

IOWA LUTHERAN EARLY CHILDHOOD MINISTRIES HANDBOOK

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This Handbook was revised and updated by:

- Jessica Paulin, Director, Beautiful Beginnings Preschool and Day Care Center, Polk City
- Jackie Illian, Parish and Preschool Administrator, Immanuel Lutheran, Cedar Falls
- Jan Doellinger, IDE Assistant to the President-Schools
- Rhonda Mohr, IDW Assistant to the President for Education, Youth and Family Life



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD



The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Introduction

As Christians, we are about disciple-making: baptizing and teaching in Jesus' name. One such program is an Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Ministry (ILECM).

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28: 19-20

Children are gifts from God! Each child is God's unique creation. Within each child lies a spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, creative and physical self. Research by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) supports what occurs in the first years of a child's life is extremely important in a child's total development. As Lutheran ECMs, we have the unique opportunity of impacting the spiritual nurture of the young child through everyday activities.

By providing Christian directors, teachers and helpers in an ECM, your congregation can, with the help and power of the Spirit, bring many unchurched children and their families to know and love our Lord Jesus. In a Christian ECM, young children are exposed to Christian teachers/models and Christian education up to five days a week, sometimes as many as 12 hours a day. This guide has been designed to set particular principles and standards for Lutheran Church Early Childhood Ministries of Iowa which will meet or surpass state requirements. Quality programs glorify God and have the potential to positively impact the congregations and communities around them.

These "Standards" contained in the following pages have been developed to help insure, under God, an early childhood program within the congregation which will truly "equip the saints for their ministry." The prime purpose of this resource is to assist the congregation in sharpening the uniqueness of its early childhood program; thereby making the program more effective in helping our children to grow in every way as children of God.

Thank you to Dr. Rebecca Schmidt and National Lutheran School Accreditation for Lutheran Early Childhood Centers for permission to use the standards for this Handbook.

(Throughout this document, you will see three *** - this means a special emphasis.)

PART I: STANDARDS

STANDARD 1: PURPOSE

The school is driven by its Christian mission.

STANDARD 1A: MISSION AND MINISTRY

Schools develop mission, ministry, purpose, and vision statements to communicate and serve as the basis for forming school goals, learner outcomes, and action plans as well as determining direction for all activities of the school. For clarity in this accreditation process, these statements are referred to as “Mission and Ministry Statements.”

The Lutheran early childhood program must be an integral part of the congregation’s ministry to young children and their families. As such, it concerns itself with the ministry of the whole church to fulfill its purpose as a Christ-centered early childhood program. The command of God is made clear to us in Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV): “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Mission outreach is an essential part of an early childhood program. Some families are active members of Lutheran or other Christian churches. Other families may be unchurched, inactive members of a church or practicing other religions. For these families, the early childhood program may be their only contact with a Christian environment and their first introduction to Jesus. The pastor and the early childhood staff minister to families daily, as well as in times of need. The early childhood program provides the opportunity to witness the love of Christ and build a strong, Christ-centered relationship with families. It is important that the congregation has ownership in the early childhood program as it carries out God’s command of ministry to meet the needs of families.

- **The early childhood program has a Mission and Ministry Statement designed specifically for the center that reflects the congregational Mission and Ministry Statement.**
- **The Mission and Ministry Statement of the center is intentionally communicated to the congregation as well as to the early childhood staff and parents/guardians.**
- **1A:04: The congregation is involved in the early childhood program in a variety of ways.**
- **A relationship exists between the school, the congregation and the community. The mission and ministry of the congregation and early childhood program is shared with the community.**

STANDARD 1B: PHILOSOPHY

Overview

An early childhood program philosophy is a cooperatively formed statement of belief that reflect every aspect of the program. Practices of the program align with the Mission and Ministry Statements of the church and school. The Philosophy Statement is Gospel-oriented and begins with a statement of faith. Additionally, the statement includes a discussion of the early childhood environment, curriculum design, parent / guardian relationships and an expression of how children's developmental needs are met with an emphasis on the importance of play. Reflection and review of the philosophy is an on-going process.

- **The written philosophy is Bible-based and reflects a Christ-centered approach to learning.**
- **Credo and Philosophy for Lutheran Church Early Childhood Ministries in Iowa**

A child is born, and that is a great day for the family. For the Christian family, an even greater day is the day the child is baptized and becomes a full-fledged member of God's family. Through baptism, the seed of faith is planted. Nurturing this seed is the chief responsibility of the parent. It is their responsibility to provide a faith community, a home of love through which the Holy Spirit can operate. The Holy Spirit also operates through the Christian teacher and school. Parents and teachers can share the task of nurturing this seed of faith. This is why, when parents choose Christian education for their child, they have chosen the Church's best educational agency available. Together, the parents and teachers can help the child to grow in grace.

An ECM plays an important role in aiding parents in early child rearing. The value of early child training is indicated in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Ephesians 6:4: "Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Parents seeking a safe, nurturing environment in which their children can grow and develop often look to the church for help. God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, continues to move His church to reach out with His love. Through His church, God touches the lives of people with His grace. Giving young children and their families the hope of the Gospel is a significant ministry that can be accomplished through an early childhood program.

A Preschool Credo:

We believe that effective guidance and teaching young children must involve a total approach to the total child. Our approach to the child is an approach of love as we give guidance in the dimensions of intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual growth.

We believe the child should develop a close relationship with God the Father who created each individual, with God the Son who made heaven possible through His death and resurrection, and God the Holy Spirit who nurtures and keeps the faith in His children.

We believe that the child should be exposed to a broad range of experiences through an active participation in the learning process.

We believe God's world becomes an exciting discovery of the Creator's resources through activities involving the five senses.

- **The written philosophy includes reference to spiritual, social/emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative development of young children with an emphasis on the importance of play.**
- **The Philosophy Statement is formally approved and/or adopted by the governing authority.**
- **The school's Philosophy Statement is communicated to staff, parents/guardians and the operating congregation(s).**

STANDARD 2: RELATIONSHIPS

The school demonstrates its Christian mission through relationships with congregation, community, staff, students and families.

Please refer to the resource: **IN HIS HANDS**
Chapter 7 – The Program Staff
Chapter 12 – Keeping the Team Connected

STANDARD 2A: HOME/FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Overview

Ministry in the Lutheran early childhood program is directed toward young children and their families. Parents/guardians are the first and foremost educators of their children. The early childhood program employs strategies for teaming with them and engaging families through effective communication, active parent involvement, and parent education.

- **A Statement of Nondiscrimination is evident in school printed materials and assures that students are admitted without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.**
- **Insert sample for staff handbook and one for student handbook. (Staff nondiscrimination may depend on money accepted from the state – what religious exemptions do we have)**
- **The school provides a variety of education opportunities for families throughout the year.**
- **The school uses orientation methods for new families.**
- **The school communicates center activities to families.**
- **Parents/guardians are welcome to visit the center.**
- **Parents/guardians are given opportunities to volunteer and support the school.**
- **Parents/guardians are annually asked to evaluate the program based on purpose, goals, and objectives.**
Please refer to the resource **IN HIS HANDS Appendix 11 example**
- **Teachers communicate with parents/guardians about physical, cognitive, behavioral, social or emotional changes observed in children. If needed, a plan is formulated for children with special needs.**
- **State and local resources are utilized to further the program’s ability to meet the diverse needs and interests of children and families.**

- **All communication regarding a student is kept confidential.**
- **Conferences are held with parents/guardians at least once each year and additionally as needed/requested or required by state licensing agencies.**
- **Parents/guardians are provided with opportunities to be included and involved in the church community**
- **Resources and materials are available to families to further the faith and general development of young children in the home.**
- **Parents/guardians are informed of the yearly calendar, themes, and special activities.**
- **Curricular goals and objectives are shared with parents/guardians.**
- **Teachers and parents/guardians form a partnership to establish and maintain two-way communication to enhance the Christian education experience and ensure that children's needs are met.**
- **Written information given to parents/guardians in a board approved handbook or other publications should include your mission and ministry statement and philosophy.**
- **Additional requirements for handbooks and policies can be found within the state/national resources that apply to your program.**

STANDARD 2B: CONGREGATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Overview

The Lutheran early childhood program is an integral part of the congregation's ministry to young children and their families. The early childhood program commits itself to participate in the ministry of the whole church to fulfill its purpose as a Christ-centered early childhood program. The administrator/director is an integral part of the ministry team of the church.

The early childhood program has opportunities to strengthen relationships with its local congregation and community. The administration supports and participates in appropriate activities within its LCMS district and the LCMS.

- **The school is operated by one or more congregations of The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod (LCMS) or maintains an active Recognized Service Organization (RSO) status with the Synod.**
- **The school provides opportunities for congregational involvement to promote its mission and ministry.**
- **A team ministry exists between the pastor and other church/school staff by supporting each other spiritually, personally and professionally.**
- **The center and congregation work collaboratively to develop and effectively implement an evangelism approach (i.e. activities, strategies, methods) for families who do not have an identified church home or attend church regularly.**

- Families are made aware of church programs and activities.
- The center provides age-appropriate chapel services to foster faith development.
- All early childhood staff members participate in various activities of the sponsoring congregation.
- Everyone employed by the center is actively involved in worship and the congregational life of his/her home church.
- The pastor and other ministry leaders are visible in the center and provide spiritual guidance.
- The pastor participates in early childhood center activities.
- The pastor expands his knowledge of early childhood practices to become better able to communicate with young children and families.
- The congregation provides spiritual support for the staff, students and their families.
- The congregation provides financial support for the center.
- The congregation has a plan for financial assistance to families with limited financial resources.

STANDARD 3: LEADERSHIP

The school is governed and administered effectively according to written policy.

STANDARD 3A: THE EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNING AUTHORITY

Overview

Leadership of the school is a critical factor in the successful development, implementation and evaluation of the school. Two primary leadership components are the board or governing authority and the appointed administrator(s). The governing authority guides, steers, directs and oversees the strategic direction of the early childhood center, although some schools may function effectively without a school board by reporting to a supervisor who works with the governing authority. In both governance models, the governing authority and leadership of the school work together to promote family involvement and support the spiritual, social/emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative development of students.

- Diagram of the governing structure of the early childhood/school/church**
- Governing authority policy manual**
- Governing authority grievance and due-process resolution procedures**
- Governing authority minutes from the past three meetings**

- Short- and long-range goals for the program
- Evaluation form used to assess the director
- Director's Supervisor Survey, if applicable

Please refer to the resource: IN HIS HANDS

Chapter 3 – Governing Body

Appendix – Division of Duties

- **The operating organization designates the governing authority and has written policies clearly defining lines of governing authority, responsibilities, limitations of the governing authority, and membership.**
- **The governing authority meets and minutes are kept for each meeting.**
- **The governing authority receives reports from the director at each meeting.**
- **Governance policies are determined at official meetings and recorded in the minutes.**
- **The governing authority has established policies that set forth rules and expectations by which the governing authority completes its tasks.**
- **The governing authority has clearly defined policies regarding open attendance at meetings and executive sessions.**
- **Governing authority policies are collected into a policy manual, separate from the minutes.**
- **No conflict of interest exists between members of the governing authority and the early childhood staff.**
- **Neither the governing authority nor its individual members involve themselves in the day-to-day operations and management of the center as defined by written policies.**
- **The governing authority monitors itself for adherence to policies.**
- **The governing authority makes appropriate reports to the operating organization(s).**
- **The governing authority has adopted comprehensive job descriptions for the director and staff.**
- **The governing authority provides for the annual evaluation of the director based on job description.**
- **The governing authority has written policies or position descriptions clearly delineating supervisory relationships for all staff.**
- **The governing authority has approved a process for the supervision and evaluation of staff members that is implemented by the director annually.**
 - Please see the resource: IN HIS HANDS – Chapter 7**
- **The governing authority provides adequate paid time for the director to perform administrative duties. If the director is teaching, adequate release time is provided for administrative duties.**
 - Please see the resource IN HIS HANDS – Chapter 6 Director**
- **The governing authority ensures that lead teachers are provided weekly paid planning time away from responsibility of children.**
- **The governing authority provides opportunities for ongoing professional growth for all**

staff.

- **The governing authority has a needs assessment process in place for evaluating the effectiveness of the school.**
Please see the resource: **IN HIS HANDS – Appendix Chapter 11**
- **The governing authority uses needs assessment process information for school-wide, long-term, systematic planning.**
- **The governing authority establishes written short-range and long-range goals for the early childhood program to effectively implement the program’s vision and mission.**
- **The governing authority communicates staff and parent grievance and due process resolution procedures in writing.**
- **The governing authority members actively serve as advocates for the early childhood program.**
- **The governing authority establishes policies that provide for annual budget planning.**
- **The governing authority and director are responsible for coordinating the school’s financial plan with the operating congregation’s financial plan.**
- **The governing authority and director ensure that sources of income and expenditures reflect the school’s philosophy and promote student growth.**
- **Salaries and remuneration reflect the value and work of the staff (1 Timothy 5:18 For the scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “the worker is worthy of his pay” ESV) and salaries are reviewed annually.**
- **The governing authority provides a health package for fulltime workers (30 hours or more) and disability and retirement (20 hours or more) if the congregation uses Concordia Plans. If you are not enrolled in Concordia Plans, you are encouraged to provide health insurance for fulltime workers.**
- **The governing authority ensures that liability insurance is maintained for the school.**

STANDARD 3B: THE EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATOR/DIRECTOR

Overview

The administrator/director assures that the early childhood education program is distinctively Christian and developmentally appropriate. He/she understands the mission and ministry of the congregation and is responsible to staff, children and families for the day-to-day operation of the program.

- **The director demonstrates a personal Christian faith, a commitment to Lutheran education and a dedication to the teaching ministry.**
- **The director implements policies as established by the governing authority and develops procedures to effectively manage the day-to-day operation of the program.**

- **The director's personal profile and qualifications fulfill the job description requirements which include a minimum age of 21.**
- **The director has at least a bachelor's degree with no less than 18 semester hours in early childhood education or is actively working toward accomplishing this requirement OR meets Iowa's DHS requirements.**
- **The director is involved in worship in his/her home church and is supportive of the sponsoring congregation's ministries.**
- **The director completes professional hours that complies with the agencies with which your program is involved.**
- **The director participates in district-sponsored conferences and events.**
- **The director submits information and statistics to the district and the Synod annually.**
- **The director is a member of at least one professional organization and remains current in early childhood education trends and practices.**
- **The director interacts with other early childhood professionals.**
- **The director consults with the pastor(s) of the sponsoring congregation(s).**
- **The director provides spiritual leadership for the staff and school community.**
- **The director or governing authority assures that levels of responsibility and accountability are clearly defined for applicable support staff (i.e. secretarial, maintenance, cafeteria, transportation).**
- **The director provides adequate orientation and training for new teaching staff members and substitutes in the following areas:**

- Goals and philosophy**
- Emergency health and safety procedures**
- Individual needs of assigned children**
- Guidance and classroom management techniques**
- Child abuse and neglect reporting procedures**
- Planned daily activities of the program**
- Expectations for ethical conduct**
- Other items required by state licensing**

- **The director meets with teaching staff members individually and collectively.**
- **The director provides an ongoing program of staff supervision that includes informal and formal observations, individual meetings, self-evaluations by staff members and a formal written evaluation.**

- **The director ensures that accurate confidential files for staff members and students are kept in an organized manner in accordance with licensing regulations.**
- **The director provides leadership in establishing developmentally appropriate curriculum and resources.**
- **The director provides in-service opportunities for staff.**
- **The director works with the governing authority to assure handbooks and manuals are updated with appropriate policies and procedures. The updates are regularly communicated to staff and parents, as applicable.**
- **The director reviews all public relations and printed materials used to market the program.**
- **The director implements the policies and decisions of the governing authority.**
- **The director manages the approved budget and finances according to the clearly defined responsibilities and limitations set forth by the governing authority.**
- **The director plans and implements a health and safety program that includes the necessary state requirements.**
- **The director limits group size appropriate for the age and level of the students and ensures optimal student growth.**
- **The director admits students according to established written admission criteria.**
- **The director designates a qualified individual to be in charge in his/her absence and posts the information.**

STANDARD 4: PERSONNEL

A qualified and competent Christian staff serves the center.

Overview

A qualified and competent Christian staff is essential to a quality Lutheran early childhood center. The cohesive school ministry team embodies the shared vision of the early childhood program.

Please refer to the resource: IN HIS HANDS

Chapter 7 – Program Staff

Chapter 12 – Keeping the Team Connected

- **All staff members demonstrate agreement in writing with the stated school mission.**
- **All staff members in licensed and license-exempt centers meet the state’s requirements for criminal record checks including documentation regarding any history of substantiated child abuse, neglect or physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect a child’s health or safety.**

- **Lead teachers have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or state recognized equivalent and are at least 18 years of age (21 years of age if working with infants and toddlers) or follow the requirements of state licensing (whichever has a higher requirement).**
- **Each lead teacher is encouraged to be a member of an early childhood professional organization.**
- **Assistant teachers have a minimum of a high school diploma or Graduate Equivalent Degree (GED) and are at least 18 years of age (21 years of age if working with infants and toddlers) OR follow the requirements of state licensing.**
- **All staff completes professional hours that comply with the agencies with which your program is involved.**
- **Each staff member demonstrates a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.**
- **Each staff member adheres to a biblically-based code of ethical behavior that has been developed and approved by the congregation.**
- **Each staff member attends regularly scheduled staff meetings, workdays, and staff events appropriate to his/her position.**
- **Each staff member completes a Staff Survey for Teachers and Assistant Teachers.**
 - Please refer to the resource: IN HIS HANDS**
 - Appendix 6 Sample Survey**
 - Appendix 11 Sample Evaluations**
- **Each staff member respects confidentiality of information shared by parents and information gained by interactions with children and families.**
- **Each staff member demonstrates a commitment to the mission and ministry of the school.**
- **The director and staff members plan and consult frequently about the program, children, and families.**

STANDARD 5: STAFF/CHILD INTERACTIONS

Staff members relate appropriately and effectively with all children.

Overview

The Lutheran early childhood center is a community of people, redeemed by God through Jesus Christ, in which all are affirmed because of their forgiveness through Him. Christ's love motivates each staff member to develop a warm and loving environment where each child is nurtured to develop positive relationships with others and reach his/her full potential. Teaching staff members recognize and provide opportunities for young children to develop an understanding of self and others. These interactions are characterized by warmth, Christ-centered relationships, respect, positive support, and responsiveness.

Please refer to the resource: IN HIS HANDS

Chapter 7 – Program Staff

Chapter 10 – Outreach to Families

- **The school promotes positive, Christ-centered relationships among all children and adults.**
- **Staff members provide a safe and nurturing environment free from negative verbal interaction, physical punishment, psychological abuse, coercion and threats as forms of discipline.**
- **Staff members treat adults and children with dignity and respect through speech and actions.**
- **Teachers initiate activities and discussions that build a positive, Christ-centered self-identity and respect for and acceptance of others.**
- **Teachers encourage children to become self-reliant in routine activities.**
- **Teachers communicate with children at the child's eye-level, listening and responding to children's conversations and encouraging them to use language.**
- **Teachers provide empathy, comfort, kindness, patience and care to distressed, sad and crying children.**
- **Teachers support and help parents/guardians and children with separation anxiety.**
- **Teachers provide children of both genders equal opportunity to participate in activities.**
- **Teachers model and promote positive social interaction in the classroom.**
- **Teachers assess the needs of children and, in partnership with parents/guardians, involve appropriate community resources.**
- **Teachers recognize and respect each family's culture, practices, and language.**
- **Teachers engage children in meaningful conversation at meal times and throughout the day.**
- **Teachers intentionally share their faith in Jesus with young children.**

- **Teachers encourage children to use words to solve problems when dealing with emotions.**

- **Teachers follow the written discipline plan which includes:**

- Positive suggestions
- Encouragement of positive behaviors
- Redirection
- Discussion of feelings
- Logical consequences
- Guidance and direction for children who hurt or bully
- Assistance in developing conflict resolution skills (describe problems, attempt alternative solutions)
- Assistance in regulating behavior by setting clear limits and applying them consistently

- **Teachers follow the written discipline plan for protecting student's personal rights. Students are free from:**

- Corporal or unusual punishment
- Infliction of pain
- Placement in any restraining device
- Humiliation
- Hostile threats
- Intimidation
- Coercion
- Mental abuse
- Other actions of a punitive nature include, but are not limited to, interference with daily living functions (i.e. eating, sleeping, or toileting; or withholding of shelter, clothing, medication or aids to physical functioning)

- **The written discipline plan incorporates a due process for children and parents/guardians.**

STANDARD 6: FACILITIES

The center maintains a safe environment that supports student learning.

Overview

The school maintains facilities, services and equipment to provide a safe, clean and healthy environment for all children and staff. The building, grounds and equipment are designed to provide a developmentally appropriate environment in which young children work, play, explore and learn.

When the early childhood facility is shared with other congregational programs, it is important that specific guidelines are developed to assist the various programs in coordinating use of equipment, materials and space.

Please see the resource: IN HIS HANDS

Chapter 8 – Environment

- **The center complies with all federal, state and local building, health, safety and disaster preparedness facility requirements and maintains documentation of the requirements including certificates, licenses and records of violations or deficiencies with documentation of resolution.**
- **The physical environment reflects the Christian philosophy of the program. It should be obvious to any visitor that your center is Christ-centered. (Crosses, pictures of Jesus, Christian themed bulletin boards, etc.)**
- **Buildings, grounds and equipment are safe, clean, attractive and developmentally appropriate for the age and number of children.**
- **Reasonable facility accommodations are made to be inclusive of all children, including children with identified disabilities and special learning/developmental needs.**
- **Appropriate indoor space square footage per child is provided for individual, small group and large group activities that follow Iowa guidelines.**
- **Individual spaces are provided for children to store their personal belongings.**
- **All rooms are well-lit and ventilated, and the temperature is comfortable.**
- **Furniture and equipment is age-appropriate, sturdy and safe.**

- **A variety of well-maintained materials are organized on low storage shelves to encourage independent use by children. Materials are rotated frequently to promote learning and extend children's play opportunities.**
- **Materials are developmentally appropriate and adequate in number to ensure choice and variety.**
- **Learning environments include but are not limited to the following areas as this could change depending on which agencies you are involved.**

- Worship center***
- Dramatic play
- Music / Creative movement
- Art
- Blocks
- Manipulatives
- Science exploration / Technology
- Math exploration
- Book area
- Sensory play
- Writing center
- Quiet spaces
- Soft elements (i.e. rugs, cushions, soft furniture)

- **Classroom areas are arranged so that traffic patterns do not interfere with activities.**

- **The following materials are included in learning environments:**

- Christian growth materials (i.e. books, audiovisual, props and puppets)***
- Small muscle manipulatives (i.e. beads, puzzles, lacing)
- Large muscle manipulatives (i.e. beanbags, balls, balance beam, wheeled vehicles)
- Art media (i.e. paint, scissors, markers)

- Music items (i.e. musical recordings, rhythm instruments)
 - Drama and role-play props (i.e. puppets, props to adapt dramatic play areas to reflect a variety of community settings)
 - Science materials (i.e. plants, pets, shells)
 - Math materials and manipulatives (i.e. number puzzles, cubes, games)
 - Language and literacy materials (i.e. fiction and non-fiction children's books, writing tools, stencils)
- **Classroom décor is child-centered and includes original artwork and writing from students with minimal commercial products.**
 - **Visual displays reflect the activities and interests of the children.**
 - **Young children's writing and art is displayed at their eye level whenever possible.**
 - **The learning environment is orderly and kept clean and safe as children use the facility.**
 - **Toilets, drinking water and hand-washing facilities are easily accessible to children.**
 - **Classroom windows are screened when open.**
 - **Appropriate outdoor square footage for outdoor play space per child exists that includes shade, as well as a variety of surfaces that follow Iowa Guidelines**
 - **The outdoor play area, surfaces and equipment:**
 - Are in good repair with no hazardous items
 - Have sandboxes (optional) that are covered when not in use
 - Are free from trash
 - **Cushioning (i.e. mats, pea gravel, sand, wood chips) material exists under all play equipment.**

STANDARD 7: WELLNESS

The school implements a wellness plan, based on best practices, and assures that children learn healthy habits. The guidelines are updated regularly. Therefore, refer to the agencies with which you are involved.

STANDARD 7A: HEALTH AND SAFETY

STANDARD 7B: FOOD AND NUTRITION

Overview

The school maintains facilities, services and equipment to provide a safe, clean and healthy environment for all staff and children. Children receive healthy snacks/meals, participate in physical activity and are introduced to healthy practices.

STANDARD 8: CURRICULUM

The center has a written curriculum that integrates the faith, is developmentally appropriate and is supported by age-appropriate materials and resources.

Overview

The curriculum of the Lutheran early childhood center reflects its philosophy and consists of appropriate learning experiences. It is the organized framework that delineates the following: content that children are to learn; processes through which children achieve curricular goals; teaching practices to help children achieve goals; and the context in which teaching and learning occur. The school's curriculum, instructional design and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and support the spiritual, social/emotional, cognitive, physical and creative growth and development of young children.

**Please refer to the resource: IN HIS HANDS
Chapter 9 – Curriculum**

If your program participates in the state-wide voluntary preschool program, their curriculum guidelines will need to be followed in addition to these guidelines.

- **The center implements a Christian curriculum that promotes learning and development in each of the following domains: spiritual, social/emotional, cognitive, physical and creative growth.*****

- **The curriculum focuses on the faith-development of young children. Through the Word and Spirit of God, teachers nurture the spiritual development of children throughout the day by: *****
 - Praying for them and teaching them to pray
 - Using the Bible daily and teaching Bible words
 - Sharing Bible stories in developmentally appropriate ways
 - Worshiping with children in the classroom and in chapel
 - Praising God in song and with words and chants
 - Integrating faith development throughout the curriculum
 - Living out their faith in Jesus Christ by serving and reaching out to others
- **The curriculum is based on state standards and reflects a developmentally appropriate philosophy.**
- **Learning experiences and materials used in the implementation of the curriculum reflect the early childhood program philosophy.**
- **The curriculum supports and values child-paced play as the avenue for learning. Child-initiated, self-selected play is included in large, uninterrupted portions of the daily schedule.**
- **Experiences and educational materials are concrete and age-appropriate, addressing various learning styles.**
- **Classroom schedules provide a routine and predictable framework.**
- **The daily schedule provides a balance of:**
 - Indoor / outdoor activities
 - Active / quiet activities
 - Large group / small group / individual activities
 - Child-initiated / teacher-initiated activities
- **The daily schedule provides for smooth and unhurried transitions from one activity to another.**
- **Teachers adapt teaching strategies to meet children’s individual spiritual, social/emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative needs and interests.**

- **The curriculum provides opportunities and materials for children to learn through exploration and use of their five senses.**
- **The curriculum supports opportunities for all children to explore, experiment, question and discover through:**

Solving simple problems

Listening

Observing

Predicting

Estimating

Measuring

Graphing

Classifying

- **The curriculum supports language and literacy through teacher-directed activities including:**

Reading and telling stories

Talking about pictures

Asking open-ended questions

Listening to children

Helping children write their own stories

Teaching finger plays

Labeling

Introducing vocabulary

Engaging in conversations (adult-child, peer-to-peer)

Providing phonemic awareness experiences (rhymes and repetition)

Sequencing stories

Comprehending stories

- **The curriculum fosters self-identity and understanding and acceptance of other cultures.**
- **The curriculum includes culturally responsive teaching practices that reflect the social/economic/cultural community in which the children live.**
- **The curriculum provides children with daily opportunities to develop socially through interaction with peers and adults.**
- **The curriculum supports physical development through:**

Large motor activities (i.e. riding tricycles, skipping, climbing)

Small motor activities (i.e. stacking, cutting, stringing beads, writing)

Large and small group activities (i.e. dancing, movement games, finger plays)

- **The curriculum supports the development of safety, wellness and healthy living.**
- **Visual media in the classroom is evaluated by administrators or teachers for educational value and contributes to a child's understanding and learning.**
- **The curriculum limits the use of passive visual media (PVM) in favor of developmental learning activities designed to engage children. Teachers are actively involved with children during viewing time and other activities are available to children when PVM is used. (PVM is not used in classrooms with children under age 24 months.)**
- **The curriculum supports comprehensive child assessment that uses a variety of instruments and multiple data sources including:**

Observations

Anecdotal records

Portfolios and work samples

Screening tools

Inventory of skills

Parent / guardian interviews and input

Developmental screening

Documentation of children's benchmarks and milestones

- Teachers conduct scheduled student assessments and share results with parents / guardians.
- Teachers provide families with individualized learning goals based on assessment results and input from parents/guardians.
- The written curriculum is evaluated annually and appropriate changes are made to ensure student growth.

STANDARD 9: INFANTS / TODDLERS

Staff members partner with parents to cooperatively work toward developing the full potential of each infant and toddler.

Overview

Research in early brain development and cognition provides clear evidence that early experiences establish the ability to learn throughout life. Experiences and materials are intentionally selected to support learning in all developmental domains: spiritual, cognitive, social/emotional, physical and creative. The adult-child relationships are caring, nurturing and responsive to the needs of each child.

Refer to DHS licensing for current guidance.

Part 2: PROTECTING YOUR IOWA LUTHERAN EARLY CHILDHOOD MINISTRIES

“In the culture, in the courts, even in casual conversation, it is increasingly obvious that we have lost sight of over 200 years of social and legal tradition that has secured our fundamental freedoms – namely, freedom of speech and religion.” The LCMS, in collaboration with Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), created the manual “Protecting Your Ministry – A Legal Guide for LCMS Churches, Schools, and Ministries.” (Excerpts from this manual appear in this Handbook.) This manual was created “to help you prepare for the legal intrusions some of your fellow believers and Christian leaders around the country have already faced, as well as prepare for the issues that may arise in the future.”

“The ability of your ministry to remain a compassionate but faithful witness to God’s truth in our world today may depend on a thoughtful consideration of the information in this manual. Sparing yourself and your ministry some of what other brothers and sisters in Christ have already suffered will help you continue to fulfill your vital Gospel mission.”

“We also recognize, with Christians of every generation and under any form of government, that if and when there is a clear and direct conflict between what our Lord commands and what is demanded by early authorities, ‘we must obey God rather than man’” (Acts 5:29).

Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Ministries Checklist

Protecting Your Ministry

Use this checklist to verify your protection

- Statement of Belief
- Religious Employment Criteria
- Facility Use Policy
- Mission Statement
- Code of Christian Conduct
- Emphasize Religious Character
- Admissions Procedures
- Religious Instruction
- Handbooks
- Disciplinary Procedures

1 Statement of Belief for Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Ministries

“A statement of belief serves as the foundation document for LCMS churches, schools, and ministries. Such a statement not only expresses the organization’s core religious beliefs, but also serves as clear evidence of those beliefs should they be questioned in a lawsuit. Generally, courts will not question an organization’s self-proclaimed religious beliefs, particularly if they appear in a statement of belief and/or other governing documents. For the LCMS, such statements and documents would include the Holy Scriptures, the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran church as contained in the Book of Concord (1580), references in the constitutions and bylaws of the LCMS, districts, and congregations, references to other essays and statements produced by various entities (such as the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations) and adopted by the LCMS Convention.” (Protecting Your Ministry, p.7)

Sample Statement of Belief

This [name the ministry] is part of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS or Synod). The LCMS is a mission-oriented and Bible-based denomination that confesses the historic, orthodox Christian faith in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a faith built on “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). With the universal Christian Church, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod teaches and responds to the love of the Triune God, who created all that exists; became man to suffer, die, and rise again for the world’s redemption; and brings people to faith and new life through His Word and Sacraments. The three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are coequal and coeternal, one God.

LCMS congregations voluntarily choose to belong to the Synod, and, although diverse in many ways, all hold to a shared confession of Jesus Christ as taught in Holy Scripture. We believe without reservation that the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament are the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice. In addition, the Synod accepts without reservation the writings contained in the *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*.

Believing in the authority of Holy Scripture and that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct interpretation and presentation of biblical doctrine, our congregations agree to conform all their teaching and practice to the Scriptures and the Confessions.

The Synod “is not an ecclesiastical government, exercising legislative or coercive powers” (LCMS Constitution, Article VII) concerning its member congregations and ministers. However, the voluntary association of member congregations and ministers includes their agreement to respect and honor and uphold (Bylaw 1.7.2, 1.8.1) decisions (resolutions) made by the Synod in its national conventions regarding the understanding of the teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and practices that are consistent with such teaching. The Synod in convention is the “principle legislative assembly” of the LCMS (Bylaw 3.1.1) and its resolutions and statements are the position of the Synod in matters of doctrine and life. The Constitution and Bylaws of the LCMS provide specific guidance for the implementation and supervision of the teaching and practice of its members (congregations and rostered church workers).

Congregations of the LCMS, while upholding teachings and practices that are consistent with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions and while honoring Synod convention resolutions, are self-governed and establish policies based on local circumstance and expediency. An LCMS congregation or ministry operates according to its own constitution and bylaws – which are required by the Synod Bylaws to be reviewed by the District through which the congregation holds membership in the Synod – and therein establishes an orderly way of making decisions and determines which individuals or entities in the congregation (e.g., the pastor, church council, board of elders) will have authority to act on behalf of the congregation in specific circumstances. The Constitution and bylaws of this [name ministry] govern our decision-making and policies. A copy is available upon request.

1.1 Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality should also be included. Here is a sample:

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Rejection of one’s biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term marriage has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

1.2 Statement of Final Authority for Matters of Faith and Conduct.

Each organization should have a statement that clearly identifies (1) the source of religious authority for matters of faith and conduct, and (2) the final human interpreter of that source for the organization. It clearly denotes that authority resides in a designated individual or group (eg Director, Education Board, Elders, Pastor) who is authorized to state the organization's beliefs and practices on any disputed issue.

1.3 Sample Statement on the Sanctity of Human Life.

Some Christian ministries are facing difficult employment decisions concerning employees who either choose or publicly advocate for abortion in a manner contrary to the ministry's religious beliefs. Include those who advocate for euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps. 139).

2 Religious Employment Criteria for Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Ministries

"LCMS schools and ministries should adopt a code of Christian conduct, grounded in the statement of belief, which establishes parameters for acceptable behavior.

"In light of current issues with sexual orientation and gender identity, this code of conduct should address: (1) dressing in conformance with one's biological sex; (2) using the restrooms, locker rooms, and changing facilities conforming with one's biological sex; and (3) abstaining from all intimate sexual conduct outside the marital union of one man and one woman. Cite the organization's statement on marriage, gender, and sexuality to highlight why this conduct is biblically required. Wherever possible, tie these requirements to scriptural or ecclesiastical teaching.

"The code should also address non-sexual behaviors such as cheating, stealing, respect for authority, and so forth. Include a warning that the school has the right to discipline or ask a student to withdraw for any reason, but that failure to comply with expected standards of conduct will subject the student or employee to potential disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion or dismissal."

2.1 Signed Statement of Belief

“First, and at a minimum, the organization should require all employees and volunteers to sign a statement affirming that they will not act contrary to the organization’s statement of belief and are willing to comply with the organization’s standards of conduct as determined by the organization (if any). (Retain these signed statements as part of the individual’s permanent record.)

“It is also good practice to note either on the signed statement, or in the employee/volunteer handbook, that acting contrary to the organization’s statement of belief or violation of the organization’s standards of conduct (if any) constitutes good cause to terminate employment or volunteer services.”

2.2 Religious Job Descriptions

“Second, the organization should create written descriptions for every employment and volunteer position. These job descriptions will be unique to each organization and position, but the descriptions should explain how the position furthers the organization’s religious mission, what the responsibilities and duties of the position include, and what characteristics or skills are necessary for the position.”

Be consistent and apply all employment standards for every employment position.

3 Facility Use Policy for Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Ministries

“A facility use policy is critical for any LCMS church, school, or ministry that owns a building and permits its facilities to be used outside of normal business operations.

“Churches, Christian schools, and Christian ministries can strengthen their religious liberty protections by adopting a facility use policy that outlines the religious nature of the building and restricts its use to those acting in a manner consistent with the organization’s biblical beliefs. A policy is clear evidence of the organization’s beliefs and practice regarding use of its property and why certain practices or activities are never permitted. A facility usage policy should appear either in the congregation’s governing documents or policy manual. LCMS churches, schools, or ministries that rent their facilities to outside organizations should consider doing so at less than market rates.

“There is no one-size-fits-all policy for all religious groups. The important point is to create a policy that covers situations unique to your organization’s ministry and mission, buildings or facilities, and religious beliefs. Take the time to craft a specific policy addressing each of these areas for your organization.”

3.1 Sample Facility Use Policy

The pastor or his official designee must approve all uses of church property and facilities [including the church school and early childhood center]. Generally, priority shall be given to church members, their immediate families, and organized groups that are part of the ministry, organization, or sponsored activities of the church.

The church believes that its property and facilities are to be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring glory to God. Although the facilities are not generally open to the public, we sometimes make our facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian service that is consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in, among other places, the church's constitution and bylaws, and in various places on its website [insert congregational website] and on the website of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *lcms.org*.

This facility use policy is consistent with our belief that allowing our property and facilities to be used for purposes that we determine are contrary to this church's beliefs would be an endorsement of those purposes and a contradiction and grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:22). Further, it is important that the church present a consistent message to the community and that the church staff and members conscientiously maintain that message as part of their Christian life and as a witness to others that is consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, advocate, or engage in practices that contradict the church's faith use any church facility. Nor may church facilities be used in any way that contradicts the church's faith. This policy applies to all church facilities, regardless of whether the facilities are connected to the church's sanctuary, because the church understands all of its property as a gift from God to be received with thanksgiving and to be set apart and used to the honor of Jesus' name in ways that are consistent with our faith in Him (Col. 3:17).

Consistent with this policy, church property, facilities and equipment [including the school and early childhood center] will be made available to non-members or outside groups which affirm that their beliefs and practices and planned uses of the facilities are consistent with the church's faith and practice.

[Note on fees for use of property and facilities: Whether a church charges a fee for facility use is up to its discretion. But charging below-market rates, or no fee at all, should help churches avoid being considered a public accommodation under local or state law. Public accommodations are generally subject to a variety of laws, including laws regarding nondiscrimination. Because there may be a greater risk of being subject to these laws when a church charges market rates for facility use, we advise either charging no fee (except for perhaps a cleaning or other incidental fee) or charging a below-market fee.]

Facility Use Hours

Facilities are available between the hours approved by the pastor or official designee.

Scheduling Events

Facility use requests shall be made to the "Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form. The event will be reserved and placed on the church calendar only when the pastor or official designee approves the use.

Fees

Use of church facilities is subject to a use and maintenance fee of \$_____ to pay for the upkeep of church facilities. Church members are not required to pay a fee for usage because maintenance of the facilities are derived from member tithes and offerings. *[Note: Whether a church charges a fee for facility use is up to its discretion. But charging below-market rates, or no fee at all, helps churches avoid being considered a public accommodation under*

local or state law. Public accommodations are generally subject to a variety of laws, including laws regarding nondiscrimination. Because there is greater risk of being subject to these laws when a church charges market rates for facility use, we advise either charging no fee (except for perhaps a cleaning or other incidental fee) or charging a below-market fee. In any event, the church may also wish to require a refundable security deposit to pay for any damages to the facilities.]

Facility Use Guidelines [OPTIONAL]

1. Alcohol Policy: No alcohol may be served in church facilities. *[Note: If a church allows alcohol, it should be aware that it is exposing itself to additional liability, especially involving claims that could arise on the premises or from intoxicated drivers afterward. Banning alcohol is also more consistent with the limited-use policy of the church. But if alcohol is allowed in a banquet hall or other facilities, the church should note that serving alcohol to minors is prohibited, and that the group using the facilities must not allow open and unsupervised serving of alcohol at events in which minors are present.]*
2. Smoking Policy: [e.g., smoking in any indoor church facilities is prohibited.]
3. Groups are restricted to only those areas of the facility that the group has reserved.
4. Food and beverages in classrooms, worship space ... [e.g., not allowed, not allowed without lid, restricted to certain areas, etc.]
5. Church equipment, such as tables and chairs, must be returned to original placement, unless arranged otherwise prior to the event.
6. All lights must be turned off and doors locked upon departure.
7. Clean-up [address whether it is the responsibility of the group using the facility, and if so, what constitutes satisfactory clean-up. The church may also wish to include a clean-up fee].
8. Abusive or foul language, violent behavior, and drug or alcohol abuse are strictly prohibited on church premises. Any person exhibiting such behavior will be required to leave the premises.
9. Any person or group must sign the “Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement” form prior to reservation of church facilities.
10. Facility usage requires the presence of adult supervision at all times.
11. Note that certain unanticipated events may require your event to be relocated (i.e. funerals).
12. The congregation is not responsible for theft or damage to personal property brought into the building.
13. Group acknowledges that they will not bring or allow dangerous items to be brought into the facility.
14. This document constitutes the entire agreement between the parties and is not assignable.

Insurance

For all non-church-sponsored events, the group or person using the facilities must obtain liability insurance coverage in the amount of at least \$ _____. The user must also sign a "Facility Use and an Indemnity and Hold Harmless Agreement."

Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement

Name of person or organization requesting use of facilities:

Please state whether you are a:

Church Member Church-Sponsored Ministry Non-Member Non-Member Group/Organization

Contact Information:

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

If the requested use is by an organization not affiliated with the church, please briefly state the organization's purpose and mission:

Please list the organization's website, if any: _____

Please list the names of the organization's officeholders and leaders:

Regardless of type of user, please describe which church facilities you are requesting use of and the purpose for which you intend to use the facilities:

What date(s) and time(s) are you requesting to use the facilities:

If you are requesting use of the church's facilities for a wedding and/or wedding reception, please list the names and contact information of the bride and groom:

Bride: _____ Groom: _____

Please list the name, contact information, and religious affiliation of the person officiating the wedding:

Please describe the marriage preparation counseling or training undertaken by the bride and groom:

I affirm that:

1. I understand that the church does not allow its facilities to be used in a way that contradicts its faith or by persons or groups holding beliefs that contradict the church's faith.
2. To the best of my knowledge, the purpose for which I am requesting use of church facilities will not contradict the church's faith, and I commit to promptly disclose any potential conflict of which I am aware or become aware to church staff.
3. I am not aware of any beliefs that are professed by me or the organization I represent and which is requesting use of the church's facilities that contradict the beliefs of the church. I agree to promptly disclose any potential conflicts in belief to church staff.
4. I understand that upon approval of my facilities use request, I will need to provide a security deposit in the amount of \$ _____, a certificate of insurance for at least \$ _____ of coverage, and any other fees required by the church.
5. I understand that the church does not allow its facilities to be generally available to the public, and that my use of these facilities is subject to the pastor's approval, which is conditioned in part on my agreement to the requirements in the "Church Facility Use Policy," a copy of which I have read and understood.
6. I understand that I will be responsible for any damages to the church facilities resulting from this proposed use of facilities.
7. The church believes disputes are to be worked out between parties without recourse to the courts. See, generally, Matt. 18 and 1 Cor. 6. Accordingly, users of the facility agree to attempt resolution of any disputes through Christian mediation.

Name _____ Date _____

4 Religious Mission Statement for Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Ministries

4.1 Mission Statement

“LCMS schools and ministries should articulate the distinctly religious purpose for their existence through a mission statement. This mission statement should be grounded on the organization’s religious beliefs and statement of belief.

“Place the mission statement in the organization’s bylaws, governing documents, and employee and student handbooks.”

4.2 Code of Christian Conduct

“LCMS schools and ministries should adopt a code of Christian conduct, grounded in the statement of belief, which establishes parameters for acceptable behavior.

“In light of current issues with sexual orientation and gender identity, this code of conduct should address: (1) dressing in conformance with one’s biological sex; (2) using the restrooms, locker rooms, and changing facilities conforming with one’s biological sex; and (3) abstaining from all intimate sexual conduct outside the marital union of one man and one woman. Cite the organization’s statement on marriage, gender, and sexuality to highlight why this conduct is biblically required. Wherever possible, tie these requirements to scriptural or ecclesiastical teaching.

“The code should also address non-sexual behaviors such as cheating, stealing, respect for authority, and so forth. Include a warning that the school has the right to discipline or ask a student to withdraw for any reason, but that failure to comply with expected standards of conduct will subject the student or employee to potential disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion or dismissal.”

4.3 Emphasize Religious Character

“Organizations that highlight their religious character have far greater religious liberty protections than those organizations that omit or conceal their religious character. Courts tend to evaluate whether an organization is religious, in part, based on its activities and presentation to the community.

“A Christian ministry can highlight its religious character through activities such as the following:

- Regularly including prayer, Bible studies, and worship in its activities, including those activities that occur off campus or away from the organization’s main facility.

- Emphasizing any affiliation with a church or religious denomination.
- Utilizing religious artwork within the building.
- Noting the organization’s religious character through its website, brochures, logo, and tagline.”

5 Admission Procedures for Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Ministries

5.1 Admissions Procedures

“Each LCMS school should have a well-defined admissions procedure that includes clear statements that the school is a Christian ministry. The procedure should also incorporate circuit breakers in the admissions process. These circuit breakers are designed to interrupt or terminate the admissions process if the school receives an application evidencing a lifestyle or belief system inconsistent with the school’s religious beliefs or mission. School admission should never be automatic.

Circuit breakers can take a number of different forms, but we suggest:

Information Packet

Provide each potential applicant family with an information packet describing the school. Include a clear explanation of the school’s religious mission and beliefs. Also, include a list of admissions criteria, particularly spiritual and behavioral criteria, which the school uses in evaluating prospective students (*sample provided at the end of this section.*) Finally, request that parents and students read the student handbook, and proceed with the application only if they are in agreement with, and willing to abide by, the policies in the handbook.

Application

In the application, include a section for “biological father” and “biological mother,” and the status of the parents’ relationship (i.e. married, divorced, deceased, never married), as well as an “alternative family information” section for step- or adoptive parents, or guardians. Inquire whether the child lives with both biological parents, and if not, ask that the family explain the circumstances.

Also, include an agreement section for parents to sign indicating that they have read the student handbook and discussed it with their student. The agreement should make clear that, by signing, both parents and students certify their consent and submission to all policies in the handbook. Ensure that the school retains any signed statements of agreement as part of the permanent record of the student and family.

It is also good practice to require a copy of each student's birth certificate. This can be used to verify birth sex, age, and citizenship (if applicable).

Interview

If practicable, conduct personal interviews of all new student applicants and their parents, and use the time to gain insight into family dynamics, faith background, behavior, and so forth.

Notice of Admission or Denial

Communicate a notice of admission or denial of admission in writing. Ensure that records of admission and/or denial are retained for an appropriate period of time.

Schools are not legally required to explain why they denied an applicant admission, but there may be instances where it is appropriate to communicate this information. If a school determines that it must deny admission due to a student's or parent's lifestyle that is inconsistent with the school's religious beliefs, it is always best to seek legal advice prior to issuing the written denial.

Sample Introductory Letter to Prospective Parent

Dear Parents:

Thank you for your interest in our school. We have adopted an admissions policy that opens the school to families who are like-minded spiritually, who are supportive of our philosophy, objectives, and standards of education, and whose children meet our enrollment standards. Our purpose is to serve families who desire not simply a private education, but a distinctively Christian education for their children.

Before applying for admission to our school, please read the Student Handbook provided in this introductory packet. The Student Handbook will introduce you to many of the school's policies, procedures, and expectations for both parents and students.

The first several pages of the Handbook explain our religious purpose, mission, and beliefs. This school unashamedly believes, teaches, and practices the lordship of Jesus Christ and acknowledges the authority of God's Word, the Holy Scriptures, *without reservation*. For example, if a question regarding biblical lifestyles arises in chapel or your child's classroom, the teacher will answer from a biblical viewpoint consistent with our mission and belief statement. If your beliefs and lifestyle choices are not in agreement with our beliefs, the teacher's answer may create conflict in your child's heart and mind.

Biblical principles are integrated into every subject taught at our school. Our staff is committed not only to academic excellence, but also to teaching students how to apply the truths of God's Word to every aspect of life. If you are in agreement with the teachings of God's Word, this school will complement the beliefs and ideals your child is taught at home. We look forward to partnering with you to educate your child in God's truth.

Sample Standards for Evaluating Prospective Students

A. Spiritual Considerations

1. Personal Christian commitment of parents and student.
2. Willingness of parents and student to be supportive of the school's Christian philosophy of education.
3. Willingness of parents and student to support the administration and faculty in carrying out the goals and programs of the school.

B. Behavioral Considerations

1. History of acceptable citizenship in previous school experience.
2. Agreement of parents and student to abide by the behavior standards established by the school.

C. Academic Considerations

1. Documented record of acceptable grades in previous school experience.
2. Acceptable scores on achievement tests.

D. Personal Consideration

1. Student's special interests, talents, and skills.
2. School makes no distinction in its admission policy on the basis of race, color, or national and ethnic origin.

6.2 Religious Instruction for Iowa Lutheran Early Childhood Ministries

"To ensure the greatest religious liberty protection for your school, it is important that students are not only taught from a biblical worldview (as understood by the church or ecclesiastical authority), but also receive actual religious instruction.

"LCMS schools should consider requiring teachers, as a condition of employment, to incorporate biblical teaching into their curriculum. Requiring teachers to sign a statement that they understand and agree it is their duty to incorporate religious instruction into their courses is helpful."

6.3 Parent, Student, and Teacher Handbooks

"All LCMS school handbooks should include the school's mission statement, statement of belief, and code of Christian conduct.

LCMS schools should also require all employees and parents to sign a written agreement statement affirming that they have read, are in agreement with, and are willing to abide by the established standards of the school as outlined in the handbook.”

6.4 Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedures

“LCMS schools should also establish clear disciplinary and dismissal procedures, and apply these procedures consistently.”

In Conclusion...

“Even in – perhaps *especially* in – a changing moral climate, God’s people can continue to make a profound impact as faithful witnesses to His love and truth. Given the freedom to live out and exercise our faith, we can engage a hostile social and political culture in ways that offer clear light and enduring hope amid the gathering spiritual darkness.

“That’s what this guidebook is all about. Adopting the action steps recommended in the previous pages cannot insulate your school ministry from all attacks by marriage counterfeits and those advocating for complete sexual license. But acting upon these suggestions will place your school ministry in a more defensible legal position should it face a lawsuit for discrimination. You have the assurance that the LCMS and Alliance Defending Freedom will continue to provide resources for the challenges ahead. Check us out at *LCMS.org* and *ADFlegal.org*.

“More than that, preparing yourselves legally will give your school ministry greater freedom to continue presenting the Gospel clearly and effectively to your community – and that freedom may well make an eternal difference for lost and hurting souls all around you.”

Part 3: IMPORTANT AGENCIES AND RESOURCES

Iowa Early Childhood Ministries aims to improve children's spiritual foundation, academic skills including improving language and early literacy abilities, as well as developing knowledge and skills that relate to math and science. It is also important to help foster the development of children's social and emotional skills, as many are entering a group environment for the first time.

Iowa ECM programs are regulated by a variety of different guidelines and agencies. Each agency presents a benchmark reference to the basic knowledge, effective approaches to use with young children, curriculum design, professional development, current policies, and other critical information.

Each Iowa EMC program will need to make some decisions about what type of program they will want to develop or work under which will often involve more than one regulating agency. Each agency may have different requirements or policies that must be followed, and they can sometimes contradict each other (e.g. ratios). Use the guideline of regulations based on city, state, and national. An array of resources is available for use by all EMC programs. This list of resources is where you can find the most accurate current information on the regulations, policies, and mandatory requirements to run a quality ECM program.

Use this guide to help locate the resources to relevant to information you are seeking.

- Licensing
 - Department of Human Services Licensing Standards and Procedures (DHS)
- Accreditation
 - National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA)
 - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (4-year-old)
 - Iowa Department of Education
 - Iowa Dept. of Ed: Technical Assistance Manual for the SWVPP
 - Iowa Early Learning Standards
 - Creative Curriculum/Gold Assessment
- Training and Professional Development
 - Iowa's Early Childhood and School Age Professional Workforce Registry (I-Power)
 - Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R)
 - Iowa Area Education Agencies (AEA)
 - Lutheran Education Association (LEA)

- Curriculum
 - Creative Curriculum/Gold Assessment
- Early Learning Standards
 - Iowa Early Learning Standards
 - NAEYC
 - National Resource Center: Caring for Our Children
- Food Program
 - Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Policies
 - Department of Human Services (DHS)
 - National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA)
 - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
 - National Resource Center: Caring for Our Children
 - Childcare Provider Portal
 - Alliance Defending Freedom

Resources (listed alphabetically)

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF)

Alliance Defending Freedom is the world's largest legal organization committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, marriage and family, parental rights, and the sanctity of life. They can assist churches with many of today's legal issues and can offer assistance crafting policies and handbooks. Churches will need to pay for a membership to receive all benefits and help from attorneys, but their website can offer important insight to be considered before writing or settling on a policy.

Adflegal.org

Child and Adult Care Food Program

Providing healthy meals/snacks is a pillar of quality care. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federally funded program that provides meal reimbursement to childcare centers, adult day care centers, emergency shelters, before and after school programs, and child development homes. This program helps provide guidelines for nutritious meals/snacks and to foster lifelong healthy eating and physical activity habits. The program serves children

age 0-12 in childcare centers and preschools. Information about this program and the process for provider approval is located on the Iowa Department of Education's website Educateiowa.gov under the **pk-12** tab. Look for **Nutrition Programs**. Nutrition training for childcare providers, civil rights information, and other educational resources related to food and wellness are also located at this site.

Creative Curriculum/Gold Assessment

When an ECM decides to partner with a local school district for the SVPP, they will need to utilize the chosen curriculum of the school district. The SVPP gives districts choices between 3 science based programs, but most districts in Iowa utilize Creative Curriculum. This curriculum pairs well with the GOLD Assessment (also available at TeachingStrategies.com), which is also favored by many districts in the state. More information on this curriculum and the assessment tool can be found at TeachingStrategies.com.

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)

Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) is a program to support quality child care throughout the state of Iowa. Child Care Consultants provide on-site consultation to licensed preschools, Child Care Centers (CCC), nonregistered Child Care Home (CCH) providers and registered Child Development Home (CDH) providers. The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) is the regulatory agency for early childhood care and education. CCR&R supports providers in complying with state regulations. Training in a variety of topics is offered to child care providers to not only meet licensing/registration requirements but to also improve the quality of care. CCR&R facilitates many types of professional development opportunities for the adults who care for our youngest citizens. Their website is iowaccrr.org.

Concordia Publishing House

CPH is the publisher of the LCMS dedicated to spreading the Gospel of Jesus. Early childhood resources can be found here.

www.cph.org

Department of Human Services: Iowa Licensing Standards and Procedures (DHS)

These standards outline all regulations for licensed childcare providers in the state of Iowa. These rules can be found on the Iowa Child Care Provider Portal (ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/providerportal) under the Rules, Forms, and Documents tab. These regulations have a tendency to change based on legislative decisions; therefore, viewing the document from the website will ensure ECMs are using the current version.

This document should be used to help formulate an ECMs policies and procedures and to ensure the health and safety of all children in the program. It will also give providers useful tools to help prepare for licensing visits. An overview of the manual is included below:

Part 1. Licensing Procedures

- Licensing Authority
- When a License is Required
- Applying for a License
- Licensing Decisions
- State Inspections and Evaluations
- Recordkeeping
- Administrative Requirements and Procedures

Part 2. Provider Resources

- State Contacts
- Iowa Resources
- National Resources
- Internet Websites

Part 3. Regulations

- Administration
- Parent Participation
- Personnel
- Professional Growth and Development
- Staff Ratio Requirements
- Records
- Health and Safety Policies
- Physical Facilities
- Activity Program Requirements
- Extended Evening Care
- Get-Well Center
- Food Services

Part 4. Tools Checklists (to be used in preparation for licensing visits)

Iowa Area Education Agencies (AEA)

The Iowa Legislature established Iowa's Area Education Agencies in 1974 to be an effective, efficient and economical means of identifying and serving children from birth to age 21 who require special education services. This decision was a result of the federal law mandating a free, appropriate, public education for children with disabilities. Iowa's Area Education Agencies continue to work as partners with children, families, and educators to ensure equitable, efficient, and effective educational services that prepare all Iowa children for a life well-lived. You can find their free resources at iowaaea.org.

Iowa Association of Christian Schools

The Iowa Association of Christian Schools (IACS) is the public policy voice of Iowa's Protestant, Christ-centered schools. Our mission: "Strengthening, Growing, and Advocating for Christian Schools in Iowa."

IACS represents Christian schools in public policy both by tracking public policy to provide information to member schools, as well as advocating on behalf of our member schools at the Iowa Legislature. IACS also educates Iowans on the benefits of school choice programs and Christ-centered education, building a culture of excellence in education and school choice in Iowa.

www.iowachristianschools.org

Iowa Child Care Provider Portal

The Iowa Child Care Provider Portal is a resource to all current and perspective childcare providers. It can be found at ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/providerportal/. This website contains applications, training, resources, forms, and documents for licensed providers. It is also the website providers will use to apply or enter Child Care Assistance (CCA) information for families approved for this program. An overview is included below:

- New Applicant Resources
- Existing Provider Resources
- I-PoWeR (Iowa's Training Registry for Childcare Providers)
- Provider Home Page (allows updates to provider information and CCA entries)
- Requirements by Provider Type
- Rules, Forms, and Documents (licensing rules, CCA provider agreement, Physical Exam Reports)
- Contact Information (DHS and CCA agency contacts)

Iowa Department of Education: Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Technical Assistance Guidance Manual

For ECMs looking to partner with their local school districts to offer the grant based Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP), this manual can help explain the application process, rules, and expectations the provider will need to follow. This information can be found on the Iowa Department of Education's website at Educateiowa.gov. An overview is below:

- Application Process
- Technical Assistance for Community Partners and Collaborative Relationships
- Program Requirements in Accordance with 281- Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 16
- Preschool Budget: Specified Budget Lines and percentages
- Community Collaboration
- Joint Planning for Successful Collaboration
- Developing Shared Agreements/Contracts

Iowa Department of Public Health

www.idph.iowa.gov

IN HIS HANDS

A Manual for Beginning and Operating Early Childhood Development Programs

This resource is intended for leaders and board members of early childhood programs that are either free standing or integrated with a Lutheran elementary school. This valuable resource provides direction as new programs are developed and offers ongoing support as established programs raise the bar of excellence through the utilization of accreditation, technology integration, and innovative marketing.

www.luthed.org/in-his-hands/

Iowa District East

Jan Doellinger – Assistant to the President-Schools

1100 Blairs Ferry Rd

Marion, IA 52302

(319) 373-2112

www.lcmside.org

Iowa District West

Rhonda Mohr – Assistant to the President Education Youth and Family Life

P.O. Box 1155

Fort Dodge, IA 50501

(515) 576-7666

www.idwlcms.org

Iowa’s Early Childhood and School Age Professional Workforce Registry (I-PoWeR)

Located on the Iowa Child Care Provider Portal (ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/providerportal/), I-Power offers trainings available throughout the State of Iowa to child care professionals. With links to alternate training websites (such as Iowa State University or Child Care Lounge), this is a great resource for childcare providers to locate and achieve necessary annual trainings.

Iowa Early Learning Standards

- Similar to Iowa Child Care Licensing Standards, these standards need to be followed in SVPP classrooms. This is in addition to the state licensing standards. This guidance is available on the Iowa Department of Education’s website, www.Educateiowa.gov. An overview is below:
- Essential Considerations
 - Intent of Early Learning Standards
 - Relationships
 - Physical/Mental Health
 - Diversity and Inclusion
 - Importance of Play
 - Role of Technology
 - Role of Observation
 - Understanding School Readiness
- Index of Eight Areas and Iowa CORE Alignments
- Standards, Benchmarks, Examples of Reaching a Benchmark, and Adult Supports
- Iowa Early Learning Standards and the Iowa CORE Alignment
- References

Luthed.org

Encouraging connecting and informing Lutheran Schools

Resource – Lutheran School Mailings

Lutheran Education Association (LEA)

The mission of the LEA is to link, equip, and affirm educators and workers in ministry for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. They offer a variety of networks, resources, and other opportunities to help support ministry workers across the country.

7400 August St.

River Forest, IL 60305

(708) 209-3343

www.lea.org

[email: lea@lea.org](mailto:lea@lea.org)

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children. The association comprises nearly 60,000 individual members of the early childhood community and 52 affiliates, all committed to delivering on the promise of high-quality early learning.

1834 Connecticut Ave. NW

Washington, DC 20009-5786

www.naeyc.org

[email: info@naeyc.org](mailto:info@naeyc.org)

National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA)

National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) serves as the accrediting body for Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod schools across the United States and the world. NLSA has been accrediting schools in the LCMS since 1978, and accreditation decisions have always been based upon a school's compliance with national standards for Lutheran schools that reflect the essential qualities that are expected of Lutheran schools.

1333 S. Kirkwood Rd.

St. Louis, MO 63122-7295

(314) 965-9917 ext 1285

Email: School.Ministry@lcms.org

www.luthed.org

National Resource Center: Caring for Our Children

Caring for Our Children (CFOC), is a collection of national standards that represent the best practices based on evidence, expertise, and experience for quality health and safety policies and practices for today's early care and education settings.

<https://nrckids.org/CFOC>

Protect My Ministry

Protect My Ministry offers complete background check and volunteer screening services for churches. Keep your ministry safe.

<https://www.protectmyministry.com/lcms/>

Protecting Your Ministry

A legal guide for LCMS congregations, schools, and ministries.

<https://adfllegal.org/forms/download-protect-your-ministry>

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

This website will explain the income eligibility requirements for the SNAP program. This site explains the process of how to apply to the SNAP program, and how benefits can be used. Visitors can apply online from this site. This is a helpful reference for families who meet the income eligibility requirements.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/>

Soli Deo Gloria!