionally winter weather may be severe enough for school to be called off or delayed for 2 hours. If the district is on a 2 hour delay, we will also operate on the 2 hour delay. If school is called off for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, then we will not have school either. You can check with local TV stations for this information. We will also send a closure alert on our communication format.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

In order for children to be most successful in learning new skills, consistent attendance is important. Children are expected to attend school Monday through Thursday. Please make every effort to have your child in attendance every day. When your child will not be able to attend for any reason, including illness, please call the classroom teacher as soon as possible. Also if you know in advance that your child will not be attending, please inform the classroom staff. If your child should become ill we will contact you or your emergency contact to come and pick up your child. We will make your child comfortable until you can come. Please see our health policy for more information.

## **CURRICULUM**

St. Joseph County GSRP preschool programs use Highscope. Highscope is a research-based curriculum that is play-based and uses exploration and discovery-based learning experiences. Each individual child is given the opportunity to move through specially designed learning centers at his or her own level of interest and ability. Every activity is planned with one underlying goal in mind: to allow the freedom of each child to grow and explore through first hand experiences in a warm, secure, and stimulating environment. Through our program, each child is given the tools needed to encourage the growth of the whole child.

## **CHILD ASSESSMENT**

Upon enrollment in the Great Start Readiness Program each child will receive a developmental screening called the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). The screening will be done and reviewed with the parent. The screening will give the program a better understanding of where the child is developmentally.

During the school year, the form of assessment used will be COR Advantage. Children will be continually assessed on a daily basis. As a part of this assessment system, teachers will take on the following tasks:

1. Observe and collect facts through observation and documentation using anecdotal notes as a method for recording.
2. Analyze and respond to children by considering their skills in relation to specific objectives and then scaffolding their learning.
3. Evaluate by comparing a child's skills and behaviors to research-based indicators of learning and development.

4. Summarize, plan, and communicate, making use of the collected information to plan experiences and share with others.

Three data collection points are scheduled for November, February, and May. Information at these checkpoints is then shared with parents via conferences or home visits.

## **CHILD AND FAMILY REFERRALS**

St. Joseph County GSRP is committed to serving children who have special needs/disabilities. We work closely with families, the Intermediate School District, and their Specialists serving your child, to ensure every child is participating in all of the classroom opportunities and receiving the appropriate services as indicated in their program plans. GSRP has a list of community resources to help parents and families in need which is given to every family.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

We strive to make parents feel as much a part of their child's education as possible. Parents are their child's first and most important teacher. Open and ongoing communication between teachers and parents is important. Parents may receive a newsletter, email, phone call, or information about their child at drop off or pick up. We encourage parents to participate in any parent meetings including our county wide Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings and to also belong to the Parent Coalition.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

The employees and volunteer participants of GSRP are required to hold all information gathered in the performance of their duties in the strictest confidence. Staff should not give out information regarding children and their parents. Such information should be held in strict confidence and should not be discussed with anyone outside the Center. Inside the Center, such information should be discussed only when it will benefit the care we offer the children and the parent. Refer any inquiries on children, their performance, and parents to the teacher. No information will be released to any unauthorized person.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Open positive communication is essential to the well-being and growth of your child. We will make every effort to keep you informed of your child's growth and development within our program. Please keep us informed when your child is experiencing any changes in his/her routine at home.

## **FOOD PROGRAM AND NUTRITION POLICY**

Breakfast, snacks and lunches are of sufficient quantity and nutritional quality to meet the dietary needs of preschool children. Meals and snacks will be in accordance with the minimum meal requirements of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Lunch will be served throughout each day for full day programs. Full day programs will also serve breakfast and/or snacks. Children in part day programs are served a minimum of 1 snack. If your child is present at the time one or more of these are served, he/she will receive whatever is being offered. Children are offered each meal component and make their own choices based on individual preferences. Weekly menus, with noted food substitutions, are posted for parent's review. GSRP complies with rule 400.8330(3) to ensure that children with special dietary needs receive meals/snacks in accordance with the child's needs. If your child has a food allergy please let us know what foods they need to avoid so that we may make appropriate substitutions.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Our discipline is age appropriate. We use positive methods of discipline which encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem and cooperation. Adults treat conflict situations with children as matter of fact. Adults diffuse the conflict situation before moving into problem solving. They approach children calmly, stop any hurtful actions and acknowledge children's feelings. Adults involve children in identifying the problem by gathering information from the children (what happened, what upset the children). They restate the problem and involve children in the process of finding and choosing a solution for the problem. Adults ask children for solutions and encourage them to choose one together. They are also prepared to give follow up support when children act on their decisions.

The following behaviors WILL NOT take place in the classroom:

- Corporal punishment (measures intended to induce physical pain or fear)
- Restricting a child's movement
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, or use of the bathroom
- Abusive or profane language
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment.
- Any form of emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child.
- Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities or from daily learning experiences.

## **BITING POLICY**

We want to ensure that every child is safe while in our care. Our program provides an environment that encourages and promotes cooperative interaction, respect for others, and non-aggressive problem solving between the children. Biting is a normal stage of development for young children who are teething and are still developing their language skills. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between thirteen and twenty-four months of age.

For safety and health concerns, we take biting seriously. When it happens, it's very scary, frustrating, and stressful for children, parents, and teachers. It is also not something to blame on children, parents, or teachers, and there are no quick and easy solutions to it. Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, or intense desire for a toy. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behavior that is often hard to extinguish because it does achieve results: the desired toy, excitement, attention. Knowing that the effect of their biting will hurt another person is not yet a part of a child of this ages' mindset, so the "cause-effect" relationship is not internalized. Our teachers plan activities and supervise carefully in order for biting not to happen. There are times, however, when everyone cannot be within immediate reach to prevent a bite.

Our policy for handling a biting incident is the following:

- The biter is immediately removed from the group with a firm NO. The bitten child is consoled and the bitten area is washed with soap and water. If necessary, ice is applied to reduce any swelling or bruising. The biter is not allowed to return to play until he/she is talked to on a level that he/she can understand, and then is redirected.
- A written incident report is given to the parents of all children involved when they are picked up that day. The name of a biting child is not released because it serves no useful purpose and can make an already difficult situation more difficult.
- We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for patterns, in an effort to prevent further biting behavior.
- We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner.
- We try to adapt to the environment and work with parents to reduce any child stress.
- We make special efforts to protect potential victims.
- We try to make every effort to extinguish the behavior quickly and to balance our commitment to the family of the biting child to that of other families.

## PARENT NOTIFICATION OF THE LICENSING NOTEBOOK

All Great Start Readiness Programs are considered child care centers under Michigan law and need to maintain a child care license from the Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential. All child care centers must maintain a licensing notebook which includes all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans (CAP). The notebook must include all reports issued and CAPs developed since May 28, 2010. The licensing notebook is available to parents during regular business hours. Licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports, corrective action plans from at least the past 3 years are available on the department's child care licensing website at <https://www.michigan.gov/mileap/early-childhood-education/cclb>.

This Center maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans.

## HEALTH POLICY

Parents usually know best when their child is ill. We assume the demonstration of good judgment by parents when illness dictates keeping a child home. **Please keep in mind that every child in attendance will be expected to participate in outdoor play.** As part of our responsibility in maintaining a safe environment for all children and staff, the following Health Guidelines have been established.

A copy of your child's immunization record is required to be in the center before the start of school. This is to verify that all children have been immunized so they will have immunity to some harsh diseases. Parents of children that are not up-to-date on immunizations will be assisted by staff in developing a plan to bring their child up to date.

Children must have a physical completed by a physician within the first 30 days of enrollment. Physicals need to be done in accordance with the State of Michigan's Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) program and will reflect whether the child is up to date on a provided schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary health care.

## EXCLUSION POLICY FOR ILLNESS

If your child becomes ill at school, the following procedures will be followed:

- Students will be evaluated by staff. The child's immediate needs will be attended to and it will be determined if a family member needs to be contacted.
- The child will remain with a staff member in a central location while the family is contacted.
- Families will be contacted by phone using the information provided on the Child Information Record. If the primary contact cannot be reached, we will continue to contact individuals indicated under the Emergency Contacts until someone is reached and able to pick up the child.
- Staff members will stay with the child and attend to their needs until they are picked up.
- Cleaning and sanitation of the area will occur before other children/staff are allowed back in the area.
- If it is determined that the child has a communicable disease, the family will notify the facility so that families may be notified.

No staff, volunteer or child will be allowed to attend school with any of the following symptoms:

1. Fever (100.4 degrees F or above) In order to return to school, the child needs to be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication; ie, Tylenol, Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen.
2. Persistent cough
3. Undiagnosed Rash
4. Vomiting
5. Diarrhea - Diarrhea being described as 3 or 4 loose stools in 6-8 hours, not just one watery loose stool.



6. Eye discharge
7. Lice

Should your child develop any of the above symptoms while at school, you will be contacted immediately. Arrangements will need to be made for you to pick-up your child promptly. Exposure to communicable disease (chicken pox, strep infection, etc.) should be reported to the Teacher/Director. They will inform you if your child has been exposed to a communicable disease while at the center.

If your child is unable to attend school due to sickness, please remember to contact us.

## **MEDICATIONS**

Should your child require prescription medication while at school, you are required to have a medical dispensation permission slip completed for that particular medication (physician signed) indicating the exact dosage and times for administration. You will be required to sign a form giving us permission to continue the medication. This ensures that medication is not given beyond the time needed. All medications must be received in their original container labeled with the child's name, medication name, and dosage/hours for administering. Office staff shall maintain a written record as to time, amount and student receiving medication. Medicine is stored in the school office in a secure container in either the refrigerator or cupboard as necessary.

## **PARENT NOTIFICATION FOR ACCIDENTS, INCIDENTS & ILLNESS**

If there is a minor accident at school we will apply first-aid and send a note home to let parents know. Examples of minor injuries (non-serious) include: cuts, scrapes, and bruises. If there is a more serious accident or incident we will immediately call parents or emergency contact and advise them, so that they can determine if they need to take their child for emergency care. Staff will provide the parents with a written injury/incident report. Examples of major incidents/injuries (serious-report immediately) include: serious injury/illness, head injury, asthma attack, allergic reaction, unconsciousness, vomiting, lost child, inappropriate contact with child on child or adult on child, and physical discipline by a staff or volunteer.

If an accident occurs resulting in the injury of a child, staff shall complete an Incident Report. This report will include the name of the child, date of incident, type of injury, location of incident, treatment required, description of incident, witnesses, and medical professionals consulted when applicable. If other children are involved in the incident, they shall not be identified by name in the report.

If the injury is not serious, staff will report the incident to the parents/guardians when the child is picked up at the end of the day. In case of serious injury, parents/guardians will be notified immediately by phone. If the parent/guardians do not answer, the emergency contact will be notified. In the case of an accident involving the need for emergency care, an Accident Requiring Medical Attention Report needs to be completed and returned to the Director.

## **STAFF, PARENT, AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING POLICY**

### **Staff, Contracted Staff, and any Unsupervised Volunteers:**

- All staff, contracted staff, and unsupervised volunteers will complete a comprehensive background check prior to an offer of employment.
- The individual must be determined "eligible" in the CCBC System before working with children.
- All individuals will sign and date a self-certifying statement at the time of hire or volunteering indicating that he/she:
  - Is aware that abuse and neglect of children is against the law.
  - Has been informed of the center's policies on child abuse and neglect.
  - Knows that caregivers are required by law to immediately report suspected abuse and neglect to Children's Protective Services (CPS).



- Any individual registered on the public sex offender registry (PSOR) is prohibited from having contact with any child in care.

If the individual has resided outside the state of Michigan within the 5 years immediately preceding the date of hire/volunteering, a criminal history check equivalent to the Michigan Internet Criminal History Access Tool (ICHAT) and the Department of Human Service Central Registry Clearance will be requested for all states of previous residence during that period of time. Failure to submit the required documents to the Department within the specified period of time will result in an “ineligible” determination and the individual will have to start the entire CCBC process over again, including new fingerprints.

### **Supervised Volunteers:**

All volunteers who elect not to go through the CCBC fingerprint process will need to be supervised AT ALL TIMES. This means that the individual must be within the line of sight of a caregiver who has completed and passed the CCBC background checks. The supervised volunteer can never be alone with children in the hallway, take children to the bathroom, outside, to the gym, on field trips, or be left unattended in the presence of children for any reason.

All volunteers will sign and date a self-certifying statement at the time of volunteering indicating that he/she:

- Is aware that abuse and neglect of children is against the law.
- Has been informed of the center’s policies on child abuse and neglect.
- Knows that caregivers are required by law to immediately report suspected abuse and neglect to children’s protective services.

All supervised volunteers must have a public sex offender registry (PSOR) clearance before having any contact with a child in care. A copy will be kept on file at the center. Any individual registered on the public sex offender registry is prohibited from having contact with any child in care.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **SELF-TRANSPORT:**

Families who elect to bring their child to school may park at designated parking areas around the school; please pay attention to signs. You must walk your child to the designated door (door 1) and sign them in with the office. Families who pick up their child after school need to meet us at the designated door (door 11) of the school. Each building's GSRP program runs on their school building's bell schedule. We appreciate it when families are on time.

### **BUSSING:**

Questions regarding bussing should be addressed to the Transportation Department (269-279-1148).

We do not want the driver's attention diverted from the road and traffic conditions. Family cooperation and enforcement of the rules is essential to realize this purpose. Students are held responsible for their own behavior. From GSRP Implementation Manual - Section: Program Administration and Staffing; pg 11 of 16: "Children must not be excluded, suspended, or expelled from classroom programming or transportation services for behavioral, toileting, or other non-health related needs. Programs should reach out to the ISD for information on mental health support for children and follow the process set by the ISD to obtain help." The following rules should be observed.

- Children must be escorted to and from the bus by an adult.
- Please have your child ready to get on the bus 10 minutes before it is due to arrive.
- Changes in pick up or drop off locations may be made through the transportation department if they are permanent changes.
- Children must observe classroom conduct.
- Be courteous, no profane language.
- No food or drink on the bus.
- Keep the bus clean.
- Cooperate with the driver and the bus aide.
- Stay in your seat.
- Keep head, hands and feet inside the bus.
- Do not punch, hit or shove anyone.
- Do not tamper with the bus equipment.
- The bus driver may assign seats.

An adult whose name is on the Child Information Card must be at the stop to receive the child when the bus arrives. If no authorized adult is at the stop, the bus will take the child to the bus garage or back to the school where they will wait for parents to pick them up. The school will make every attempt to contact the parents or other authorized adults on the Child Information Card.

## **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION/GRIEVANCE**

The Three Rivers Board of Education complies with all federal laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination and with all requirements and regulations of the U.S. Department of Education.

It is the policy of the Three Rivers Board Of Education that no person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, age, sex, marital status, handicap, or lack of English skills shall be discriminated against, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity to which it is responsible to or for which it received financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education.

The grievance procedure and forms for grieving are available in the Superintendent's office or any administrative unit in the Three Rivers Community School District.

## **TYPICAL DAILY ROUTINE (W/ TIMES)**

Each classroom teacher has the flexibility to arrange times that meet the needs of the children in their classroom. Each classroom has posted a daily schedule including times for each part of the day.

This is a sample day:

- 8:10 - 8:20 am: Arrival
- 8:25 am: School Starts
- 8:25 am - 3:21 pm:
  - Breakfast, Lunch, and Snacks
  - Large and Small Group
  - Outdoor Area
  - Plan, Do, Clean Up, Review
  - Read Aloud
  - Rest Time
- 3:21 pm: Dismissal

Your child's teacher will provide you with a specific schedule for your child's classroom.

Michigan Department of Education  
Child and Adult Care Food Program

**PARENT INFORMATION SHEET FOR CACFP**

*Where Healthy Eating Becomes a Habit*

This child care center is a participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program. The CACFP provides cash reimbursement to child care centers for nutritious meals and helps children develop healthy eating habits. The CACFP is administered by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

Through the CACFP you can be assured that your child is getting balanced, nutritious meals and developing healthy lifelong eating habits. Proper nutrition during the early years ensures fewer physical and educational problems later in life.

As a participant in the CACFP, your child care center receives reimbursement for serving nutritious meals. Meals and snacks must meet the USDA meal pattern requirements listed below. Children less than one year old: Foods in the infant meal pattern vary according to the infant's age. If your child is less than one year old, please request the infant meal pattern requirements from our center.

Breakfast	Lunch
Milk Fruit and/or Vegetable Grain	Milk Meat or Meat Alternate Fruit Vegetable Grain

MDE is required to verify the enrollment, attendance and meals typically consumed by children while they are in care. MDE staff may contact you regarding your child's participation in our day care center.

If you have any questions about the Child and Adult Care Food Program, please contact:

Three Rivers Community Schools  
George Seidis  
269-279-1100

or

Child and Adult Care Food Program  
Michigan Department of Education  
P.O. Box 30008  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
(517) 373-7391

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AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by: mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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S:CACFP/FORMS/PARENT INFORMATION SHEET CENTERS REV



5/2025