

# Parent Manual

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# WELCOME TO HEAD START PRESCHOOL!

## Introduction to Head Start Preschool

### Mission Statement

To provide programs and services for Aboriginal children, youth, families and community that are rooted in culture and language.

### NIWASA Program Statement

NIWASA believes that children are gifts from the Creator. We support a holistic approach to well being, education and health that includes the child, family and community. NIWASA is built on 6 components: Culture and Language, Nutrition, Social Support, Health Promotion, Parental Involvement, Education and Lifelong learning. The 4 foundations are integrated into our Indigenous Pedagogy.

- 1) **Belonging:** Staff promote an environment where children and families develop rich relationships with each other, mother earth and their community.
- 2) **Well-being:** Staff promote children's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Children learn how to regulate themselves and discover their identities. They also learn how to take care of themselves and others.
- 3) **Engagement:** Staff encourage children to be curious and explore their world. The environment fosters creativity, problem solving, innovation and connection to all of creation.

**Expression:** Staff encourage children to communicate with expressive language, bodies, and materials. Indigenous language, cultural practices, and ceremonies are embedded and integrated into every aspect of the program.

Our vision is to provide high quality, holistic programs and supports that foster Indigenous identity formation and a sense of belonging.

**Goal:** Niwasa promotes the health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of the children, youth, family and community.

**Approach:** Staff have a holistic view of children's health that includes their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well being. Children and their families have opportunity to prepare seasonal and traditional meals which include access to traditional medicines.

Niwasa will ensure the environment is safe and sanitized by following recommendations the of Local Public Health Unit. Staff implement and monitor sanitary practice policies and procedures daily. Niwasa prepares meals that align with Health Canada documents including Canada's Food Guide– First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Children engage in active play throughout the day and receive time for rest and relaxation if required as stated in the Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from

Research About Young Children document. Indigenous language, cultural practices, and ceremonies are embedded and integrated into every aspect of the program.

**Goal:** Niwasa will support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/family, educators and program staff.

**Approach:** Educators are qualified and trained in connecting with children while supporting their mental, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being. The values of Honesty, Truth, Respect, Love, Courage, Humility and Wisdom guide interactions with children, youth, and families.

A holistic approach that will support children, youth and families in developing solutions and resolutions through co-operative problem solving. Parents are viewed as part of the circle and participate in decision making in their child's education. Niwasa promotes positive parent-child interactions and builds upon the strengths and knowledge inherent in each family. Niwasa takes a strength based approach to respond to families with varying needs. Niwasa makes connections for families through Indigenous and mainstream services as needed.

Niwasa will engage in positive, responsive interactions critical for children's overall learning, development, health and well-being. Educators engage and support positive interactions between children, families, and staff. Niwasa also engages in networking and collaborative work with community partners to remove barriers and overcome challenges for Indigenous families.

**Goal:** Niwasa encourages children to communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate.

**Approach:** Children are viewed holistically in the context of their individuality, family, and community. Each child is competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential. Educators collaborate with parents and caregivers to support children to understand their emotions, maintain reasonable levels of focus, and develop self regulation. Staff support children in understanding others and respecting diversity. Niwasa staff support child development in their practice by using Early Years Portal and How Does Learning Happen? documents. Drumming, singing, dancing and traditional stories are part of our daily activities that represent cultural teachings and well being. We create an environment that fosters meaningful communication and interaction.

**Goal:** Staff encourage exploration, play, and inquiry.

**Approach:** Children have access to a rich environment that fosters their social, physical, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive development. Children are encouraged to explore, to challenge, to theorize and to question all of creation and the natural world. An Indigenous pedagogy sets the foundation for children to explore their world, their culture, their community and to develop confidence when meeting new challenges. Educators view themselves as co-learners and collaborate in their practice with children and parents in accordance with the best practice resources How Does Learning Happen? and Aboriginal Head Start National Guidelines.

**Goal:** Staff provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences.

**Approach:** Educators develop program plans for children collaboratively utilizing observations and pedagogical documentation. Educators provide opportunities for each child to self-direct their learning. Educators, parents, elders, and teachers foster creativity by providing new challenges and supporting each child's interests and ideas. Niwasa views education as a lifelong process and assists children in a successful transition into the elementary school system. Early Childhood Educators provide play spaces and learning materials that offer exploration and inspiration to the children on a daily basis. Staff meet weekly to brainstorm ideas and discuss provocations to build on children's interests and provide tools that inspire further exploration and interaction among children. Niwasa continues to develop educational, cultural and language resources that support classroom interests that are shared with parents at parent meetings. Educators develop portfolios that include learning stories in order to provide life long memories for children and help parents see their child's development over the course of the year.

**Goal:** Staff create positive environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development are supported.

**Approach:** Educators observe children's interests and co-construct learning activities, make decisions, resolve challenges and develop theories that support ongoing projects primarily lead by the children and supported by educators and families. Programs are informed by the Ontario Early Learning Framework, "How Does Learning Happen?", and "Think Feel Act" documents. Our cultural and seasonal teachings guide traditional knowledge acquisition and projects that reflect Indigenous culture. We include cultural items, field trips to explore Indigenous communities, gardening and ceremonial teaching in our classroom environment to foster health and welling.

**Goal:** The program considers the individual needs of each child receiving care. Each day incorporates indoor and outdoor learning experiences, as well as rest time and sleep if needed.

**Approach:** The learning environment is well planned and developmentally appropriate. Educators utilize environmental resources to support the program. Staff encourage children to respect mother earth and contribute to their community. Niwasa understands children are unique individuals with distinct gifts. Each child is provided with appropriate outdoor time (weather permitting with appropriate clothing) and rest time if required. Trips, gardening space and outdoor learning environments are offered to the children all year round to fulfill their connection with Mother Nature and active play.

**Goal:** Foster engagement and ongoing communication with parents and caregivers about the program and their children.

**Approach:** Families are respected as children's primary teachers. Families are contributors to the program through their involvement on the Board Directors and Parent Council. Parents and care givers engage in meaningful decision making for the planning, development, operation and evaluation of the program. Educators assist families in maintaining strong and caring relationships. Staff provide resources to families regarding child development, parental education, and referrals to support services in person, newsletters, parent education sessions, or via a social media provided by Niwasa. Parents and caregivers have an opportunity to observe the classroom and share feedback each month. Parents are involved in the classroom for special occasions including honoring women's day, family socials and harvest meal along with many other events planned by parents that engage the community.

**Goal:** Niwasa collaborates with community partners to support the children, their families, and staff.

**Approach:** Educators are committed to working collaboratively with families and other service providers to the promote health and well being of each child. Niwasa works with community partners to developed early interventions to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous families. Niwasa supports a seamless transition to the elementary school system. Niwasa continues to develop linkages and relationships with service providers to enhance the facilitation in transition to support services. Niwasa recognizes that a healthy community is necessary to raise healthy children. Staff understand that healing requires achieving balance within the individual, family, and community. Children develop a sense of belonging and learn about responsibility to their community.

**Goal:** Niwasa supports staff with continuous professional learning and cultural development.

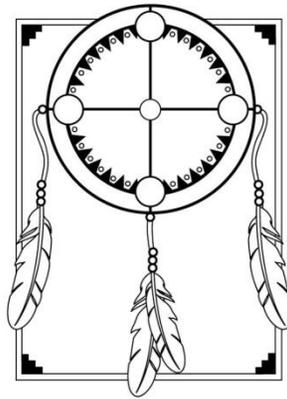
**Approach:** Staff and volunteers are provided with ongoing learning opportunities regarding early childhood development and cultural education. Staff are reflective practitioners and have opportunities to engage in current research, language acquisition and gain traditional knowledge. Staff support ethical responsibilities in Early Childhood Education and maintain their registration with the College of Early Childhood Educators. Educators continue to maintain healthy professional relationships that encourage growth and mentorship through networking opportunities, self discovery and through the cultural and knowledge sharing of traditional ceremonies.

**Goal:** Niwasa will continue to document and evaluate the impact of the strategies outlined in the program statement on children and families.

**Approach:** Niwasa will continue to evaluate the impact of the strategies for supporting children and families through regular communication at parent meetings, through surveys, feedback and regular parent participation. Educators will reflect on observations and develop children's developmental portfolios. Educators will engage in meaningful conversations and activities with children that will inform the children's learning environment. Through team meetings, training, mentorship and reflective practice, learning stories and pedagogical documentation, Niwasa will continue to monitor and evaluate the strategies and amend them as needed.

## Quality Assurance

In keeping with our mission and program statements, Niwasa will continually strive to maintain a high quality environment for the children, youth and families who access our programs. Niwasa participates in the *City of Hamilton's Quality Assurance Program* that aligns with the Early Years Pedagogy, How does learning happen? document.



## Hours and Days of Operation

### Hours of Operation

Head Start will have a maximum enrollment of 50 children, 2.5-5 years of age. The program will run four classes, two in the morning from 8:30 am to 11:30 am and two in the afternoon from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

### Days of Operation

HS will operate Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm, with no overnights or weekends. We will close for Christmas break, spring break and summer break. Head Start will run from September to the end of June each year.

### Holidays

HS will be closed on designated and Statutory Holidays. Prior notice of days closed will be posted to notify parents and community. The following are designated and Statutory Holidays:

New Years Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Aboriginal Solidarity Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Christmas Holidays and Spring Break will coincide each year with the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board. All dates will be posted at least one month in advance.

Head Start will be observing the same Professional Activity days as the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board. There will be no classes on Professional Activity days.

### Weather Related Closures

When the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board makes the decision to close schools due to a snowstorm or weather emergency, HS will also be closed. If you suspect that the weather may cause a cancellation, please listen to the radio (CHML or K-Lite FM) for more information. The Executive Director will make every effort to change the NHS voice mail message in order to give parents more information regarding the closure. Should the Board of Education make a decision to close schools in the middle of the school day, each parent will be responsible for making arrangements to pick up their child from the school as soon as possible. Under no circumstances, unless approved by parents and the Executive Director, are staff permitted to drive children home.



## **Six Components of Head Start**

### **1. Culture and Language**

The purpose of the Culture and Language component is to provide children with a positive sense of themselves as Aboriginal children and to build on the children's knowledge of their Aboriginal languages and experience of culture in their communities.

### **2. Education**

The purpose of the Education Component is to support and encourage each Aboriginal child to enjoy life-long learning. Niwasa will encourage each child to take initiative in learning and provide each child with enjoyable opportunities to learn. This will be done in a manner which is appropriate to both the age and stage of development of the child

### **3. Health Promotion**

The purpose of the Health Promotion Component is to empower parents, guardians, caregivers and those involved with Niwasa to increase control over and improve their health.

### **4. Nutrition**

The purpose of the Nutrition Component is to ensure that children are provided with food which will help meet their nutritional needs, and to educate staff and parents about the relationship of nutrition to children's ability to learn, physical development and mental development. Mealtimes provide opportunities for sharing, teaching and socializing.

### **5. Social Support**

The purpose of the Social Support Component is to ensure that the families are made aware of resources and community services available to impact their quality of life. The goal of this component is to empower parents to access assistance and services which will support them to be active participants in their children's lives and Niwasa.

### **6. Parental and Family Involvement**

The purpose of the Parental and Family Involvement Component is to support the parents' and family's role as children's primary teachers. The parents and family will be acknowledged as contributors to the program through involvement with a parent body or participation in and/or contribution to classroom activities. This component provides the opportunity to empower parents to bring forth their unique abilities and further develop as role models for children and in their communities.

### **Staff**

Our program is staffed according to the requirements of the *Child Care & Early Years Act*. Registered Early Childhood Educators (R.E.C.E.s) and Early Childhood Educator Assistants provide quality care for the children. Niwasa supports and participates in the Early Childhood

Education Apprenticeship program allowing students to become qualified while working directly with the children.

### Ages of Children Served

Niwasa will have a maximum enrolment of 25 children in the morning program and 25 children in the afternoon program. Niwasa is available to children ages 2.5 months to 5 years.

*Our staff: student ratio is 1:8.*

### Parents as Volunteers

Each Niwasa family is required to complete SIX volunteer hours each month. These hours can be complete by attending meetings or workshops and by volunteering at the school. If you would like to complete your volunteer hours by working in the classroom, on field trips or in any other capacity involving children then you must have a police check completed. The Executive Director can give you a letter stating that you are a volunteer at Niwasa Head Start Preschool. Take this letter to the police station to have your check completed. At Niwasa we understand that everyone makes mistakes. Your police check will only be reviewed by the Executive Director and will not be kept on file.

Volunteers in the classroom will be directly supervised by a Niwasa Head Start employee and will not be permitted to be alone with a child at any time.

Speak to the Teaching Supervisor or the Family Programs Manager to see how you can get involved. When you arrive at Niwasa Head Start to volunteer, please report to the main office to sign in. The Sign In/Out book is located on the small filing cabinet in the main hallway. Please make sure you sign this book every time you visit our school.

### Dress Code

Please feel free to wear comfortable clothing and footwear, but we ask that you do not wear t-shirts with obscene printing or any type of revealing clothing. In winter months, volunteers should wear warm, comfortable clothing so that they can participate in the same activities as the children. In the summer months, running shoes are best to participate in activities.

### Smoking

There is NO SMOKING within 100 feet of the Niwasa building.

### Support Services

Supportive Services will be designed to meet the needs of everyone involved in Niwasa Head Start. Parents will be responsible for deciding what kind of supportive services that they think they need, along with which services they think should be available at NHS. The Family Programs Manager will develop and maintain healthy working relationships with these community agencies to assure that the care of the NHS families needs are being met.

The list below is an example of some of the programs and services that will be offered by NHS and other Hamilton agencies.

- Parent support group
- Substance abuse prevention program
- Traditional parenting workshops

- Language programs
- Healing and wellness worker
- Counseling services

### Child Registration

The Niwasa Head Start program, using a holistic approach, will focus on Aboriginal preschool children and will include; culture and language, education, health promotion, nutrition, social support programming and parental involvement.

All families will meet with the Family Program Manager to complete an intake package prior to their child being accepted into the program.

#### Immunization

All children must have an up to date immunization record to be eligible for Niwasa Head Start. Objections or exemptions must be completed on the ministry-approved form and retained in the children or staff record.

- Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief forms for religious/conscience objections must be completed by a “commissioner for taking affidavits” (i.e. must be notarized)
- Statement of Medical Exemption form for medical exemption to immunization must be completed by a doctor or nurse practitioner.

#### Guardianship

Children can only be registered in the NHS Preschool Program by their legal parent/guardian. The NHS Preschool Program requires a copy of any legal papers showing the custody of the child, should you be separated or divorced. Staff cannot refuse access to the other parent if legal documentation is not supplied.

#### Mandatory Selection Criteria

Must be of Aboriginal ancestry.

Age appropriate: 2.5 – 5 years

Must be potty ready and diaper free. (This does not apply to children with special needs)

#### Waitlist

When enrolment is full at Head Start, any new applications received will be placed on a wait list. The application will be date stamped on the date the completed application was received. When a space becomes available, the Family Programs Manager or Supervisor will contact the family who’s application is first on the list according to the wait list application date. The waitlist will be kept confidential. There is no fee to be on Niwasa’s wait list and no deposit accepted to secured space at Niwasa.

#### Currently Enrolled Children

Parents will be contacted by the NHS staff to update their registration and enrolment forms for the new school year. There will be an Annual General Meeting at the beginning of the school year which all parents must attend. At this meeting parents will be given the opportunity to have

input into the upcoming school year. Children who hold **current enrollment status** will be given first priority for selection of the next school year's participation list.

### Emergency Contact Procedures

Each family must provide the school with an emergency contact. In the event that we can not reach you we will contact your emergency contact person. The parent or guardian of the child must provide the emergency contact person's name, address and telephone number. Ensure that the contact person will be available during school hours. You may be asked from time to time to up-date your contact person to ensure they are a reliable source.

### Children's Files

Children's file will contain the following information:

- Application (enrolment) form for child care centre
- Copy of current immunization record, or Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief , or Statement of Medical Exemption
- Completed accident reports/illness reports/medication forms
- If applicable; individual support plans

### Change of Information

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the centre in writing of any changes that should be made to their child's registration form. For example: change of pick up persons, new allergies, new address or phone numbers, etc.

### Confidentiality

All children's files and records are considered confidential for the staff and parents only, and will kept in file cabinets in the centre's office at all times. Every parent has the right to access their child's file.

All files are the property of Niwasa Head Start Preschool unless your child attends the NELCC as well, then two sets of files will be kept, one in each location.

## **Attendance**

### Attendance Requirements

According to the AHS Renewal Recommendations Committee 2002, children must maintain an average monthly attendance of 75% or higher. The Family Programs Manager will contact families who are not meeting the requirement at the end of each month. After a 3 month pattern of low attendance, the family will be placed on the waiting list. A formal letter will be mailed to the family.

### Chronic Absenteeism

Absenteeism can jeopardize a student's enrolment status. A student who is unreported absences from the program for 3 consecutive days, the Family Programs Manager will contact the family. If a child is absent for 5 consecutive school days without notice from parent/guardian, it will be understood by NHS staff, that a voluntary withdrawal has taken place. Niwasa Head start staff will notify the family in writing that their child has been put on the Niwasa waiting list.

## Daily Programming

### Behaviour Guidance

Educators will support children as they move through the continuum of development and acquire skills for problem solving. Educators will respect each child's unique form of expression and communication while role modelling positive interactions. Educators will respond with empathy and redirection while assisting children to learn strategies for staying calm and focused.

The following practices are prohibited at the Head Start;

- A. corporal punishment of the child;
- B. deliberate use of harsh or degrading measures on the child that would humiliate the child or undermine his or her self-respect;
- C. depriving the child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing or bedding;
- D. locking the exits of the child care centre for the purpose of confining children; and
- E. using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine the children.
- F. inflicting any bodily harm on children including making them eat or drink against their will.

*Staff at Niwasa will read and sign that they understood the Behavior Management Policy.*

### Breach of the Behavior Management Policy

Staff who do not follow and respect the Behavior Management Policy may be subject to termination.

Adults who do not follow and respect the Behavior Management Policy will be notified by the administration in writing. Flagrant misuse of the Policy could result in discontinued services from Niwasa and a report to the proper authorities e.g. Children's Aid Society, Police, etc.

### Inclusion Policy

Every child is unique and important; Niwasa provides an inclusive program where all children and families have equitable access to program services. This includes children with individualized needs. Equitable access to services will be provided to all families.

## Children's Belongings

All children must have an extra change of clothing in their "cubby" at all times. All children should come prepared for the weather outside. If parents are not able to provide the appropriate clothing for the weather please contact our Family Programs Manager to arrange that you get the clothing items that your child needs. Niwasa will have a few spare clothing items available for children to borrow in cases of emergency but we do not have enough supplies or space to keep enough for all students.

Any items brought to school should be labeled with your child's first and last names, if items are not labeled staff will label it. Niwasa is not responsible for any lost items but we will do our best to locate items that are brought to our attention. We strongly encourage you not to send your children to school with toys. If your child does bring a toy to school they will be asked to keep it in their cubby.

## Fire Drills & Emergency Information

Fired drills and emergency evacuation procedures are practiced on a regular basis. In the case of a real emergency, staff will evacuate the children and notify parents/guardians once we have arrived at our temporary shelter. In the event of a community emergency, parents are not to come to the centre as it will hinder a safe evacuation process due to traffic congestion. Parents are to listen to the community radio station for instructions and meet at the designated evacuation site.

## Sunscreen

Sunscreen is provided for all children. If due to an individual need your child requires his/her own sunscreen it will need to be handed to a staff member labeled and maintained at child care for your child's use. Please apply sunscreen to your child in the morning. A good base cover applied before full clothing is essential to ensure that bathing suit lines are properly covered. You may also apply sunscreen to your child when you arrive at the centre. Throughout the day staff will re-administer as necessary. Permission to participate in the sunscreen routine is provided in writing on the admission form.

## Field Trips

Throughout the school year your child's class or the whole preschool may go on various outings or field trips. Notification of these trips and all pertinent information will usually go home in the monthly newsletter or a flyer. Parents sign a general consent form in the enrollment package to enable your children to participate in events. If the trip is an all day event and/or requires alternative (school bus) transportation a permission trip will be sent home for parents to sign allowing children's participation. In these situations children that have not returned a signed permission form will not be able to participate. Parents who choose for their children NOT to participate in field trips will have to secure alternate care for their children for that day.

## Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning is an important part early childhood education at Niwasa. Children at Niwasa benefit from a variety of opportunities to engage with the natural world, including exploration, investigation and observation of the environment.

Being active can help young children stay healthy, improve movement skills, have fun and feel happy, develop self-confidence and improve learning and attention. . Research suggests that

allowing children to actively explore and investigate what they are naturally curious about, to test their limits, take manageable risks appropriate for their age and abilities, and engage in creative problem-solving is critical for children's physical and mental health and well-being. Children benefit from a variety of opportunities to engage with the natural world, including exploration, investigation and observation of the environment. Connecting to the natural world contributes to children's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health.



## Health Program

The Niwasa Head Start early childhood staff, volunteers and all other adults who work with the children and families will model proper hygiene practices. Niwasa will post proper hygiene practices throughout the preschool where the best apply as a reminder to all of the participants and staff of the preschool.

### Daily Health Check & Sick Children

A Health Check will be done upon each child's arrival at Niwasa Head Start each day. In order for a child to receive the most benefits from the program, they must be well rested and nourished, with enough energy to sustain them for the day. It is important that parents observe their child for signs of illness before they are sent to Niwasa, even though a Health Check will be completed upon their arrival.

**In order to prevent the transfer of illness to other children, parents must look for these symptoms before sending their child(ren) to Niwasa each day.**

- Diarrhea
- Persistent Cough
- Fever
- Severe Pain
- Headache
- Discharge from eyes
- Vomiting
- Unusual Rash

When a child is not feeling well, like all of us, they will be most comfortable at home. Keeping your child away from other children while they are sick also prevents other children from getting sick. If a staff member observes a change in your child that indicates they are not feeling well they may contact the parent(s) to pick up their child from the center.

**The procedures below must be followed if a child experiences any of the following:**

**Diarrhea** - the child must be taken home after the second incident of the day. The staff can suggest that a physician look at the child.

**Giardia** - (mucous diarrhea which is caused by a parasite) the child may not be at NHS until they have been on medication for 24 hours.

**Vomiting** - the child must be taken home after the first incident of the day

**Elevated Temperature** - Children may not attend program if they have a temperature of 38.5 C or higher. If a child has a fever it is recommended that the parent consult a physician for diagnosis.

**Colds** - the child may still attend school, but if their temperature becomes high the parents will be contacted.

**Ear Infection** - the child may attend the program if they have been on medication for at least 24 hours

**Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)** – the child may attend after being on medication for 24 hours and when the infectious period has ended.

**Impetigo (Staphylococcal)** - the child may attend after being on medication for 24 hours and when the infectious period has ended.

**Strep Throat** - the child may attend after at least 48 hours on medication.

**Pinworm-** Pinworm is a common infestation in young children. The child can return to school 24 hours after starting the medication for pinworm.

A child suffering from a communicable disease (chicken pox, measles, impetigo, etc.) shall not attend school during the period advised by health authorities. Any child suspected of having a communicable disease they will be removed from NHS immediately. A doctor's note must accompany the child on their first day back to school, this is to ensure the safety of the other children and staff.

If your child is displaying any symptoms of ill health your child will be isolated from the other children until they can be picked up at school by one of the emergency contacts. If we are unable to contact one of the emergency contacts the teacher will at their discretion provide special arrangements for your child until you can be reached.

### Administration of Medication

Niwasa staff will not administer over-the-counter medication (i.e. Tylenol, cough syrup, etc.) without a note from a physician. If necessary, one designated staff member will administer prescription drugs in accordance with provincial legislation. In order to do this the parents must provide:

- Daily written instructions including the name of the drug, prescription number, dosage and number of times that the drug is to be given; and
- Medication in the original prescription container clearly labeled with the child's name, date, name of drug, name of physician, instructions for storage, and administration of the drug.
- A completed medical form provided by NHS. The staff member that administers the medication will initial this.
- Children requiring Epi-pens or asthma inhalers will be permitted to carry them themselves, but staff must know where they are located at all times.

While staff members will administer medication if absolutely necessary, it is preferred that the parent(s) medicates the child at home under their own supervision. **For safety reasons make sure that any medication is handed directly to a staff member.** All medications will be stored in a locked container in the NHS kitchen clearly labeled 'medication'.

### Outbreaks

**An outbreak is when an occurrence of ill health or communicable disease has affected more than 10% of the children in the school or when the ill health re-occurs for a period of two to three weeks.**

## PROCEDURES THAT WILL FOLLOW:

In the event of an outbreak of a communicable disease the school staff in conjunction with the local board of health will come up with a plan to manage the outbreak. This could possibly include grouping healthy children separately from infected children or closing the school for a short period of time if necessary.

It is the parents/guardians responsibility to insure that the school has up-dated phone numbers of home, work or relatives in case there is an illness at school. If a child arrives and is of ill health we will ask that the child be taken home or to the doctor. We may ask that you bring in a note from your doctor that states that your child is not ill or infectious to avoid the spread of any communicable disease amongst the children in the school.

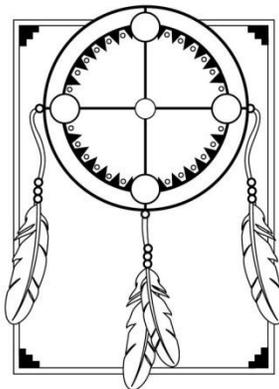
### Head Lice

Head Lice are very common among school age children. In order to prevent lice from spreading throughout the preschool, and among a child's family, the following procedure will be implemented.

Children's heads will be checked once a week, usually on the final day of programming. **If live lice or nits are found, a note will be sent home that same day requiring a parent/guardians signature. Children must be free of any live lice before returning to the program.**

It is imperative that all persons treating head lice use a lice shampoo that must be repeated again after 7 days, even if it seems as though there are no longer lice present. During this week period hair must be combed everyday with a fine comb. When nits are found  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch or more from the scalp, they are not considered a 'live nit'. Daily combing will remove any of these dead nits.

A health team professional or senior staff can provide educational information and support to families.



## Niwasa Allergy and Anaphylaxis Policy and Emergency Plan

Niwasa supports children who are or may be at risk for potentially life-threatening allergies. Most are allergic to food and some children are at risk for insect sting allergy. Anaphylaxis (pronounced anna-fill-axis) is a severe allergic reaction that can be caused by foods, insect stings, medications, latex or other substances. While anaphylaxis can lead to death if untreated, anaphylactic reactions and fatalities can be avoided. Education and awareness are key to keeping students with potentially life-threatening allergies safe.

The Niwasa anaphylaxis plan is designed to ensure that children at risk are identified, strategies are in place to minimize the potential for accidental exposure, and staff and key volunteers are trained to respond in an emergency situation.

### What is an Allergy?

An allergy is the immune systems excessive reaction to a normally harmless substance, called an allergen. Examples of common allergens are nuts, milk and insect sting. When the immune system reacts to an allergen hives, itching and swelling are seen. Allergic reactions can vary from mild to life-threatening. Anaphylaxis is a term used to describe a life-threatening allergy.

### What is Anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis (allergic shock. or .generalized allergic reaction) is a severe allergic reaction that can result in death due to airway obstruction or a severe drop in blood pressure. It is an extreme total body reaction.

### When Does Anaphylaxis Occur?

The course of a life-threatening allergy can vary from person to person. Anaphylaxis can potentially occur when a person has experienced only minor allergic reactions previously. Others may show a general progression of increasingly severe allergic reactions that lead up to anaphylaxis. Another person may experience an anaphylactic reaction without any previous signs of an allergy. Anaphylactic reactions can be triggered by minute amounts of an allergen measured in micrograms. For example, children have developed anaphylactic reactions after coming into contact with residual peanut butter on tables that were wiped clean of visible material. A person with a life-threatening allergy must be diagnosed and treatment prescribed by a doctor. It is recommended that an allergy specialist assess the child.

### Signs of Anaphylaxis

After exposure to the allergen, any combination of the following signs may occur to signal the onset of anaphylaxis. Signs do not always occur in the same sequence, even in the same individual. The following signs of anaphylaxis are due to airway obstruction and a severe drop in blood pressure:

- Throat tightness or closing.
- Change of voice
- Difficulty swallowing
- Difficulty breathing

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Change in skin color
- Dizziness
- Fainting or loss of consciousness

Other signs of anaphylaxis are:

- Red watery eyes
- Runny nose
- Hives/ red, raised and itchy rash. (It may appear anywhere on the body. If a person has eaten a food that contains the allergen, hives often appear around the mouth.)
- Itching. (May occur on any part of the body.)
- Swelling. (May occur on any part of the body, most often in eyes, lips, face or tongue. Swelling may be described by the child as itching, stinging or burning.)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Sense of doom
- Change in behaviour .(The child may say he doesn't feel right, become unusually quiet or withdrawn, become suddenly tired, scream, appear very agitated or stop eating in the midst of eating well.)

### Identification of Children at Risk

At the time of registration and annual renewal, parents are asked about medical conditions, including whether children are at risk of anaphylaxis and asthma. All staff must be aware of these children by including the information on their individual "Emergency Card". These emergency cards are maintained and stored in the child's classroom, bus, main office and master file.

It is the responsibility of the parent to:

- Inform the Family Support Coordinator of their child's allergy (and asthma).
- Before enrollment commences or upon a diagnoses, (before returning to the program), complete medical forms and the Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan. The plan includes a photograph, a description of the child's allergy, emergency procedure, contact information, and consent to administer medication. The Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan will be posted in all areas such as in the child's classroom (posted on the wall) the teacher's daybook, and inside the Niwasa kitchen. Parental permission is required to post the child's plan.
- Provide Niwasa with an epinephrine auto-injector (if prescribed) to remain on site at Niwasa in addition to one that the child will carry at all times in their back-pack.
- Advise the school if their child has outgrown an allergy or no longer requires an epinephrine auto-injector. (A letter from the child's allergist is required.)
- Have the child wear medical identification (e.g. MedicAlert<sup>®</sup> bracelet). The identification could alert others to the child's allergies and indicate that the child carries an epinephrine auto-injector. Information accessed through a special number on the identification jewelry can also assist first responders, such as paramedics, to access important information quickly.

- Be willing to provide safe foods for their child for special occasions.
- Provide support to the facility and staff as required.

### Availability and Location of Epinephrine Auto-injectors (“auto-injectors”)

Children at risk of anaphylaxis who have demonstrated maturity should carry one auto-injector with them at all times and have a back-up available in the school. Most children are able to carry their own auto-injector and asthma inhaler (if needed) in their backpack which will be kept with them when outside the classroom such as on neighbourhood walks, trips and playground. For children with stinging insect allergy, this would not have to be for the full year but during insect season (warmer months).

Additional auto-injectors normally kept at Niwasa will be brought on field trips. If the location is remote, the supervisor of the field trip carries a cell phone and knows the location of the closest medical facility.

### Niwasa Emergency Protocol

An individual Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan should be signed by the child’s physician. A copy of the Plan will be placed with the child’s emergency card which is copied to the classroom, bus and office.

Adults must be encouraged to listen to the concerns of the child at risk, who usually knows when a reaction is occurring even before signs appear.

To respond effectively during an emergency, a routine has been established and practiced, similar to a fire drill. During an emergency:

1. One person stays with the child at all times.
2. One person goes for help or calls for help.
3. An ECE will administer epinephrine at the first sign of reaction. The use of epinephrine for a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction will not harm a normally healthy child, if epinephrine was not required. Note time of administration.
4. Call 911. Have the child transported to an emergency room even if symptoms have subsided. Symptoms may recur hours after exposure to an allergen.
5. One calm and familiar person must stay with the child until a parent or guardian arrives. When the child is being driven to hospital, another adult should accompany the driver to provide assistance to the child if necessary. The child’s back-up epinephrine auto-injector should be taken.
6. Contact the child’s parents.
7. The ECE Supervisor will document the procedure and inform the Ministry according to serious occurrence procedures and include a copy of the report in the child’s file. A copy will also be made available for the Childs parents.

### Training

Each year there will be training for Niwasa staff which includes an overview of anaphylaxis, signs and symptoms and a demonstration on the use of epinephrine. Staff will have an opportunity to practice using an auto-injector trainer (device used for training purposes) and are encouraged to practice with the auto-injector trainer throughout the year, especially if they have a student at risk in their class.

Supply teachers will be advised to review the Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan for children in their class. The supervisor will speak with supply teachers about the procedure for responding to emergency situations.

All volunteers in the classroom will be provided with training on the procedure to be followed in the event of a child having an anaphylactic reaction, including how to recognize the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis specific to the child, what actions should be taken by the staff and how to administer medication.

Students will learn about anaphylaxis through circles and small group discussions.

### Creating an Allergy-Safe School Environment

Individuals at risk of anaphylaxis must learn to avoid specific triggers. While the key responsibility lies with the students at risk and their families, Niwasa must also be aware. Special care is taken to avoid exposure to allergy-causing substances. Given that anaphylaxis can be triggered by minute amounts of an allergen when ingested, children with food allergy must be encouraged to follow certain guidelines:

- Eat only food that Niwasa has made.
- Wash hands before and after eating as well as before boarding the bus.
- Not share food, utensils or containers.

For children not at risk, Niwasa asks that they not bring food from home or on the bus so as to reduce risk of exposure for those who do have allergies.

Niwasa posts children's first names and associated allergies in both classrooms, kitchen area and on all food trays.

On trips, children with identified allergies will be supervised directly by a qualified ECE teacher who is knowledgeable about the child's health concerns and trained to ensure safety measures are followed:

- During Niwasa events where parents/guardians are present, we ask that children be directly supervised by that parent/guardian to ensure their health and safety. We also ask parents who attend socials and pot-lucks at Niwasa to ask about any known allergies.
- Staff will also refrain from bringing into the school, any known foods, products which could trigger a known allergy.

### Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan

A standard "Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan" template designed by "Anaphylaxis Canada" will be used for all Niwasa students. Copies of these template forms are kept in the Niwasa administrative office.



## Communication

### Open Door Policy

Communication is vital to the success of both NHS programs and the children and parents involved. There are a few things that parents and teachers should do in order to ensure that the gates of communication remain open.

**Take the time to greet each other each day.** It only takes a few minutes, and it will give both parents and teachers an opportunity to bring up any concerns about the child.

**Ensure that staff members are kept up to date with any changes in your child's life.** When a child's life changes in some way (i.e. new sibling, change of address, etc), the child will often behave differently. Staff will be better prepared to meet the needs of individual children if they know the reasons behind any predicted behavioural changes.

### Telephone Communication

This is a great way to share information, especially if the parents can't find time during the day to communicate with NHS staff. Leave a message on the center's answering machine regarding the issue you wish to speak about and the best time for the call to take place.

Parents are encouraged to set up an appointment with a staff member when they wish to speak about their child's behaviour. Please remember that it is never appropriate to discuss a child's behaviour if he/she is present. NHS has established an open door policy to address parent's problems, concerns, and complaints. Parents and community can address their grievance with the Family Program Manager, Executive Director and/or appropriate staff members.

### Maintenance of Emergency Records

A copy of your child's emergency information will be kept on file in the office and a file card box will be kept at all times in the classroom containing the emergency information. It is important that these files are kept up to date. **If there is a change in your child's emergency contact information please notify the Family Program Manager immediately**



## Solving Problems

In any environment you come across problems. It is important to everyone at NHS that parents and children are satisfied with the program. Should you have an issue regarding your child or the program, please follow the procedure below:

1. Arrange to speak with your child's teacher or a NHS staff member at a time that is mutually convenient for both of you. While the teacher would love to be able to participate in a conversation during program time, it is next to impossible to supervise a group of children while trying to hear and understand a parent's concerns.
2. If your child's teacher is not able to provide you with satisfactory information, please contact the Executive Director to discuss your issue.
3. Most issues are resolved in the previous step, however, should you still feel dissatisfied with the answers you have received, your concerns can be brought to the attention of the Board of Directors. Concerns must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director in order to have them added to the upcoming Board meeting agenda. You may consult the Executive Director for the time and date of the next Board meeting.

## Unusual Situations

Every attempt will be made to meet the needs of children in our care. But since life can be so unpredictable, sometimes things will happen that could not have been predicted, and may not be addressed in our policy manual. Should one of these unusual situations arise, staff will meet with parents as soon as possible to discuss the issue and determine a suitable solution that addresses the needs of everyone involved. In any case, the Executive Director will be able to make all final decisions.

### **When a solution cannot be achieved...**

Niwasa Head Start may not always be able to meet the needs of every family; therefore, Niwasa staff members will request to meet with a family in order to have an opportunity to discuss concerns and develop a plan of action. In some cases, the child's needs might be better met in a different environment. If this is the case, staff members will work with the family to find more appropriate and suitable care.



## Transportation

### Niwasa Head Start Preschool Transportation Policy Agreement

Transportation is intended to assist families who are experiencing the following barriers to participation:

- Income Level
- Emergency/Crisis Situations (shelter, domestic violence, CAS, grandparents with custody)
- Aboriginal Foster Children
- Single Parent Families
- Families with no vehicles
- Families with Individualized Needs

Each year families will receive a transportation questionnaire with their registration forms to determine eligibility.

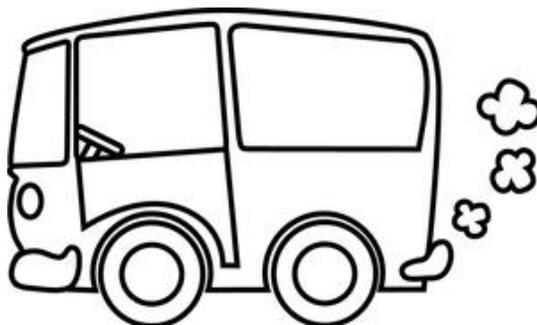
Families who reside in a 1 km radius of Niwasa will not be eligible for transportation.

Niwasa makes no commitment to guarantee transportation for children who require service outside of the "Bus Route" which is established each year and based upon the majority enrollment. This includes children who reside outside of the established route and/or may re-locate through the school year and/or change drop off/pick-up locations.

Please be advised that your pick up and drop off time may change throughout the year due to enrolment changes. A bus driver will call to advise you of a permanent route change and pick up or drop off time. You will also be provided with a written notice of the change.

All requests for changes will need to be submitted to the Executive Director and Family Programs Manager in writing a minimum of 5 business days prior for consideration.

Please note that Niwasa complies with **all** provincial safety laws and will provide children with proper safety seating as required.



### Transportation Procedure

Students will be picked up and dropped off at a pre-determined curbside stop. If students are not at the bus stop the bus driver will not wait. It is required that you be at the bus stop 10 minutes prior to pick up and drop off. Parents are responsible for assisting children on and off the bus and securing seatbelts.

If your child is absent the bus will not stop to pick them up again until you call the school and let them know your child is ready to return.

Students will only be released to the parent, guardian or person previously approved with Niwasa for pick up and drop off. Students will only be released at the pre-determined bus stop. If the parent, guardian or previously approved person is not present for drop off, the student will be returned to Niwasa Head Start.

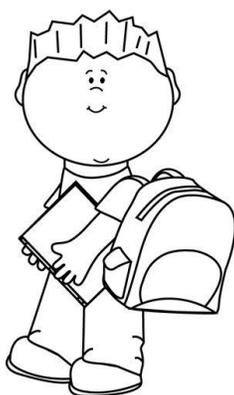
Every attempt will be made by the staff of the Niwasa Head Start program to contact the parent/guardian or emergency contact person listed on the NHS application form. If staff are unsuccessful in contacting the above-mentioned people, under the licensing agreement, will have no choice but to contact the Hamilton Children's Aid Society or the police.

If your child is sick or going to be absent please call the school in the morning before 7:15 am or the night before and leave a message. This is so the bus drivers will not be expecting to pick up your child.

### Pick Up and Drop Off Changes

Any request for a temporary change of pick up or drop off location must be approved in advance by the Family Program Manager. You must speak directly to the Family Program Manager between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30pm weekdays.

The bus driver can not authorize any change in your child's pick up or drop off.



## Food and Nutrition

### Meal Planning

NHS will be providing meals and snacks in accordance with the Canada and Aboriginal Food Guide. Our meals will be presented in a way that will encourage the children to try various foods that are nutritious and wholesome

Menus will be posted weekly for parents to look at and copies will be kept on file for a one-month period.

Any special dietary restrictions for medical reasons will be followed accordingly.

### Food Handling and Preparation

All food will be kept in the proper containers and storage spaces to ensure that no contamination of food occurs. All kitchen equipment, appliances and shelves will be cleaned with a disinfectant daily. All food will be prepared in accordance to the manufacturer's instructions. The cook and Executive Director will maintain their "Food Handlers" certification and encourage volunteers to complete this as well.

### Food Service / Outside Foods

Due to ministry regulations and health and safety concerns of the children, we cannot permit any outside food to be served to the children whether it is homemade or store bought.

A notice is on the entrance door stating that No outside food or drinks are permitted in our building.

### Dental Hygiene

All the children will brush their teeth after breakfast or lunch with the help of a teacher or staff member. Tooth brushes will be provided for the children and kept at the school.



## Head Start Beliefs about Children

We believe...

- That children are a gift from the Creator.
- That our children have a right to live proudly as Aboriginal people in the lands of their ancestors.
- That children have a right to learn their respective Aboriginal language(s) and histories, and adults have a responsibility to pass on the instructions that the Creator gave in the beginning of time as are reflected in our languages, cultural beliefs and cultural practices.
- That each child is part of what makes a community whole.
- That it is essential for children to develop meaningful relationships with Elders, the carriers of knowledge and history.
- That children, under the guidance of Elders, will learn to love learning throughout their life.
- That adults are community role models who are to teach children how to live a good life.
- That children deserve opportunities to gain knowledge and experience of how to live a good life.
- That children acquire knowledge by watching, listening and doing, and adults are responsible for encouraging and guiding them in all those activities.
- That children, through being loved, valued and encouraged, will gain the courage, the strength and the wisdom to use the power of a good mind and spirit in all that they do.
- That children have a right to enjoy the opportunities that education offers.
- That children have a right to live in healthy, self-determining communities that are free of violence.

