

# Open Sesame Preschool Parent Handbook

This version updated July, 2023

Handbook on website may not be newest version.  
Please contact [sesamevolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:sesamevolunteer@gmail.com) for most up to date information.

## **Open Sesame Contact Information**

For questions about your child and attendance:

Supervisor

Email: [opensesameheadstart@gmail.com](mailto:opensesameheadstart@gmail.com)

Call or Text: 519-886-7930

For registration, general inquiries and family support:

Program Coordinator

Email: [sesamevolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:sesamevolunteer@gmail.com)

For fee payment:

Email: [opensesamefees@gmail.com](mailto:opensesamefees@gmail.com)

**If your child will be absent, please notify the school at  
(519) 886-7930 (call or text) or  
[opensesameheadstart@gmail.com](mailto:opensesameheadstart@gmail.com)**

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## OPEN SESAME PRESCHOOL PROGRAM STATEMENT

Open Sesame Preschool (Open Sesame) is a family-centred, play-based, inclusive preschool program licensed by the Ministry of Education under the Child Care and Early Years Act - 2014 (CCEYA). Open Sesame has operated with the support of Mount Zion Lutheran Church since 1970.

At Open Sesame we see each child as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential. Our intention as educators is to honour each child's uniqueness and provide meaningful opportunities for them to learn through play. Play is the most effective way for children to learn and gain new skills. During play, children make sense of the world around them. They experiment and problem-solve. Play engages children with challenges they can master. In play, children experience joy, wonder and delight that inspires their creativity. Children's interests, strengths, needs and perspectives form the backbone of our daily activities. We continually reflect on ways we can build on and support the ideas children already have to create opportunities for expanding their learning.

We believe that

- Partnerships with families and our community strengthen our ability to meet each child's unique needs;
- Respect for diversity, equity and inclusion are necessary for optimal growth, development and learning;
- Play promotes learning by building on children's innate curiosity, creativity and exuberance;
- Early learning is supported by a planned curriculum based on individualized goals for each child;
- Responsive early childhood educators engaged in lifelong learning and reflection are essential to creating environments where children thrive.

### Open Sesame's Goals and Approaches

Below are the goals of our program with brief explanations of the approaches we take to meet our goals.

#### **1. Promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of children;**

Children are cared for and supervised by Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) who are members in good standing of the College of Early Childhood Educators and have provided a Police Vulnerable Sector Check.

The health of children, families and staff is important to us. All staff are trained in standard first aid and CPR. We prevent communicable disease through daily cleaning using approved cleaning and disinfecting products, personal hygiene routines such as handwashing and ensuring that children and staff come to Open Sesame only when healthy.



We have comprehensive emergency preparedness and procedures, including monthly evacuation and fire drills. Our safe shelter location is Empire Public School, 83 Empire Street in Waterloo, in the event an evacuation is required.

We acknowledge our role in Child Protection and staff are trained in procedures and Duty to Report. We guide behaviour through the use of positive language, questions and encouragement. We never use Prohibited Practices, i.e., corporal punishment, verbal degradation, confinement and deprivation of basic needs (including food, clothing or bedding).

We provide a daily snack based on the Canada's Food Guide. Water is available to drink throughout the day. We take allergies and personal food restrictions seriously. Open Sesame has an Anaphylactic Policy and Procedure in place and staff and volunteers are trained in the use of EpiPen. Our snacks are respectful of religious, cultural and personal preferences.

We understand that children thrive in the outdoors and we play outside every day, weather permitting.

## **2. Support positive and responsive relationships and interactions;**

Positive and responsive relationships are essential for learning and development. We encourage these relationships by fostering an atmosphere of inclusion, cooperation, sharing and friendliness.

We value each child's unique perspective and we encourage them to develop their strengths and abilities.

We believe that it is important for children to experience the freedom to make choices in order to build self-confidence, a sense of belonging and of responsibility.

## **3. Encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate**

We model the use of positive language and behaviours at all times when talking with children and other adults. We support children in developing communication skills and problem-solving skills such that they become competent in using multiple forms of communication (words, sign language, and body language).



We follow the CCEYA guidelines for Behaviour Guidance by using positive language and offering choices and encouragement. We never use Prohibited Practices, i.e., corporal punishment, verbal degradation, confinement and deprivation of basic needs (including food, clothing or bedding).

We support self-help skills by encouraging children to do as much for themselves as possible without becoming discouraged or frustrated and providing assistance as needed. We provide reasonable challenges that facilitate the development of new and stronger skills.

We encourage self-regulation in an environment where every child feels safe and supported to find a variety of ways to express their emotions. We work to help children recognise their own emotions and discover ways to deal with challenges effectively and calmly.

**Open Sesame uses positive interactions in the following ways:**

- Our staff and volunteers use positive suggestions, which help children understand what they can do instead of pointing out what they cannot do.
- We provide for and encourage opportunities to make choices by offering options that fit the situation. Children are supported in their desire to complete tasks on their own and, if need be, we acknowledge the difficulty and offer solutions.
- We acknowledge a child's feelings and help them recognize and express their feelings. We help each child to understand what another child's emotions are and how to respond to them. We help children understand the consequences of their actions and direct them towards positive expressions of their feelings.
- We acknowledge each child's uniqueness and that each child has their own unique way of dealing with stressful and negative situations. We anticipate behaviour and respond positively/preventatively to the behaviour. We work together to find appropriate activities for each child – allowing the child to self-regulate and calm down through giving the child a safe space, a quiet corner, or sensory outlets.
- We support a child's experience through transitions, which can be difficult and cause anxiety for some children. We identify the types of transitions that are difficult for each child and assisting them to gain confidence in making those transitions. We offer appropriate comfort to children experiencing difficulties with transitions.
- We understand and facilitate patterns of interactions, maintain consistent expectations and we continuously assess each child's needs in regards to the group setting allowing for accommodations and alternative activities while providing opportunities for them to be an active member of the group.
- We encourage respect and acceptance of others. We model respectful words and actions and consistently offer pictures, words and simple phrases so that children can express their desires, feelings and needs. We model respect and acceptance of others by providing multicultural toys, snacks, books, and other activities. We also model that there is no right or wrong in what we like or dislike but through our actions and discussions we encourage children to explore in a safe environment.

- We also model acceptance and respect of those of various abilities. We encourage the children to help each other. We acknowledge accomplishments no matter how big or small.

#### **4. Foster children's exploration, play and inquiry;**

As creative adult partners, we:

- Offer free flowing centres and open-ended materials, which provide increased opportunities for learning.
- Ensure that children have varied play experiences indoors and outdoors.
- Encourage children to discover and follow their interests with materials available or provided.
- Plan activities based on the strengths and interests of the children present
- Provide consistent provocations to stimulate learning and consider the individual needs of the children.

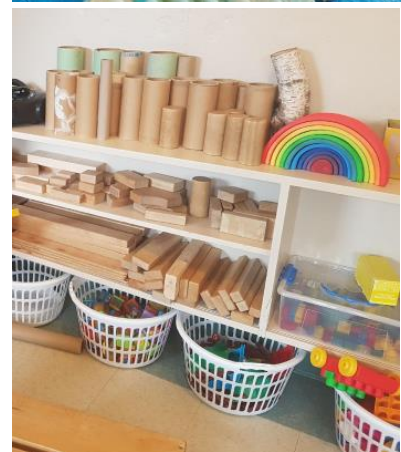
#### **5. Provide child initiated and adult-supported experiences;**

We follow the children's lead in our interactions and in creating an environment that is rich in opportunities for exploration and interaction. We look for teachable moments to engage the children in problem solving, planning and learning. Through observation and reflection, we discover each child's current interests, which guide us in the materials we provide and the opportunities we offer. We endeavor to balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the group. We create environments that encourage children to challenge their abilities, expand their interests and develop relationships.

#### **6. Plan for and create a positive learning environment in which each child's learning and development will be supported;**

From our regular observations of the children's activities and interactions and the input we receive from parents, we plan a Program that stimulates the interests and development of each child. We provide a variety of activities, both active and quiet, which will meet the needs of each child regardless of the level of need and development. We make changes in our environment and Program as the children's interests and developmental needs change. Where applicable, we implement individual education plans provided by our Resource Consultant.

Children come to Open Sesame with different communication skills and levels of speech. We recognize the need to enhance and develop language and it is our aim to provide language-building experiences throughout our Program and curriculum.



To expand our current interests within the Program, we encourage everyone to share interesting activities or discoveries from outside of the preschool. From time to time, we engage with community resources such as KW Humane Society education dog, a dental hygienist or a librarian to spark learning.

**7. Incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest, and quiet time, into the day, and give consideration to the unique needs of the children receiving child care;**

We provide structure and routine so the children have safe boundaries and predictability in their day. We arrange the classroom to best suit the needs of our current group of children and we rotate toys and activities depending on the current interests of the children.

Each day at Open Sesame includes:

- Group circle time with stories, songs, group games and time to talk about their learning and interests.
- Classroom activity time with free-flowing centers for different interests including sensory activities, art, science, building, imaginary play and music.
- Play in our outdoor playground and/or indoor gym with a variety of toys for gross motor development including tricycles, climbers, balls and balance beams.
- Children are always allowed to rest in our quiet area if needed. We understand that some children can become over-stimulated by so many choices and activities and we encourage children to find a quiet spot to sooth themselves and return to activity when ready.

**8. Foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the Program and their children;**

Parents are the first and most important influence on children's learning, development, health, and well-being. Parents are the true experts and want what's best for their children. At Open Sesame, our role is to support parents' goals for their children.

We value the whole family system, including parents, caregivers and extended family members. We respect each family's diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives. We believe that families are valuable contributors to their children's learning, and we encourage all families to be engaged in our program in a meaningful way.

Open Sesame has an open-door policy with parents and caregivers and we welcome open dialogue. Staff are always available to schedule parent meetings. We have a variety of options for communication, including but not limited to face-to-face or virtual meetings, app-based messaging, and digital photo sharing. Developmental evaluations of each child are ongoing and we involve parents and community partners to help provide the best care for each child.

We invite all family members to annual events where families can build relationships with each other, our staff and our volunteers including our Holiday Party, Mother's Day Tea, Spring Carnival and our Graduation/End of the Year Celebration.



**9. Involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families, and staff;**

Open Sesame has operated at Mount Zion Lutheran Church since 1970 and we have a dedicated group of volunteers from the church community who work in different capacities to improve our facility and to support the children in the classroom. Parents are welcome at the Mount Zion Café on Wednesday mornings for conversation, live music and a light lunch.

We are grateful for the partnership with outside resource agencies including KW Habilitation and Kidsability. We also work directly with private therapists who are welcome to attend our Program with their clients.

Open Sesame is fortunate to welcome volunteers from Wilfrid Laurier University who are completing placements in our classroom. These student volunteers bring energy and creativity to our Program.

**10. Engage in continuous professional learning;**

Our Educators obtain a minimum of 8 hours of Professional Development per school year. Open Sesame is a member of the Professional Resource Centre at Conestoga College, which provides access to resources and professional development opportunities. Staff may also make use of webinars, college courses and other training opportunities.

After Program each day, staff discuss successes and challenges of the day. They discuss, plan and evaluate the Program and their interactions with children. To address challenges and learn new strategies, staff use various resources including RECE colleagues at other preschools, the PRC, and internet-based resources. Staff also meet with our Resource Consultant who provides advice, resources and strategies for addressing the needs of individual children. Throughout the year, staff participate in staff meetings with the full staff and the Management Committee

Open Sesame provides professional development to our volunteers through volunteer orientation sessions and quarterly newsletters on relevant child development and early childhood education topics. Our educators observe volunteers in the classroom and provide feedback on volunteer performance.

**11. Document and review the impact of strategies on children and their families.**

Educators engage in curriculum planning to ensure the Program is constantly evolving yet touching on the unique developmental needs of each child. Documentation is an important part of our planning and is a way for our staff to reflect on how children think and learn. All current programming and observations are documented in the daily log.

We use the HiMama app to document individual children's experiences at preschool to share with parents. We also have a private Instagram page where parents can see photos and videos of our daily learning.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

### Fees

Open Sesame is a participant in the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan (CWELCC), a program that will lower child care costs and improve access, and quality across Ontario's child care and early years sector. Funding for the Canada-wide System is provided by the Federal government, and is being delivered through a partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Region of Waterloo. More information about CWELCC from the [Region of Waterloo](https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/national-child-care.aspx).

[www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/national-child-care.aspx](https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/national-child-care.aspx)

Open Sesame's Management Committee approved base fees of ~~\$24/half day~~ effective to December 31, 2022. Due to our participation in CWELCC, families now pay **\$12/half day** for preschool enrollment.

Fees are charged for all school days regardless of whether your child is in attendance or not. Because we operate as a preschool Program and not a drop-in centre, there are no reductions of fees or refunds for family vacations, illnesses or appointments or for weather related closures.

Families are NOT charged for scheduled closures including statutory holidays, Winter Break and March Break. Families will be refunded in the following month for any unplanned closures due to staff shortages.

The Region of Waterloo manages a subsidy Program for child care in the region. Families who are in need of funding can speak with the Program Coordinator and/or apply for Region of Waterloo subsidy. For more information about child care subsidies, visit <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/help-paying-for-child-care.aspx>

### Payment Information (E-Transfer, Direct Deposit, Cheques)

Parents receive a monthly invoice for child care fees by email. Payment is due by the end of the first week of each month. Payment by e-Transfer is preferred. Payment by cash or cheque can be arranged by contacting <opensesamefees@gmail.com>.

- For e-Transfers, please use the email address <opensesamefees@gmail.com>. If you add Open Sesame as a payee, no password is required. Otherwise, please use the password PRESCHOOL (in all caps) for convenience.
- **All cheques should be made payable to Open Sesame Headstart Preschool.** NSF cheques will be charged at the current bank processing rate.

Families can request a statement of their balance at any time. Families will be provided with a yearly tax receipt in February of the following year. Please make sure we have your current email address to receive your receipt.

Non-payment may result in withdrawal from child care, with notice to the parents. If you are having difficulty meeting fee obligations, please speak to the Program Coordinator as soon as possible. The Program Coordinator may be able to help find a solution.

If you wish to change the days that your child attends, please contact the Program Coordinator. This request can only be granted if / when there is availability on the days requested. If the number of days changes, fees will change accordingly.

## Registration

Open Sesame is licensed for 16 children between the ages of 2 ½ and 5 years old<sup>1</sup>. At the discretion of the Program Coordinator, there may be space for a maximum of three children between the ages of 2 and 2 ½ years based on the classroom dynamics. We require a minimum enrollment of 3 days/week.

The Program Coordinator is the first point of contact for families interested in Open Sesame. Families may contact us by phone, email or OneList registration. Referrals may also come from family doctors, social workers, KidsAbility and other community agencies.

Regardless of the first point of contact, all families of children seeking a spot for the current school year must apply using OneList <https://regionofwaterloo.onehsn.com/>. Acceptance to the Program is at the discretion of the Program Coordinator and the Management Committee. We accept registration for the current session through March of the current year and we begin accepting applications for the next session in May for currently registered families and in June for new families.

Returning families need to re-register via **OneList** <https://regionofwaterloo.onehsn.com/> by May 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous school year to secure a spot for the upcoming school year. As of June 1<sup>st</sup>, spots will become available for new families who wish to enroll via **OneList** <https://regionofwaterloo.onehsn.com/> for the following school year.

## Orientation

Parents are asked to bring their child(ren) to an initial visit at Open Sesame<sup>2</sup>. At your first visit you can expect:

- To meet the Program Coordinator and/or Educators
- To receive general information including current school year dates, hours, fees, subsidy applications, snack and other policies pertaining to the preschool, philosophy of the preschool, explanation of the Family Program, field trips etc
- A review of the required forms – **please bring along your child's immunization record.**

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Education or Region of Waterloo may temporarily restrict capacity and/or require cohorting.

<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Education or Region of Waterloo may restrict in-person orientation for health and safety reasons.

- A chance for your child to play and explore the classroom
- A chance to ask any questions or raise any concerns

### Attendance Policy

Our attendance policy is designed to ensure families value their place with our Program and recognize that there may be a waiting list.

It is the responsibility of the family to telephone, text, or email the school if their child will be absent from the Program any day. If the absence is related to an illness, please let us know.

If your child has missed 10 Program days without explanation, your spot in the Program will be subject to review. If your child has missed 15 Program days without explanation, you will receive written notice that the child has lost their place in the Program effective at the end of that week. There will be no refund of fees already paid in the event of absence.

**Please Note: As a small centre, Open Sesame does not have a large pool of supply teachers and there may be times that we have to close temporarily due to staffing shortages. Parents will be given as much advance notice as possible in the event of an unplanned closure due to a staffing shortage.**

### Late Pick-Up Fees

Open Sesame's daily Program runs from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm each day. Parents/caregivers must pick up their child by 12:35. Extended hours are not available at this time.

Families will be charged for pick-up after 12:05 pm. Late pick-up fees are non-base fees and are not subject to CWELCC fee reductions.

- Late fee charges: \$5.00 for any time within the first fifteen minutes
- \$3.00 for any time within each subsequent 5-minute period.

Weather, traffic etc. DO NOT serve as exemptions for late fees, except under extreme circumstances at the discretion of the Program Coordinator.

Families will be required to sign the late fee book when the child is picked up after closing time. The time will be noted from Open Sesame's smartphone clock. At the end of the month, the Program Coordinator will total all late fees and they will be applied to your next monthly payment.

If repetitive late pickups occur, the Program Coordinator will meet with the parent to discuss and determine whether the center hours meet the family's needs. A notice of withdrawal from child care may be issued for unresolved patterns of lateness.

## Waitlist

Open Sesame is licensed for 16 children per day and the Management Committee may cap enrollment at any time. When we reach maximum capacity or the Management Committee has capped enrolment, we open a waitlist for interested applicants.

Open Sesame gives priority to families who are already registered with us and children referred by our community partner agencies. Registration for the upcoming Fall program opens to currently registered families on May 1 of the same calendar year and June 1 for new registrants. Children are enrolled based on their spot on the waitlist. There is no charge to parents for placing a child on the waitlist.

All inquiries about the waiting list, including confirming your place and information about the estimated timeframe of the waiting list, should be directed to the Program Coordinator.

### **Procedure for Parents**

If Open Sesame is full or enrollment has been capped, the Program Coordinator will offer you a place on the waiting list.

Open Sesame gives priority to children who are currently enrolled and asking to add a day, children referred by community partners and siblings of children who are currently enrolled. Once these children have been placed, other children on the waiting list will be prioritized based on program room availability and the chronology in which the child was placed on the waiting list.

When space becomes available, you will be notified by email. You will have 2 days to respond before the next child on the waitlist is offered a space. It is parents' responsibility to follow up on an offer. We will not send reminder emails or follow up by phone.

Parents may request information on their child's position on the list. Any other information is confidential. The names of children on the waitlist are private and confidential and will not be shared. You may request information about your child only.

Parents still on the waitlist in May will be contacted to confirm their desire to stay on the list for September. Parents will have 2 weeks to confirm their place on the waitlist, at which point the waitlist will be cleared to prepare for the coming program year.

## Withdrawing from Open Sesame

We request that parents contact us as soon as possible if you plan to withdraw your child from our program. There will be no refunds if you choose to withdraw your child in the middle of a month that you have already paid for. If you know in advance that you will be withdrawing your child mid-month, notify us and arrangements can be made to pay per day for a limited time.

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

Open Sesame starts the year on the first Tuesday after Labour Day. The preschool operates from September to the third Friday in June of the following year. The school is closed all statutory holidays as well as two weeks at the New Year and one week at March Break. Parents may consult the Annual Calendar for the dates of all holidays, school closures and special events.

### Your Child's First Day at Open Sesame

Parents or caregivers are welcome to join their child on the first day of school for as long as they see fit. Each child will respond differently to the transition to preschool. You know your child best and we will follow your lead to make this transition a positive part of their growth and development.<sup>3</sup>

### Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Our program begins at 9:00 each morning and ends at 12:30 pm. There is no supervision before 9:00 or after 12:30. If families arrive early, they are responsible for the supervision of their child(ren) until 9:00 when educators are on duty.<sup>4</sup>

The arrival and departure points may vary during the Program year depending on the curriculum and weekly planning. Parents will be notified of any changes. The possible arrival and departure points include:

- **Playground stairs or gate**
- **Front door**

Please escort your child directly to the arrival point where staff will sign them in. Open Sesame is not responsible for a child until they are signed in. The child's arrival must be recorded before the caregiver leaves the premises.

Please note that you may only leave your child once a qualified staff is present at the arrival point. Please ask if you are unsure about who is the qualified staff present.

Parents or designated caregivers may pick their children up from the departure point and a staff person will sign them out. It is our policy that children will only be released to their parent, designated caregiver, or another adult listed on the completed registration form. The first time a designated person comes to collect a child, we ask that you provide us with their name and relationship to the child beforehand. We will always ask for current, photo identification when a child is being picked up for the first time by someone new. Please inform your friend/ family member of this policy. We cannot make any exceptions.

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<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Education or Region of Waterloo may temporarily restrict parents' presence in the program area for health and safety reasons.

<sup>4</sup> The Drop-off and Pick-Up procedure may vary if required by the Ministry of Education or the Region of Waterloo

Please note that we have a busy parking lot that is used by many different groups. Young children are happy to see their parents and caregivers at the end of the day and will sometimes run towards them. This can be dangerous for children, their educators and other drivers in the parking lot. If you arrive early to pick up your child and see the children coming out of the building with their educators, please stay in your car until children are safely in the fenced playground.

### Access to Child and Premises

We will not prevent a parent from having access to their child except,

- if a staff person believes on reasonable grounds that the parent does not have a legal right of access to the child;
- if a staff person believes on reasonable grounds that the parent could be dangerous to the children at the premises; or
- if the parent is behaving in a disruptive manner.<sup>5</sup>

### Parking

Many different groups use the parking lot on Lourdes Street and it is important that parents supervise their children in the parking lot at all times. Parents are asked to use the spaces facing the street. Please respect signs for accessible parking. The spots directly in front of Mt. Zion's office are reserved for Mt. Zion Staff. Younger siblings should not be left in the car unattended while older siblings are dropped off and picked up.

### Clothing and Possessions

Your child should be dressed in clothing that is appropriate for messy play, physical activity, the weather and the season. We play outside every day (weather permitting) and it is important for your child's comfort and safety to be dressed for the weather (i.e. jacket, splash pants, snow pants, hats, mitts, boots, depending on the weather). We also do regular indoor water play, science and art activities and clothes may get dirty and wet. We never stop children from engaging in an activity to prevent mess and we encourage you to send your children dressed in "play" clothes that are appropriate for outdoor play, science and art projects and water play.

Each child has a coat hook and basket in the main hallway labelled with their name where they can keep their personal belongings. Parents must supply:

- Diapers/Diaper rash ointment or training pants/pull ups as appropriate for your child's development.
- Spare clothing, including shirt, pants, underwear and socks to be kept at Open Sesame
- Seasonally appropriate outdoor clothing

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<sup>5</sup> Parents may need to pass a screening before they access their child if Provincial or Regional guidelines require doing so.

- Indoor shoes that are appropriate for play kept at Open Sesame. Shoes should be closed toed and have, at least, a strap in the back (Croc-style is OK but no flip-flops). All shoes, both indoor and outdoor, should be easy for your child to put on or learn to put on independently (Velcro or slip-ons).

Important: Please label clothing, shoes and other personal items. It is not necessary to buy personalized labels unless you want to; labeling with a permanent marker works well in most cases. Labeling personal items is extremely important. Especially in the early days of their attendance, children may not recognize all of their belongings. If personal items are not labeled, we cannot guarantee that children will have their own personal items. Before the first day, help your child learn to recognize their belongings, shoes and coat.

Our classroom can become warm so please dress your child in layers. All clothing, especially shoes, should be labelled with your child's name.

### Getting Dressed and Other Self-Help Skills

Our philosophy is that children are competent and capable and we encourage children to practice self-help skills including getting dressed and changing shoes. We believe that children learn these important skills by practicing them in a supportive and unrushed environment. If children dress themselves independently or change their own shoes and there are small mistakes (e.g. shirt on backwards or shoes on wrong feet), we do not correct them; we offer praise them for their effort. We will only correct mistakes if children are uncomfortable, unsafe or unable to participate in activities. We have found this approach to be successful in learning new skills, encouraging independence and building children's confidence in their own abilities.

### Backpacks, Water Bottles, Snacks and Toys From Home

Because we have storage at preschool, children do not need to bring backpacks or diaper bags with them. Most young children cannot manage their own backpacks and we do not have staff to track and carry multiple backpacks. Everything your child needs will be available to them at preschool. **Please do not bring backpacks to preschool.**

We make water available throughout the morning and milk available at snack time with cups that we supply. **Please do not send water bottles, juice boxes or milk with your child.** Similarly, we are not permitted to serve snacks from home unless a medical feeding plan is in place. **Please do not send snacks with your child.**

We have lots of toys and materials for all of the children to enjoy throughout the morning. Bringing toys from home creates conflict when other children want a turn and creates distress if a toy is lost or damaged. **Please do not bring toys from home to preschool.**

We ask that children do not bring backpacks, water bottles, toys or other items from home. We do, however, recognize and respect that some children have comfort objects that help them feel secure to participate in a program away from home and we will never deny a child a comfort object. We will instead, work with the child and parents to slowly



transition away from this object at school. We also understand that some children are dropped off and picked up to different family members' or babysitters' homes. If your child needs a backpack to travel from one home to another, please let us know and we can make arrangements for this. With anything brought from home, we will do our best to keep track but we ask parents to understand that we cannot be held responsible if these items are lost or damaged.

## Daily Schedule

Because children thrive with routines they can predict, we strive to keep our schedule consistent throughout the year while maintaining some flexibility to best meet the needs of the children currently in our care. The schedule will always include:

- **Outdoor play and exploration** – we play outside every day, weather permitting. On very cold or rainy days, we play in the upstairs gym.
- **Circle time** – an opportunity for the whole class to participate in activities such as songs, stories, puppets and games. Circle time may take place in the classroom or on the playground.
- **Snack time** – a substantial nutritious snack is provided daily.
- **Free play time** – children choose what and where they want to play. There are always creative activity, sensory activity, and fine motor activities available as well as blocks, dramatic play, book nook, cars and science to name a few areas.
- **Small group time** – an opportunity for activities such as playing a game, working on specific skills such as cutting, writing, identifying letters
- **Toileting and personal hygiene** – children have access to the bathroom at all times. We always wash hands when we come inside, before and after we eat, after we use the bathroom and any other time hands are dirty. Children can also change clothes any time their clothes are wet or dirty.

Our goal is to provide structure and routine so the children have safe boundaries and predictability in their day while also being flexible in building on children's needs and interests. If our schedule changes, we will support children through new transitions as needed.

## Toileting and Diapering

Children do not have to be toilet trained to attend Open Sesame. Toilet training is different for each child and we encourage parents to speak with us about any needs your child has so that your child's experience is positive.

### Children in Diapers

As a preschool, we do not have diaper changing tables so we use universal sanitary precautions on a floor-mat in our classroom. We will change diapers if we notice a very full diaper or the child has a bowel movement. If your child is not actively toilet training and/or needs diaper changes, please send diapers, not Pull-ups. When the child and family are ready, staff will assist in toilet training at preschool.

### **Children who are Toilet Training or Trained**

For children who are toilet-training, we require children to be 2 weeks accident free at home before coming to preschool without diapers. Staff will accompany children to the bathroom whenever they have a need and will also provide regular opportunities and reminders to use the bathroom, such as before and after snack. Parents may also choose to make a routine of taking their child to the bathroom when they first arrive or before they go home. If your child experiences distress in a bathroom away from home, we will work with you on a plan to ease the transition. **Staff will never force a child to use the bathroom and will not provide rewards beyond praise for successful toileting.**

If a child has an accident, staff will keep the experience positive and assist the child in changing their clothes. Please note: staff follow universal sanitary precautions when assisting children with personal hygiene. Soiled clothing and personal items will be placed in a plastic bag for laundering at home. Due to public health guidelines, staff **will not** rinse body fluids or feces from clothing or personal items.

### **Program Holidays**

Open Sesame Preschool is closed for 2 weeks for Winter Break and 1 week for March Break in accordance with the Public and Catholic School Board Public Holiday closures. Open Sesame is also closed on all statutory holidays that fall on school days during the school year. Professional Development (PD) days for early childhood educators are determined by the Region of Waterloo. These dates will be communicated to parents with as much notice as possible.

### **Field Trips and Special Events**

Throughout the year, trips may be made to special places of interest. Notice of field trips will be provided in advance of the excursion informing you of the destination, time and date. To ensure your children's safety our policy on field trips is as follows:

- On all field trips, children must be accompanied by a parent or designate. It is not the responsibility of the preschool, its staff or volunteers to supervise your child during field trips unless arranged ahead of time.
- Field trip(s) will be within the Region of Waterloo. For families without a vehicle, all field trips will be reachable by public transportation or taxi (paid by Open Sesame).
- Sometimes we will have special visitors at Open Sesame and parents may be asked to volunteer because of the nature of the visitor.
- There may be a small additional charge for field trips. If a family cannot afford such a cost, please talk to the Program Coordinator.

## School Closures

Open Sesame will be closed if:

- Waterloo Regional District School Board buses are cancelled in town.
- The police request that people drive only if necessary.
- The legislated ratio of 1 RECE to 8 children cannot be guaranteed due to staff shortages.

The Supervisor and Coordinator *may* decide to close the school if:

- The weather is likely to get progressively worse through the morning.
- The Region of Waterloo requires closure for health and safety reasons.

The Supervisor will contact all parents in the event of school closure by phone, mass email and/or text. Parents will be asked to email or text back to confirm that they have received the information. For families who do not have email or texting capability the Supervisor or Program Coordinator will call the family. If the Supervisor cannot reach a family, the Supervisor will contact the emergency contact person listed on the registration form.

NOTE: Parents are asked to make their own decision on whether or not their child will attend outside of the above policy. Parents are asked to inform the Supervisor by email, text or phone if their child will not be attending.

## OPEN SESAME CURRICULUM

Open Sesame strives to be a child-initiated, adult-supported, play-based Program. This allows the children to discover and follow their interests with materials available or provided. Based on the needs and interests of the children, curriculum is planned weekly by educator(s). Educator(s) will provide consistent provocations to stimulate learning and will consider the individual needs of the children and follow any individual learning goals.

Educator(s), children and families are encouraged to share family events, hobbies and activities, holidays and observances, and cultural practices or any other interesting activities or discoveries from outside of preschool. This builds community and allows us to build learning into current interests and experiences of each child. Educator(s) and families may also have the advantage of using community resources such as KW Humane Society education dog, a dental hygienist or a librarian to support our program.

Open Sesame's daily program is enhanced by volunteers and post-secondary students. Although they are not RECEs, our volunteers and students bring experience and dynamism to our Program and children enjoy their time with them. In general, our adult volunteers are retired individuals who value service in the community and our university students are primarily from the Wilfrid Laurier Psychology Program. Volunteers and students have a Vulnerable Sector Criminal Records Check and are supervised at all times. Volunteers and students are never alone with any child.

## What You Can Expect from the Curriculum

### Open Sesame curriculum will:

- allow children to discover the world around them and play a part in their own learning
- enhance the child's strengths and interests while building skills
- build on children's interests, curiosity and eagerness to learn
- provide a positive environment where each child will discover themselves while building self-esteem and confidence
- nurture positive social skills
- encourage creative problem solving
- support the development and growth of each child
- provide a variety of experiences and activities each day to stimulate play and creativity as well as math and language skills

### Open Sesame Educators will

- observe the children to determine their interests and needs
- work with parents to set achievable goals for children and support them in meeting those goals
- recognize teachable moments where the Educator engages the children in problem solving, planning and learning
- promote the development of social, physical, emotional and cognitive skills

## PROHIBITED PRACTICES

The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 outlines very specific guidelines for discipline and behavior management in a childcare setting, which we take very seriously.

At Open Sesame no one, including all RECE's, adult and student volunteers, is permitted to use any kind of punitive punishment with a child. Prohibited practices fall into the following categories:

(a) corporal punishment of the child;

(b) physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;

(c) locking the exits of the child care centre premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures;

(d) use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth;

(e) depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding; or

(f) inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

We will never engage in physical punishment of any kind, including but not limited to:

- Striking a child with any body part or object
- Shaking a child
- Shoving a child
- Spanking a child
- Any other form of aggressive contact
- Forcing a child to repeat physical movements
- Forcing a child to eat any foods
- Harsh, belittling or degrading responses of any form including verbal, emotional, and physical actions that would harm a child and/or undermine the child's self-respect
- Denying a child any of the usual comforts – including shelter, clothing, bedding and food
- Confining a child in a small space, lockable room or structure, any isolation, or physical restraint as a form of punishment.

It is our policy that every RECE, staff, volunteer and students review and acknowledge that they have read and understood the Prohibited Practices Policy yearly and/or at the start of their placement. A review with all staff and volunteers occurs once in the fall and once in the spring that they have followed these guidelines. We review these policies annually and amend where necessary.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### Immunization

All children must have up to date immunization records before their first day of attendance. If a family has medical reasons or objects to vaccination, they must follow the procedure set out by the Region of Waterloo. A copy of all immunization records is kept in the children's files and is submitted yearly to the Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services.

### Illness

We have a responsibility to each other to protect children and their families, staff and volunteers from illness and communicable disease. If your child is not well enough to play outside or participate in all parts of the program, please keep them home.

Open Sesame takes a communicable disease outbreak very seriously. Caregivers should observe their children for contagious illnesses by using the criteria below as a guideline. Children exhibiting one or more of the following symptoms should stay home:

- New or worsening green or yellowish-green nasal discharge
- Fever
- An undiagnosed rash
- General feeling of being unwell
- Vomiting in the previous 24-hour period that is not linked to allergies or pre-existing conditions
- Diarrhea in the previous 24 hour period that is not linked allergies or pre-existing conditions
- Possibility of pink eye (conjunctivitis)

If in doubt, you are encouraged to call the Supervisor prior to bringing the child to preschool.

Children who have stayed home due to illness may return to preschool when symptoms have been ended or are improving for at least 24 hours and feel well enough to participate in all preschool outdoor and indoor activities.

If a child develops any symptoms of illness while at preschool, we will call you and keep your child comfortable and away from the group until they are picked up.

In the event of a pandemic, special rules will come into effect.

### **Communicable diseases outbreak**

Please inform us if you think your child has been exposed to a communicable disease. If an outbreak occurs or there appears to be a possible case of a communicable diseases the preschool will follow the protocol set out by Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services. If an enrolled child is diagnosed with certain communicable diseases (such as coronavirus, chickenpox, measles, hepatitis, mumps), we are required to report this to Public Health so that they can take appropriate precautions to control the spread of the disease. In the event of a pandemic, special rules will come into effect.

### **Administration of medication**

Open Sesame does not administer medication with the exception of asthma medication, EpiPen, and other crucial medication related to emergency situations. An administration of medicine form must be filled out and only properly labeled medication will be administered.

### **Non-medical and Personal Hygiene Products**

Open Sesame staff will administer non-medical personal care and hygiene products only when given express consent by parents/guardians. This applies to the following products:

- Hand sanitizer (provided by Open Sesame for all children)
- Diaper rash cream/ointment (provided by parents for use by child indicated only)

Parents are given the opportunity to consent to these products when they sign the Parent Handbook Agreement.

Open Sesame does not provide or apply sunscreen or bug repellent. Parents are asked to apply these products at their discretion before children attend preschool each day.

### Emergency Procedures

To ensure safety, the fire alarms at Mount Zion Lutheran Church, including Open Sesame classrooms, are checked annually and children and educators participate in a monthly fire drill. Further, Open Sesame has procedures in place for different emergency situations that could arise during Program time, including:

- Evacuation Procedure (in case of fire)
- Severe Weather/Tornado Procedure
- Lockdown Procedure (in case of an intruder)
- Serious Occurrences (relating to the safety of a child or children)

These procedures are detailed in our Policy and Procedure Manual and can be reviewed by any parent or caregiver at any time.

We have a safe shelter location at Empire Public School, 83 Empire Street in Waterloo, in the event an evacuation is required. Parents will be notified as soon as possible in the event of an evacuation and will be advised to pick their child up there at the safe shelter location.

### Smoke Free

There is no smoking allowed on any part of Mt. Zion property including the parking lot. We ask that if you choose to smoke off property, you do so out of sight of the children and dispose of remnants in an appropriate way.

### Outdoor Play Policy

Playing, exploring and relaxing outdoors are important activities for preschoolers. We play outside everyday unless:

- Outdoor temperatures are -15 degrees Celsius or lower including the wind-chill
- Sidewalk and ground conditions are too icy for safe walking and playing
- Temperatures exceed 30 degrees Celsius
- If there is heavy rain, thunder showers or the high chance of heavy rain or thunder showers. In light rain, we will play outdoors.
- The air quality index is 5 or higher and a Special Air Quality Advisory is in effect
- The daily playground inspection has identified a risk that cannot be immediately corrected
- Educators have planned a special gross motor activity in the gym
- The Supervisor, at their discretion, has decided playground use and/or outdoor play is unsafe or ill advised.



When we are unable to play outside, we play in the upstairs gym where children have plenty of space to ride tricycles, run, jump and play with balls.

## NUTRITION

At Open Sesame we serve one snack each morning. Enjoying food and meal times depends to a great extent on the way food is offered and the models provided by adults. We believe that snack time should create opportunities for children to:

- Develop a positive attitude toward a wide variety of foods;
- Practice self-help skills by preparing and serving food; and
- Enhance socialization skills, self-regulation, and language skills.

It is Open Sesame's policy to:

- Offer at least three food choices each day: 1 whole grain, at least 1 fruit or vegetable and a vegetarian protein
- Limit foods that are high in sugar or salt including candy, dried fruit, cookies, chips, pretzels
- Serve water at snack time and any time a child is thirsty. During especially hot weather, we offer water outside as well.
- Offer portion sizes that are responsive to children's cues of hunger and fullness;
- Serve snack at a time that does not interfere with the children's appetite for lunch (between 1.5 and 2 hours before lunch)
- Accommodate all religious food rules and personal preferences in food choices as noted on the Food Restriction Form provided in the Application Package and provide substitutions that are similar to the original menu (i.e., rice crackers for wheat crackers or coconut yogurt for dairy yogurt)
- Consult with parents to develop a Feeding Plan for any child that requires medical diet or special feeding requirements
- Consult with parents to develop Anaphylaxis Management Plan for any child with anaphylactic allergies
- Never force a child to eat or drink
- Never use food or drink as a reward or punishment

The snack menu is posted bi-weekly in the classroom and can be viewed each day on the HiMama app. Parents may request an email or hard copy of the menu from the Supervisor. We will share information and photos of children at snack time and parents are encouraged to ask if they have any questions. Parents can also make suggestions for snacks anytime. We will provide special snacks from time to time, for example Halloween and Valentine's Day.



## Food Choices and Sensitivities

We are part of a diverse community and individual families restrict certain foods for a variety of reasons. Open Sesame respects the food choices made by families. We recognize that there is a difference between food allergies, food sensitivities and personal choices and therefore food allergies are also subject to the Allergies and Anaphylaxis Policy.

It is the parents' responsibility to inform educators about any and all food restrictions that affect their child. All families fill out the "Food Allergies and Restrictions" form as part of the registration package. When parents indicate a food restriction for their child, the child is added to the Food Restrictions list that is posted in the program area in two places: the bulletin board in the snack preparation area and beside the door in the play area. The list includes records for children with:

- Any and all serious allergies to food and the regulations for using an EpiPen®
- Any and all other food issues such as sensitivities, preferences and faith-based requirements.

## Medical Diet or Special Feeding Requirements

Open Sesame will work with parents to meet any medical diet or special feeding requirements that apply to their child. Any child who has a medical diet or special feeding requirements will require a Feeding Plan. A Feeding Plan is a written record that outlines any special instructions provided by parents. The Supervisor will be responsible for ensuring that all special instructions are followed and for any record-keeping and reporting, if applicable.

## Food From Home

Food from home is not permitted unless there is a documented medical diet or special feeding need. Food from home requires prior consultation with the Supervisor and must:

- Respect the Anaphylaxis Policy
- Be labelled with the child's name and date
- Be delivered ready to serve, in closed containers
- Be stored to maintain maximum nutritive value and prevent contamination.

## ALLERGIES AND ANAPHYLAXIS POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

Open Sesame is an "allergen aware centre". While we cannot guarantee that no nuts or other serious allergens/ products ever enter our preschool, Open Sesame aims to reduce the risk to the best of our knowledge and ability.

The success of risk minimization and management depends on the ongoing involvement and vigilance of all responsible adults and it is our policy that both parents and staff have responsibilities for ensuring that any child with an anaphylactic allergy is safe. It is vitally important that parents and staff maintain open communication about individual children's allergies, forms of treatment and emergency plans. We encourage parents to teach their children about their allergies and how to avoid allergens and to share this with staff so that we can all provide a consistent message to the child.

## **POLICY**

Food items that contain peanuts, tree nuts or any other kind of nut are not permitted in Open Sesame's program area (classroom, playground, gym, hallways).

All food will be carefully chosen and handled. All adults must read ingredient lists carefully. To prevent cross-contamination, food items that list the words "may contain" followed by the name of any form of nut may not enter the centre. The Grocery Volunteer will be trained specifically to ensure that all products are nut-free.

If a child with an anaphylactic allergy is registered at Open Sesame, only food purchased and prepared by Open Sesame staff and volunteers will be allowed (exceptions can be made for food for children with medical diets). In this event, families may not provide treats for special occasions such as birthdays. Open Sesame will make alternate arrangements for special occasions.

For every child with an anaphylactic allergy, their emergency action plan must be kept in the attendance binder, posted in the room, kept with the EpiPen® itself and recorded in the child's file.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Anaphylactic shock**

In the case of a child who has had an anaphylactic shock previously and who is exposed to a particular allergen, the occurrence of any of the following symptoms, in any combination, indicate anaphylactic shock:

- Hives and itching on any part of the body
- Swelling of any body parts, especially eyelids, lips, face or tongue
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea
- Severe stomach cramps
- Dizziness
- Coughing, wheezing or change of voice
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Throat tightness or closing
- Panic or sense of doom
- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Changes of colour in skin and appearance

Immediate administration of the EpiPen® is required where a child who has had anaphylactic shock previously shows signs of ANY of the above. In situations where it is uncertain that anaphylactic shock is occurring, it is advisable to administer the EpiPen® anyway. Reaction to medication if administered unnecessarily is usually very mild.

### **PROCEDURE: DEALING WITH ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK**

All staff, volunteers and students must sign a form confirming they have read this policy and understand it prior to starting their role at Open Sesame. If there is a child with an anaphylactic allergy enrolled in our program, an instructional session at our fall Volunteer Training Workshop will occur, so all are educated in the process of using an EpiPen®

Parents are asked to:

- Fill out the anaphylactic information sheet and provide a current photograph of the child to be displayed in the classroom.
- Provide a doctor's note stating the presence of an anaphylactic allergy.
- Provide an unexpired EpiPen® and case whenever the child is at school.

Open Sesame will:

- Keep the provided EpiPen® in its case (without any wrapping) with the attendance binder.
- Ensure that the provided EpiPen® is always as accessible to the responsible adult as possible while also keeping it out of the reach of all children.
- Keep the EpiPen® at room temperature. When children are outside, the responsible adult should keep the EpiPen® on their person, (i.e., under their coat).
- Ensure that the anaphylactic information sheet includes the following:
  - A child's photo for clear identification of the child
  - Description of the allergy
  - Monitoring and avoidance strategies
  - Signs and symptoms
  - Emergency contact information
- Post any and all information including the anaphylactic information sheet in the classroom.
- Ensure there is a copy of all paperwork in the attendance binder.
- Offer an orientation to all volunteers either separately or at a volunteer training workshop. This will include reviewing our policies and procedures and instruction on the use of the EpiPen®.

### **ACCESSIBLE SERVICE PLAN**

Open Sesame Preschool is committed to serving all members of the community with respect and dignity. We work to be familiar with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005; assistive devices used by the families we serve and new technology and pedagogy in relation to all abilities and disabilities. If a child or family member is having difficulty accessing our facilities or our program delivery needs accommodation, alternate plans will be implemented in consultation with the Program Coordinator, the

Management Committee, Mt. Zion, and the Region of Waterloo. Every effort will be made to accommodate individual needs.

Families we serve and community members who wish to offer feedback on the way Open Sesame provides service to any person may contact the Management Committee Coordinator, Carol Ziegler, at (519) 886-6675.

## **FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS AT OPEN SESAME**

At Open Sesame the whole family system is valued, including parents, caregivers, and extended family members. We have an open-door policy and welcome any family member or caregiver to come and speak with us about a concern. Families connect with staff through a variety of ways including daily face to face meetings, phone calls and emails. Families and caregivers may use any of these methods to raise concerns and questions at any time. Families and caregivers are given the opportunity to complete a survey at the end of each year. Information is kept confidential and used to continually improve our services.

Families can expect regular updates from our staff. Formal progress reports are available to families once a year or when there is a concern that has been expressed by families or staff. We also work closely with our Resource Consultant from KW Habilitation Preschool Services as needed.

### **Family Support and Engagement**

Our Program Coordinator is available to support you and your family during your time at Open Sesame. The Coordinator can support you with filling out forms, parenting information, accessing community resources and responding to any questions or concerns that you might have.

All parents are invited to attend special events as scheduled. At different points in the year, Open Sesame may provide topics of discussion, guest speakers, and activities for parents and caregivers. Parents are welcome to suggest topics and activities that are of interest to them.<sup>6</sup>

We are committed to creating an environment that is safe for all families regardless of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or ability. Our goal is for all parents and caregivers to feel respected and included. We strive to create a supportive family atmosphere and believe we must all work together in order to meet the needs of our children. We aim for respectful communication in all of our interactions between families, staff and volunteers. We do not tolerate any hateful, harsh, or degrading behavior from our staff, volunteers, parents and caregivers. At Open Sesame, our values of respect and inclusion are important to us. Families or caregivers who choose to ignore or fail to respect our values risk having their child terminated from our Program.

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<sup>6</sup> Special events may be restricted by the Ministry of Education or the Region of Waterloo for health and safety reasons.

### **Staying on the Premises During Preschool Program**

Parents may choose to stay in the church building during preschool Program time as long as it does not interfere with the church's functions such as funerals or meetings. Parents are asked to use the upstairs meeting room unless there has been a specific request to be in an alternate room. This allows younger children a place to play and limits any mess to one room. Please make sure any room used is cleaned up at the end of the morning. If you notice anything amiss, please inform staff.<sup>7</sup>

### **SUMMARY OF OUR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION POLICY**

The Program Implementation Policy sets out the policies and procedures that ensure the goals and approaches outlined in the Program Statement are implemented to the highest standard. Responsibility for monitoring this policy rests with the Supervisor, the Program Coordinator and the Management Committee Coordinator who are all available for comments, complaints and feedback.

### **Staff**

Samantha Beesley RECE is our Supervisor and Classroom teacher. She is registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators and meets all of the qualifications of the College. For more information please visit [www.college-ece.ca/en](http://www.college-ece.ca/en). Our Program Coordinator is Jana Kelly, who has a master's degree in community planning and experience working in training and community development. All of our staff are certified in first aid and infant and child CPR. Staff are required to participate in Professional Development Activities each school year.

### **Volunteers and Students**

Volunteers and students play a vital role in our classroom. Although they are not RECEs, they have a wealth of knowledge and we provide training for them twice a year. We use both adult volunteers and university students from Wilfrid Laurier University. Adult volunteers and students are supervised at all times by the RECE Supervisor and are not permitted to be alone with any child.<sup>8</sup>

### **Confidentiality**

Open Sesame recognizes the importance of confidentiality. All staff, management committee members, volunteers and students are required to maintain confidentiality at all times. This means that children and their families will not be discussed outside the school with anyone unless parents grant their permission for disclosure. Anything discussed at staff meetings, volunteer meetings, committee meetings, volunteer workshops and team meetings will not be discussed outside the Program.

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<sup>7</sup> Access to the premises may be restricted by the Ministry of Education or the Region of Waterloo for health and safety reasons.

<sup>8</sup> Volunteers and students are placed at Open Sesame with permission from the Ministry of Education and may be restricted for health and safety reasons.

All staff, management committee members, volunteers and students must sign a confidentiality statement prior to employment or placement.

### **Monitoring Compliance of Program Statement and Prohibited Practices Policy**

#### **Staff**

Every RECE and other staff signs a confirmation that they have read and understood our Program Statement, its goals and the approaches to implementation, including Prohibited Practices. This is done annually or at any time that the Program Statement is amended.

All staff report to the Open Sesame Management Committee. A formal review of every staff person occurs three months after that have begun (for new staff). A mid-term performance review is conducted in January and an end-term review is conducted in June of each school year (for returning staff). Staff members are also required to make regular reports at meetings of the Management Committee.

The Open Sesame Management Committee monitors all staff members to ensure that we are meeting the goals of our Program Statement. Any contravention of our policies and procedures or commission of any prohibited practice by Open Sesame staff should reported directly to our Management Committee Coordinator, Carol Ziegler, by phone at (519) 886-6675 or in writing delivered c/o Mount Zion Lutheran Church.

**The commission of a prohibited practice, once verified, by any staff member will result in dismissal.**

#### **Volunteers**

All volunteers are required to familiarize themselves with our Program Statement, its goals and the approaches to implementation, including Prohibited Practices. This is done annually or at any time that the Program Statement is amended. Our Supervisor monitors all volunteers and student placements through direct observation and interaction in the classroom and volunteers are subject to regular performance reviews.

The full policy on the Contravention of Open Sesame Program Statement Approaches and Commission of Prohibited Practices is available on request.

Our Supervisor monitors all volunteers and student placements through direct observation and interaction in the classroom.

Any contravention of our policies and procedures or commission of any prohibited practice by Open Sesame volunteers or student placements should be reported directly to our Supervisor in person, by phone at (519) 886-7930 or by email at <opensesameheadstart@gmail.com>.

**The commission of a prohibited practice by any volunteer or student placement, once verified, will result in dismissal.**

## PARENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### Policy

Open Sesame encourages parents/guardians to take an active role in our preschool and regularly discuss what their child(ren) are experiencing in our Program. We support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/guardians, child care providers, staff, and volunteers and foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents/guardians about the Program and their children. Our staff are available to engage parents/guardians in conversations and support a positive experience during every interaction.

All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians will be taken seriously and will be addressed. Every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties and as quickly as possible.

Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing (hard copy or email). Responses and outcomes will be provided verbally, or in writing upon request. The level of detail provided to the parent/guardian will respect and maintain the confidentiality of all parties involved.

An initial response to an issue or concern will be provided to parents/guardians within 2 business days. The person who raised the issue/concern will be kept informed throughout the resolution process.

Investigations of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial and respectful to parties involved.

### Procedures

Nature of Issue or Concern	Steps for Parent and/or Guardian to Report Issue/Concern:	Steps for Staff and/or Licensee in responding to issue/concern:
<b>Classroom Related</b> E.g: curriculum, schedule, toilet training, indoor/outdoor Program activities, feeding arrangements, etc. or <b>Volunteer Related</b> E.g. All issues or concerns about volunteer conduct that puts a child's health, safety and well-being at risk	Raise the issue or concern to Samantha Beesley, Supervisor, in the classroom, by phone (519) 886-7930 or by email opensesameheadstart@gmail.com - Samantha Beesley, Supervisor, in the classroom, by phone (519) 886-7930 or by email opensesameheadstart@gmail.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Address the issue/concern at the time it is raised or</li><li>- arrange for a meeting with the parent/guardian within 2 business days.</li></ul> Document the issues/concerns in detail. Documentation should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- the date and time the issue/concern was received;</li><li>- the name of the person who received the issue/concern;</li><li>- the name of the person reporting the issue/concern;</li><li>- the details of the issue/concern; and</li><li>- any steps taken to resolve the issue/concern and/or information</li></ul>



Nature of Issue or Concern	Steps for Parent and/or Guardian to Report Issue/Concern:	Steps for Staff and/or Licensee in responding to issue/concern:
<b>General, Centre-or Operations-Related</b>  E.g: child care fees, hours of operation, staffing, waiting lists, menus, etc.	Raise the issue or concern to - Jana Kelly, Program Coordinator, in the classroom, by phone (519) 886-7930 or by email sesamevolunteer@gmail.com	given to the parent/guardian regarding next steps or referral.  Provide contact information for the appropriate person if the person being notified is unable to address the matter.
<b>Staff, Supervisor, and/or Licensee-Related</b>	All issues or concerns about staff conduct that puts a child's health, safety and well-being at risk should be reported to the Program Coordinator as soon as parents/guardians become aware of the situation.  Further, parents/guardians may raise the issue or concern to - Carol Ziegler, Management Committee Coordinator, by phone at (519) 886-6675 or in writing delivered to the church office located beside the Open Sesame entrance.	Ensure the investigation of the issue/concern is initiated by the appropriate party within 2 business days or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter. Document reasons for delays in writing.  Provide a resolution or outcome to the parent(s)/guardian(s) who raised the issue/concern.

## Confidentiality

Every issue and concern will be treated confidentially and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents/guardians, children, staff, students and volunteers, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons (e.g. to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities or a Children's Aid Society).

## Conduct

Open Sesame maintains high standards for positive interaction, communication and role-modeling for children. Harassment and discrimination will therefore not be tolerated from any party.

If at any point a parent/guardian, staff or volunteer feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused or belittled, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the supervisor and/or licensee.



## Escalation of Issues or Concerns

Where parents/guardians are not satisfied with the response or outcome of an issue or concern, they may take the issue or concern verbally or in writing to Carol Ziegler, Chairperson of the Open Sesame Management Committee or Karen Gastmeir, Chairperson of the Mount Zion Church Council.

Issues/concerns related to compliance with requirements set out in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and Ontario Regulation 137/15 should be reported to the Ministry of Education's Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch.

Issues/concerns may also be reported to other relevant regulatory bodies (e.g. local public health department, police department, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labour, fire department, College of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario College of Teachers, College of Social Workers etc.) where appropriate.

## Contact Information

### **Samantha Beesley, Supervisor**

(519) 886-7930

[opensesameheadstart@gmail.com](mailto:opensesameheadstart@gmail.com)

### **Jana Kelly, Program Coordinator**

(519) 886-7930

[sesamevolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:sesamevolunteer@gmail.com)

### **Karen Gastmeir, Chairperson of the Mount Zion Church Council**

(519) 886-5820

in writing c/o Mount Zion Lutheran Church delivered to the church office located beside the Open Sesame entrance

### **Children's Aid Society, Waterloo Region**

(519) 576-0540

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

### **College of Early Childhood Educators**

(416) 961-8558 or toll free 1 888 961-8558 ext. 239

[discipline@college-ece.ca](mailto:discipline@college-ece.ca)

### **Ministry of Education,**

Licensed Child Care Help Desk: 1-877-510-5333

[childcare\\_ontario@ontario.ca](mailto:childcare_ontario@ontario.ca)

## Concerns about the Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child

**If you have reason to believe that a child is in need of protection or is at risk of harm, or you are looking for support for your family, call 519-576-0540.**

The *Child & Family Services Act* defines a child in need of protection as having experienced actual harm, or at risk of experiencing harm, physically, sexually or emotionally. Harm can occur by either abuse or neglect.

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Children's Aid Society as per the "Duty to Report" requirement under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

If a parent/guardian expresses concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, the parent will be advised to contact Family and Children's Services (FACS) directly at (519) 576-0540.

You can find further, detailed information about the types and signs of abuse and neglect from the Association of Children's Aid Societies website [www.useyourvoice.ca](http://www.useyourvoice.ca)

Or

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/childrensaid/reportingabuse/index.aspx>

## ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Our full Policies and Procedures are kept on site in printed form. These include:

- Serious Occurrence Reporting
- Criminal Reference Checks
- Anaphylaxis Management
- Playground Safety and Inspection
- Sanitary Practices Policy
- Staff Training and Development
- Supervision of Volunteers and Students

Any parent or caregiver can ask to review these policies at any time.

If you have any questions about anything in this Handbook, please contact the Program Coordinator.