Family Handbook

Preschool Day Program:
Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

Contents

Welcome 3
CASA Principles of Care 3
Program Description and Eligibility 4
Team Roles 5
Family Involvement and Responsibilities 6
  Communication 6
  Progress/Individual Program Plan Reports 7
  Education and Training 7
  Out-of-School Visits 7
  Transportation 7
  School Supplies and Lunches 7
Evidence-Informed Practice 7
Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment 7
  Programs for Your Child 7
  Programs for Your Family 8
  The Classroom 9
Your Guide to the Primary Classroom 9
  Contact Information and Hours 9
  Supplies 9
  Lunches and Snacks 10
  Drop-off and Pick-up 10
  Typical Daily Routine 10
Program Policies 10

Welcome

Welcome to the Preschool Day Program! We are pleased to deliver this program in partnership with Edmonton Public Schools. This handbook will familiarize you with the program's staff and services, and outline what to expect from us and what we expect of you and your child.

We realize the decision to enroll your child in a specialized day treatment program is a difficult one. It is normal to have questions, worries and concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact us. We always invite suggestions and feedback.

You are a crucial partner in your child's treatment, and we look forward to working closely with you. Remember, you are your child's first teacher!

Thank you for your confidence in CASA Mental Health and entrusting us with caring for your child.

CASA Principles of Care

Mission

To build resilience through holistic, evidence-informed and compassionate care, and to advocate for children, youth and families with mental illness.

Vision

A community where all children, youth and their families are provided with timely mental health care and empowered to thrive.

Values

Community

We believe each person's community is unique, and is needed to support the mental health and well-being of those we serve.

Child-centred and family-inclusive care

As partners in care, we build services around the specific needs of each child and family.

Collaboration

We work together to better serve children, youth and families.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

We create a culturally safe environment that acknowledges and respects the lived experience of every person and community.

Outcomes-based accountability

We commit to and deliver effective outcomes as both a care provider and employer.

Preschool Day Program Goals

- Enhance your child's ability to participate meaningfully at home, school and in community environments.
- Enhance healthy social-emotional, cognitive and physical development.
- Strengthen your family's ability to support your child's development and learning by promoting parent confidence and competence.
- Prepare your child to enter the community school system and help divert possible future struggles.

The Preschool Day Program promotes the mental health and resilience of children by:

- developing the child's capacity to experience, regulate and express emotions;
- forming close and secure interpersonal relationships, and;

exploring and learning, all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children.

Due to the clinical nature of this program, please be aware that any contact between families outside of program hours is strongly discouraged.

We often get requests to share invitations to birthday parties. Unfortunately, this could potentially disrupt our classroom environment, particularly when conflict occurs.

Instead, we encourage parents to exchange contact information at program graduation as a way to practice skills and build support networks.

Program Description and Eligibility

The Preschool Day Program provides specialized early childhood mental health care in a small classroom setting.

The program is for children ages four and five who are experiencing severe challenges managing their emotions and behaviour. They may also have difficulties in development, executive functioning or learning.

The family and care team work together to support the child's social, emotional, academic and physical development. The program works to strengthen the family's ability to support their child by promoting parent confidence.

Children attend the program two full days a week during the 10-month school year: Tuesday and Thursday or Wednesday and Friday. There is a maximum class size of nine children.

Team Roles

Child's Caregiver/Family

You are the most important team player. You know your child best, and the CASA team needs you! We cannot help your child without your active involvement.

Certified Teacher

Teachers play a vital role in the lives of young children by nurturing and developing their interests in age-appropriate subjects. The teacher encourages social interactions and fosters a creative learning environment where the foundations of literacy and numeracy are taught through one-on-one guidance, scaffolding and modeling in play and other contexts.

Child Psychiatrist

The psychiatrist provides support to the child and family through assessment, intervention, diagnostic review and medication. The psychiatrist is a medical doctor that offers specialized assessment measures, educational recommendations and consultation.

Educational Assistant (EA)

The EA assists the classroom teacher in the implementation of individualized education plans. This includes direct support for all children in the program.

Mental Health Therapist

The therapist supports the child and family through assessment and intervention to set goals and to develop skills that promote learning and development. They provide mental health guidance and support to enhance the child's social and emotional growth and the parent's understanding of behaviour. They will liaise with the child's daycare to support the implementation of behaviour management strategies.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

The OT completes formal and informal assessments on an as-needed basis and creates intervention programs to promote the development of fine and gross motor skills. They provide consultation on an as-needed basis regarding daily living activities, such as feeding, dressing and toileting. OT intervention enables engagement in occupations of daily living such as self-care, academic and recreational activities.

Occupational Therapist Assistant (OTA)

The OTA assists the occupational therapist in administering assessment and delivering intervention plans. They also support the classroom team as needed.

Practicum Student(s)/Residents

Students and residents support the team while enhancing their own competence in their related field of expertise. An assigned supervisor supports practicum students through direct supervision. PDP has been a field site of choice for students and residents from the fields of occupational therapy, speech and language pathology, social work, psychology, child and youth care and psychiatry.

Program Manager

The program manager leads the delivery of high-quality clinical services by providing competency assessments, coaching, mentoring, training and clinical supervision to members of the mental health team.

Registered Nurse (RN)

Along with the psychiatrist, the RN helps to monitor effectiveness of medications, side effects or other arising medical concerns. The nurse is also on-site for assessments, administering medications and minor treatments should your child injure themselves on-site. In addition, the nurse provides informal health teaching as necessary.

Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

The SLP completes formal and informal assessments on an as-needed basis and creates intervention programs to promote growth in the areas of speech, language, social communication, phonological awareness and literacy.

Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (SLP-A)

The SLP-A assists the SLP in administering assessments and delivering intervention plans. They may also support the classroom team as needed.

Therapy Support Assistant (TSA)

The TSA serves as the family's main point of contact for the program to help organize the delivery of care with the rest of the team. The TSA supports the team, family and child inside and outside the classroom by assisting with the planning and implementation of individual or group programs. They also provide problem solving strategies and coaching for the family.

Therapy Support Navigator (TSN)

The TSN reduces gaps when transitioning a child and their family from a CASA program back to their community and home supports. They may provide services such as parent coaching, assisting with referrals to internal/external programs, direct consultation to schools and/or daycares to facilitate a smooth transition, and many other services related to coordinating services for families and children.

Program Supervisor

The supervisor provides day-to-day leadership to an interdisciplinary team. Their leadership work includes coaching, mentoring, training and clinical supervision. They ensure that clinical care remains consistent with CASA policies, procedures and strategic and operational plans. They also liaise with community organizations to enhance partnerships and develop mutual goals.

Assessment Psychologist

The psychologist helps the team to understand your child's cognitive skills and academic achievements through specialized assessments, educational recommendations and consultation.

Family Involvement and Responsibilities

Family-Centred Care

We understand "family" as a broad term that encompasses the child and all individuals who care for them. We respect the central role that the family plays in a child's life, and we support and empower family members as partners and decision makers in their child's care.

Emotional and/or behavioural problems affect all members of the family. Families must participate in all aspects of the child's assessment and treatment to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the child's behaviour. Families will learn specialized parenting skills that meet the child's unique needs. Your success in the program is directly related to the effort you put into engaging in the program, which includes implementing and practicing these skills in your home setting. We will work closely with you to understand the strengths and challenges your family experiences. We will develop a plan that addresses your specific concerns and respects your family values and customs.

Communication

Teaching staff maintain daily communication through a communication folder in order to provide you with detailed information about your child's experiences at school.

It is a program expectation that parents/guardians also fill out their portion. We are always happy to discuss your child's progress with you in-person, and you may request a conference at any time during the school year.

Progress/Individual Program Plan Reports

Conferences are held with parents during the year to discuss your child's developmental progress. Individual program plans (IPPs) are the "living documents" that function to integrate and coordinate treatment goals and planning across time and settings. All team members co-author the IPP, and it holds all accountable for the shared responsibility of setting, monitoring and refining goals and treatment approaches.

Education and Training

CASA is committed to providing you and your child with the best evidenced-based strategies to enhance your child's growth and success. Parent groups are offered throughout the school year and focus on helping you understand and manage your child's behaviour. Parents are highly encouraged required to attend these sessions. See 'Programs for Your Family' for more details.

Out-of-School Visits

Throughout the school year, the teaching staff and mental health therapist may visit the home and/or daycare as needed to act as a liaison between the home and school.

Transportation

Caregivers are responsible for transportation of their child to and from CASA.

School Supplies and Lunches

See 'Your Guide to the Primary Classroom'.

Evidence-Informed Practice

Treatment planning and delivery involves integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of child and family characteristics, culture and preferences.

Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment

In the Preschool Day Program, assessment is a collaborative and ongoing process of understanding the strengths and challenges your child faces in the home, school and community. Good assessment integrates your child's story with knowledge of child development, observations of patterns of behaviour and formal questionnaires and tests.

We use questionnaires as pre and post measures for program evaluation and quality improvement. They are also used to inform individual assessment and intervention. We will discuss these further during the program.

While each child requires a unique treatment plan, the program also offers a core basket of intervention to all children and their families.

Programs for Your Child

Occupational Therapy Groups

These groups explore play, crafts, sensory bins, gym equipment and movement activities. Fine motor

groups target small hand muscle strength, manipulation and coordination between hands. Gross motor groups support development in body coordination, balance and strength.

Individual or small-group intervention may also be available to target specific motor or functional goals.

Speech-Language Pathology Groups

Speech-language pathology groups explore literacy and music. The books, songs and activities covered within this group vary based on the classroom theme and the particular goal being targeted. These literacy and music-based interventions expose children to language concepts, speech sound production skills, rhyming and phonological awareness with peer modelling and adult support.

Children also participate in Story Champs, a 12-week group that targets story comprehension, story re-tell and story grammar.

Individual or small-group intervention may also be available to target specific speech or language goals.

PATHS: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies

The goal of the PATHS program is to lay the foundation for lifelong social-emotional understanding. It is a comprehensive, developmentally-based curriculum intended to promote social and emotional competence, and to prevent or reduce behaviour and emotional problem. Through PATHS, children learn essential skills in emotional literacy, behavioural self-control and problem solving.

Diagnostic Review

The psychiatrist and program psychologist will review your child's diagnoses and provide a formal and/or refined diagnosis. We review all diagnoses with a formal psychiatric assessment, including learning and developmental diagnosis. The program psychiatrist and psychologist provide the formal and/or refined diagnosis while integrating information from other team members and disciplines, including education, occupational therapy and speech and language.

Medication Review

The psychiatrist will review medication and may suggest changes. These may include an increase/decrease in dosage, change of prescription or starting a new medication. It is important to monitor your child's vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, height, weight) when taking medications, especially when they are starting new ones. The nurse or psychiatrist will complete a review on a monthly basis.

Programs for Your Family

Parent Group

A mandatory behavioural management training group that:

- Focuses on parenting/family strengths and applies these strengths to you child's needs.
- Develops specialized parenting and behaviour management skills to meet your child's unique needs.
- Identifies and understands the positive and negative patterns that occur between your child and other members of your family.

Individual Family-Oriented Therapy

This modality provides a time for families to independently discuss and process family-specific successes and difficulties in school, at home and in community. Staff will provide you with a toolbox of skills to help support your unique family needs. These required sessions are focused on (but not limited to) medication management, review of your child's progress, and ongoing collaboration to promote emotional regulation, develop effective behaviour management strategies, and improve the relationship between the child and their caregiver.

The Classroom

Formal education is central to your child's success. We believe that education should be therapeutic, so the Preschool Day Program supports your child's success with Alberta School Board curriculum and interventions. Strategies are used in the classroom to support learning and growth in group therapy. Clear and consistent expectations are set for all children. We are guided by our commitment to provide programming that recognizes the unique values, needs and talents of your child. This will help your child to shine academically, socially, emotionally and behaviourally and to confidently navigate current and future challenges in the home, school and community.

The team will help your child meet their goals and create healthy, productive lifestyles. We empower your child with high – but still reachable - academic, social, emotional and behavioural expectations. We support this child-centered experience with positive, helpful feedback in a safe environment.

The program will adhere to the framework, "Play, Participation, and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta" and the Kindergarten Program Statement. This strengths-based program is enveloped by play, which is the child's everyday reality. This takes place in an enriched environment in which children feel safe, nurtured, respected and supported so as to co-construct learning experiences. Play-based therapy and education are essential to a child's skill development and acquisition in multiple domains.

Play fosters your child's natural curiosity and potential. It is driven by their interest to understand the world and their place within it, which in turn helps cognitive, academic, physical, social-emotional and language development. Play also promotes self-regulation, resilience and stress management. Children are mighty learners that are competent, curious and full of knowledge and potential. Staff are deeply aware of your child's potential and construct their work and the environment to respond appropriately.

At PDP, physical restraint is sometimes necessary to ensure a safe environment for all. The goal of any physical intervention is safety. Staff will only use a physical intervention or restraint when your child is in imminent danger of hurting themselves or another person. In the event that a trained member of the PDP team safely uses a restraint to protect a child or others, they must follow Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) regulations. If your child is restrained, we will inform you. CASA leadership formally reviews every restraint – both at the program level and by CASA's Patient Safety Committee.

The entire program is designed to emphasize competence, autonomy and relatedness. Nothing is left to sit in isolation. Everything is alive and connected. Children, teachers and families join together to continually improve the system that supports our school community.

Your Guide to the Primary Classroom

Program Location

CASA Centre

10645-63 Avenue NW

Edmonton, AB

T6H 1P7

Supplies

- Backpack that your child can wear
- Indoor shoes
- Personal water bottle
- Change of clothing (pull-ups, wipes and underwear if needed)
- Lunch kit
- Outdoor attire appropriate for the season/weather i.e. snow pants, mittens, toque (please no scarves)

Please label all belongings!

Lunches and Snacks

Caregivers are to provide a nourishing lunch and one snack. Please note that our classroom is nut-free. Please do not send food that needs to be heated, as children do not have access to a microwave.

Drop-off and Pick-up

You and your child will be greeted by staff at entrance three, located on the south side of the building closest to 62 avenue. Please do not use the front entrance for regular school day drop-off/pick-up.

Typical Daily Routine

Program Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.
8:30 a.m. Arrival and self-regulatory play
8:50 a.m. Morning meeting and table time
10 a.m. Physical education
10:30 a.m. Snack and circle time
11:15 a.m. Play and possibilities
12 p.m. - Carpet time
12:30 p.m. Lunch and book corner
1 p.m. Outdoor play
1:30 p.m. Play and possibilities
2 p.m. Centres
2:30 p.m. Story time/Show and share
2:45 p.m. Preparing to go home
3 p.m. Dismissal

Program Policies

Absence Policy

If your child will be late or absent from school, please leave a message on the absence line at 780-400-4516.

Illness Policy

If your child has any ongoing health issues, please inform staff so that we can provide your child with the best care possible.

Your child should attend school only when they are feeling well and are able to participate in scheduled activities. We will call you to pick up your child if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- A fever
- A runny nose
- A sore throat
- Symptoms of a communicable disease (such as chicken pox)
- Is unusually lethargic
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Yellow or green mucus discharge indicative of infection
- Discharge from ears

- Symptoms of pink eye
- An unexplained rash
- Labored breathing or wheezing
- A harsh cough

If your child is ill, please keep them home until:

- they are fever free for a minimum of 24 hours;
- they have not vomited or had diarrhea for a minimum of 24 hours;
- they have been given permission by a doctor to return to school, or;
- they have been prescribed medications for 24 hours (particularly antibiotics).

If your child is exhibiting any of the above symptoms, the nurse may do an assessment. Should the nurse deem your child unwell or to be exhibiting any of the above listed symptoms, you will be contacted to pick your child up immediately.

CASA requires an emergency contact for each child. This contact must be reachable during program hours, and will need to be available should your child need to be picked up from program.

Contact our day program nurse with any questions regarding whether or not to send your child to school.