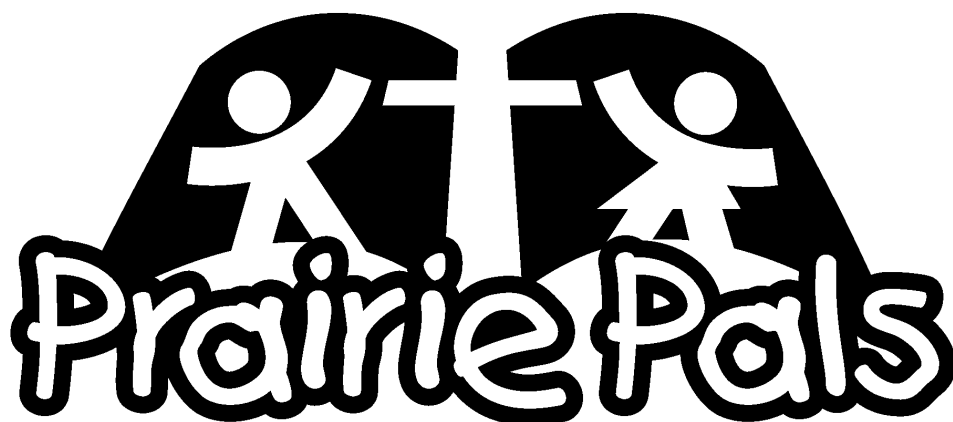




Prairie Pals Christian Childcare

Parent Handbook



Love of learning . . . Love of others . . . Love of God.

Prairie Pals Christian Preschool & Childcare
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Website: www.prairiepals.org

(Revised September 2018)

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Welcome to Prairie Pals Christian Childcare! We are so excited to give your child a head start on their personal, social, academic, and spiritual growth!

This non-denominational Christian program emphasizes strong academics and age appropriate faith experiences. Our program offers a variety of learning experiences that will help develop your child's independence, social skills and much more!

Prairie Pals is certified by The Department of Children and Family Services and follows all rules in accordance.

The staff at Prairie Pals aims to give your child the highest quality childcare experience. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Director at any time. Welcome to our Center!

Your Prairie Pals Christian Childcare Staff

Mission Statement

Prairie Pals Christian Childcare provides an academic, social, and spiritual program that will help children develop physically, emotionally, and cognitively. We provide an atmosphere that is conducive to children's learning while building their faith, self-esteem and a foundation for education.

Center Programs

Prairie Pals serves children from the age of six weeks through five years. Hours of operation are 6:00am to 6:15pm Monday thru Friday. Our programs are designed to give children a balanced curriculum of organized activities and learning, along with the free play time children need.

Eligibility

In order for a child to be eligible to attend Prairie Pals Childcare, (s)he must meet the following criteria:

- Must be at least six weeks of age.
- Parents/Guardians must complete all required forms.
- A complete health record and medical statement signed by a physician must be provided. This includes a physical, TB test, and lead test (TB and lead test to be determined by doctor). This must be done within six months prior to the enrollment date.
- All children are eligible regardless of creed, sex, national, or ethnic origin.

Program Selections

The following programs are available: Infants/Toddlers, 2 Years/Young 3s, and 3-5 Years. Please see the rate sheet for pricing information.

Financial Information

A \$50 non-refundable registration fee is required for all programs to secure a place in the classroom.

Families enrolling multiple children will receive a 5% tuition discount for the second and subsequent children. The discount will be applied to the lowest tuition rate(s). If the family qualifies for more than one type of discount, only one discount may be applied per subsequent child.

Prairie Pals offers a Referral Incentive to families who refer friends to our preschool program. When a new family enrolls and lists your name as the referring family, you will receive a \$25 credit towards your tuition AFTER the new family has paid their first month's tuition. The referring family must be enrolled at Prairie Pals when the new family begins classes to qualify for the tuition credit.

Tuition payments are due on the first scheduled attendance day of each week. Payments received later than Friday each week will incur a \$15 late fee per child, which accrues weekly until payment is made. Checks are to be

made payable to OCF. Payments may be brought to the Center, mailed, or payment may be made with a credit card on **PayPal** through our website, www.prairiepals.org. We do not process credit card payments in the building. Payment according to the tuition agreement is necessary regardless of attendance or days off. A \$10 service fee will be incurred on any returned payment.

If you wish to withdraw your child from the program, please submit a signed letter to the Director. Please include the final date that your child will attend. Payments are required for two weeks from the receipt of the withdrawal letter or to the withdrawal date if it is farther than two weeks.

If there is an outstanding balance of one week and payment arrangements have not been made with the Center, your child may be removed from the program. Reinstatement will require payment of all past due tuition and fees, plus the current week's tuition (providing space is still available in the class). If you are having difficulties making payments, please contact the Director or Financial Officer to discuss possible payment arrangements.

The Childcare Handbook provides only an overview of our most frequently asked financial questions. For the full financial commitment and disclosure statement for our program, please reference the Attendance and Tuition Policy.

Birth Certificate

For first time students, parents must provide a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age of the child within 30 days of their start date. We will make a copy of the certificate and return the original to you. If a certified copy of the birth certificate is not available, you must submit a passport, visa or other governmental documentation as proof of the child's identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate. We are required by law to notify the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement agency if you fail to provide the documentation within 30 days.

Days Off

Prairie Pals will be closed for the following holidays: New Year's Day; Good Friday; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Thanksgiving Day; Friday after Thanksgiving; Christmas Eve; and Christmas Day. The Center will close at 3:00pm on New Year's Eve.

If New Year's Day, Christmas Day or Independence Day falls on Saturday, the Center will be closed on Friday. If New Year's Day, Christmas Day or Independence Day falls on Sunday, the Center will be closed on Monday.

If District #308 is closed due to snowfall or other weather emergencies, Prairie Pals Christian Childcare will remain open provided road conditions allow staff to arrive safely to the Center. The Director reserves the right to close the Center anytime conditions are thought to be unsafe. In the unlikely event of this occurrence, please note that full tuition will still be due.

Arrival and Dismissal

If your child will not be attending, please notify the Center prior to your child's normal start time. **A late pick up fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged after 6:15pm.** After five minutes of tardiness, parents will be called. If parents are unable to be reached, staff will call those on the authorized pick-up list. If unable to reach those on the authorized pick-up list, the emergency contacts will be called. The Center will attempt a minimum of 2 calls to each parent. If unable to reach any parents, 1 call to each person on the authorized pick-up list or emergency contact list will be made. After 45 minutes, the police department will be contacted. A staff member will stay with the child until someone authorized or a police officer comes to pick up the child.

Please call if you are going to be late. This does not waive the fee; however, it does allow us to reassure your child that you are on your way. Staff members will not hold the child responsible for late pick-up and will discuss the issue only with the parent and never with the child.

Upon arriving at the Center, you must escort your child to his/her classroom. All children must be signed in and out with the time of arrival and departure.

We will only allow your child to depart with those authorized. Any other arrangements must be given in writing by the parent or caregiver by use of a Transportation Authorization form found on our website. A photo ID will be requested from anyone who is unfamiliar to the staff. Anyone picking up your child must be at least 18 years old.

It is critical that all pick up and emergency information is up to date. If there are any changes to the information on file, please notify us in writing as soon as you are aware of the change.

Medical Procedures & Emergencies

Our program requires permission to treat children with basic first aid when necessary. If there is an incident that requires more than basic first aid, the following procedures will apply:

1. Paramedics will be called to the Center by a staff member using 911.
2. A parent/guardian will be called. If he/she cannot be reached, the emergency contacts will be called.
3. We will make emergency personnel aware of your desire if you request a certified practitioner for a child exempt from medical care on religious grounds. If this is the case, you will need to make us aware of this in writing.
4. If contacts cannot be reached, the child will be taken to the emergency room with a staff member. That person will remain with the child until a contact arrives.

Parents are responsible for keeping all information updated in the child's file and for all medical bills incurred. The Childcare Center does not provide medical insurance for the children. The Center is not responsible for anything that may happen as a result of false information given on any forms completed.

Incident Reports

Staff is required to fill out an incident report if any incident or injury occurs. Parents are to read the incident report and then sign accordingly. Parents will receive a copy. The original will be kept by the Center in your child's file.

Medication

Medication should be administered prior to or following childcare, if possible. If medication is required during attendance hours, a medication authorization form must be filled out prior to administering each new medication.

Medication will be accepted only if in its original container. Prescription medications must be labeled with the full pharmacy label. Over-the-counter (OTC) medication shall be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. The container shall be in such condition that the name of the medication and directions for use is clearly readable. If the OTC medication label indicates the child's physician should be consulted, you must verify that you have consulted the physician and you are authorizing a dosage consistent with the physician's recommendation.

Sick Policy

For the children's protection, if a child has any of these symptoms, they are not to attend childcare:

- Fever of 100.5 (oral) or 99.5 (armpit) degrees Fahrenheit or higher (without the aid of fever reducing medication)
- Undiagnosed rash
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Severe cold
- Contagious illness

Children who have been absent or sent home should not return to the Center until the temp has been normal for 24 hours or a consecutive attendance day without the aid of fever reducing medication. Children who have had any of the above symptoms or illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities should not return for 24 hours after the last incident or consecutive attendance day.

We may require a doctor's note to return to the Center. ***When a parent is called to pick up a sick child, the***

child must be picked up in no more than 30 minutes plus the parent's normal travel time to work (i.e.—if it takes a parent 20 minutes to get to work from the Center, the child must be picked up within 50 minutes).

Pesticide Application Registry

Prairie Pals practices Integrated Pest Management, a program that combines preventative techniques, non-chemical pest control methods and the appropriate use of pesticides with a preference for the products that are least harmful to human health and the environment. Applications are only made when deemed necessary to control a pest problem. We will establish a registry of people who wish to be notified prior to pesticide applications. To be included in the registry, please notify us in writing. Please state "Notification Registry", your name, your child's name and the date.

DCFS Mandated Testing

Radon and lead testing are required by DCFS for our facility. Testing results and any mitigation needed/in effect will be posted in the lobby on our information bulletin board.

Confidentiality

Family history and children's personal information will not be released without written consent. All information is kept confidential and is used for program purposes only. This policy may only be broken in the case of abuse or neglect. **Federal law mandates all employees to report any suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Family Services. It is the responsibility of the staff to comply with this law.**

Personal Property

Students should come to childcare with a full sized backpack (that does not have wheels) or a diaper bag for younger children. The backpack/bag should contain a complete change of weather appropriate clothing, including underwear and socks. Please ensure your child's name is on his/her belongings. The Center will provide blankets; however, children may bring a child-sized blanket for nap time. Personal blankets will be sent home at the end of the week for laundering. They may also bring an object such as a stuffed animal. Please do not allow children to bring any toys to childcare unless requested for show and tell. Be sure to check cubbies daily for important papers and messages from the Center.

Discipline Policies

Our program implements a behavioral program that is based on natural consequences. The classrooms have a stop light system; green, yellow, and red. All children will begin on green each day. A warning is given for inappropriate behavior. A second warning will result in movement to yellow and a third to red. Physical confrontations such as hitting and kicking will result in immediate movement to yellow. Children remaining on green for the day will receive a sticker for positive behavior. They can then earn prizes when they have earned enough stickers. We want to reward the children for their good behavior and correct the inappropriate.

Prairie Pals operates under the following policies:

1. No corporal punishment, including spanking, will ever be used.
2. No child shall be subjected to cruel or severe punishment or verbal abuse, including those that are shaming, frightening or humiliating.
3. No child shall be denied food, toileting, or rest as punishments.
4. No harsh or profane language or implied threats of physical punishment shall be used.
5. No child shall be punished for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.

We recognize and praise appropriate and positive behaviors. A teacher's response to inappropriate or negative behaviors may include redirecting the child's activity, reasonably discussing the problem, or reinforcing positive behavior options. When necessary, the child may be separated from the group and ongoing activity for a brief period within sight of the staff. This also involves a teacher-child discussion of the behavior.

Should a child be moved to red during the day, a phone call may be made to the parent to discuss the behavior. If a behavior becomes an ongoing issue, we will work with you to address it. If the behavior involves danger to other

children or staff, we reserve the right to remove the child from the program after reasonable attempts have been made to correct the behavior.

We are not equipped for one on one care at our Center. If a child requires this attention, we will make reasonable modifications to our program as long as they do not cause undue hardship for the Center.

Communication

We offer many tools to keep our families informed of current/upcoming events and information. We hope you will take advantage of all the following resources:

- Email - we will send reminders for upcoming events and important dates. **Please be sure to save frontdesk@o-c-f.org and ccdirector@prairiepals.org to your contact list or other list of approved accounts to ensure our emails don't land in your spam folder.**
- Facebook - follow us on Facebook for quick reminders and a peek inside our classroom activities.
- PrairiePals.org - our school website will have important dates and reminders on the homepage. You can also find links to the meal menu and information sheets that are required to be filled out on the Childcare / Childcare Forms page.
- Remind - we will send an abbreviated version of any email communications through Remind. Download the Remind app to your smartphone and join our school community (instructions available on the Childcare / Childcare Forms page of our website). It is a great quick reference tool to access recent reminders and links to the newsletter each month.

Curriculum

Prairie Pals strives to provide a positive environment that will ready children for the school years. Our teachers give children the academic tools they need while nurturing their emotional and developmental needs. We also seek to provide the children with an age appropriate spiritual basis. The children will be introduced to age appropriate Bible Stories in the classroom.

Story and Reading Time

Reading is fundamental in the development of language and listening skills. It expands language and develops vocabulary. We include reading and story time daily in our activities within our program. We strive to help the children develop an appreciation and love for books.

Math and Science

Our math and science curriculum encourages experimentation and exploration with a variety of materials. As children experiment and play, they develop skills in problem solving. Many activities are used to promote cognitive growth in this area.

Art

Children express themselves in a variety of ways. Using art, the children have the opportunity to be creative and show who they are. This area is important to develop independence and self-esteem. This also develops fine motor skills and cognitive learning.

Dramatic Play

Dramatic play promotes imaginative growth and problem solving. The children also develop social skills as they role-play and communicate with one another.

Large Motor

The children will be given time each day for large motor activities. These activities promote the use of coordination and aids in developing muscle mass for balance and strength.

Christian Program

Prairie Pals is a non-denominational Childcare program that is Christian based. The program involves prayer, Bible stories, Chapel Chat, and observance of Christian holidays.

Daily Schedule

A schedule of the daily activities is posted in each classroom.

Fundraisers

We have two main fundraisers throughout the year. The money raised goes towards providing the Childcare with new materials, equipment and improvements. We appreciate your help in developing these efforts.

Parental Involvement / Volunteers

Parents are essential in our childcare program! They are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom to get hands on experience. Please prearrange volunteer time with your child's teacher. Parents are welcome to visit at any time.

Snacks & Meals - (We are an Allergy Smart School)

Prairie Pals follows the requirements set by the Department of Children and Family Services. Students are provided with breakfast, lunch and two snacks throughout the day depending on their time of arrival. A monthly menu will be distributed by email, available on our website and posted throughout the building.

To help make school a fun and safe place for our increasing number of peanut and tree nut allergic students, we are an allergy smart school. We follow the guidelines on the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act. If any of the top 8 allergens are present they will be listed on the packaging.

Home-made items and items not in their original packaging/not displaying allergy information will not be accepted; we cannot ensure allergy information.

If you choose to provide a birthday treat, we suggest Wal-Mart bakery and their mini cupcakes; however, to ensure the safety of our students we suggest you provide items of a non-food nature (pencils, erasers, stickers, etc.). If you have questions about an item, please ask before bringing them to school.

We also ask that you please clean your child's hands and mouth before entering school, to avoid the potential exposure to any of these allergens that may have been consumed at home.

Product Recall Information

For a comprehensive list of unsafe children's products visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission website at www.cpsc.gov.

Oswego Christian Foundation

Prairie Pals Christian Preschool and Childcare is a ministry of The Oswego Christian Foundation (OCF). This foundation has a board that governs the preschool. You may reach the Foundation President and Childcare Director at the Center office if there are any concerns or questions regarding the program.

OCF is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation dedicated to assisting churches in establishing and maintaining preschools and childcare centers. If you know of a church that would benefit from the Foundation's services, please contact the Foundation at (630) 551-7143. We accept donations, which are tax deductible. Oswego Christian Foundation's tax ID# is 32-0091574.



Thank you for joining our program! We look forward to getting to know you and your child!