

For Adult Caregivers

Welcome to Family Room After School Program

We are delighted to have you as part of our extended family! At Family Room Chicago, we believe in creating a supportive, engaging, and welcoming environment for every child, caregiver, and staff member. Your dedication and unique perspective are what make our community truly special. This handbook outlines our guiding principles and procedures to ensure we work together to achieve our mission.

Our mission: To provide a welcoming, inclusive, and engaging environment where families can connect, grow, and have fun through diverse educational, creative, and physical activities. We are committed to supporting children's development and building a sense of community.

Our vision: To be the go-to neighborhood hub for families in Chicago—a place where children feel safe and inspired, and caregivers feel supported and empowered.

Our core values: F.A.M.I.L.Y.

- **F – Fairness & Respect:** We treat every person with respect, dignity, and empathy, recognizing that all humans are equal.
- **A – Ask & Admit:** We foster brave, honest communication. We ask questions, admit mistakes, and embrace every opportunity to learn and grow.
- **M – Mindset of Positivity:** We lead with optimism, celebrate progress, and approach every challenge by looking for the good.
- **I – Integrity & Trust:** We assume the best in others and build trust through transparent, kind, and reliable actions.
- **L – Lean on Leadership:** When in doubt, we seek clarity from our managers and our families to guide choices that ensure everyone's safety and well-being.
- **Y – You Matter:** We value the presence, voice, and actions of every team member, child, and caregiver. Your contribution makes a difference.

Our Approach to Education and Play

At Family Room Chicago, we believe in a child-centered approach to learning and development. Our program incorporates elements of **Montessori**, **Reggio Emilia**, and **restorative practices** to guide our play-based curriculum. We provide a structured environment that allows a child's imagination to flourish without being forced. This philosophy empowers children to explore, create, and grow at their own pace.

Our Team

We are committed to building a high-quality team that reflects our core values. All of our instructors are required to have prior experience working with children and possess a warm, empathetic, and positive personality.

To ensure our team is equipped to provide the best possible care, we require all staff to undergo **background checks**, including criminal record checks and reference verification. Additionally, our employees receive extensive training, including:

- Initial online and offline education.
- Continuous, on-the-job training.
- Ongoing education across various developmental scopes and pedagogical methods.

Our staff is trained to work with a range of behaviors, using redirection and positive engagement strategies. While our employees are not experts in all behaviors or specific extenuating circumstances, they receive continuous on-going training throughout the season to enhance their skills.

If you have any questions regarding our high-quality services or staff qualifications, please contact the General Manager at management@familyroomchicago.com

Behavior management: A restorative approach

Family Room Chicago uses a positive guidance and discipline policy centered on positive reinforcement, redirection, and the development of self-regulation. Our primary concern is the safety and well-being of our students, and we expect all students to display respect, honesty, and care toward their peers and employees.

Expectations for employees

As a team, we will work together to ensure a consistent and empathetic approach based on understanding the students' needs.

Addressing student misconduct: A step-by-step approach

When a student does not follow our behavioral guidelines, employees should follow these steps in order. In cases of escalating or unsafe behavior, a step may be skipped to ensure immediate safety.

1. **Positive redirection:** Speak to the student in a calm and positive manner, providing gentle reminders, redirection, and acceptable choices.
2. **Temporary removal (Time-In):** If a student needs a moment to regain control, ask them to sit quietly in a designated "time-in" area for a few minutes. The area must be within sight of an employee.
3. **Reflect and discuss:** Engage the student in a conversation to help them identify the unacceptable behavior and discuss more appropriate alternatives for the future.
4. **Involve leadership and parents:** If the behavior continues or cannot be diffused, inform a Program Manager, Site Director, or Site Lead, who will help facilitate a resolution. A manager will then contact the parent or guardian to communicate the issue and align on a strategy.
5. **Document the incident:** Complete an Incident Report detailing the behavior, what may have provoked it, and the corrective actions taken.

6. **Review with family:** A member of our leadership team will review the Incident Report and behavior policy with the family. This serves as a verbal warning.

Escalated discipline and consequences

In rare cases where a child's behavior continues to be disruptive or escalates to an unsafe level, additional actions may be taken to ensure the safety of all participants and staff.

- **Early pickup or suspension:** A child may be required to be picked up early or suspended from the program without a refund if behaviors persist after the above steps have been taken.
- **Permanent removal (Expulsion):** The child may be permanently removed from the program without a refund if inappropriate behavior continues after suspension, or if their actions ever threaten the immediate safety of themselves or others.

Behaviors that may lead to suspension or expulsion

While not exhaustive, reasons for escalated consequences may include:

- Endangering the health and safety of others (e.g., verbal threats, bullying, pushing, punching, kicking, biting).
- Using excessive inappropriate language, profanity, or obscenities.
- Repeated disrespect for program rules.
- Stealing or destroying personal, program, or property during program hours.
- **Immediate termination:** Any student found in possession of or using tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, weapons, firearms, or explosives will be immediately suspended with a potential for permanent expulsion.

Communication with families

Family Room Chicago's Site Leads, Site Directors, and Program Managers will be the direct points of contact for communicating with parents regarding behavioral concerns. Depending on the severity of the incident, school administration may also be notified.

The Important Legal Stuff

Illness & Exclusion Policy

To maintain a healthy environment for all, students may not attend Family Room Chicago if they have exhibited any of the following symptoms within the past 24 hours: fever of 100.4°F or higher, vomiting, diarrhea, or contagious skin rash.

Return to Care: Students must be symptom-free without the aid of fever-reducing medication for a full 24 hours before returning.

Illness During Program: If a child becomes ill while in our care, parents will be notified immediately and must arrange for pick-up within 60 minutes.

Medication Administration: Family Room Chicago staff generally do not administer medication. Exceptions are made only for life-saving emergency medications (e.g., EpiPens, asthma inhalers) provided we have a signed "Medication Authorization Form" and a written Action Plan on file. We do not administer over-the-counter medications (e.g., Tylenol, cough syrup) or daily antibiotics.

Personal Belongings & Electronics We work hard to provide a rich environment full of activities. Please leave personal toys, trading cards, and money at home.

Electronics: Personal electronics (including cell phones, iPads, and gaming devices) must remain in the student's backpack at all times unless a specific designated time is approved by a staff member.

Liability: Family Room Chicago is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items brought to the program.

Late Pick-Up Policy Our program concludes promptly at 6:00 PM. To respect our staff's time, a late fee can be assessed for students remaining after closing time. We support working parents and understand pickup challenges. Repeat late pickups will be

discussed between caregiver and management and will result in late pickup fees being charged.

Safety & Emergency Protocols The safety of your child is our highest priority. Our staff is trained in emergency response procedures for fire, weather, and medical situations. In the event of a medical emergency, 911 will be called immediately, followed by the parents/guardians listed on file. Please ensure your emergency contact information is always up to date in our secure parent app.

For Children Attendees

Welcome to Our Family Room!

This is a fun place to play, learn, and grow together. We are so happy you are here!

Our Big Ideas

- **Use your imagination!** We have toys and art and games for you to explore. You are the leader of your own play.
- **Be a good neighbor & friend.** In our Family Room, we all play nicely together. We share our toys and use kind words.
- **Listen to your grown-ups.** Our teachers are here to help you. They keep everyone safe and happy. If you have a problem, you can ask a teacher for help.
- **Use your words.** When you feel sad or mad, you can use your words to tell a grown-up how you feel. We will help you find a way to fix things.
- **Try again.** Sometimes we make mistakes, and that's okay! We can try again together.

Rules of Our Family Room

- **Be gentle:** Keep your hands and feet to yourself. No hitting, pushing, or biting because that hurts our friends.
- **Kind words:** Use kind and honest words when you talk. No yelling or saying mean things.
- **Listen to teachers:** We listen to our teachers so we can stay safe and know what to do.
- **Take turns:** We all like to play, so we take turns using the toys and games.
- **Walk inside:** We walk, not run, inside the Family Room. Running is for outside or for Fit & Fun designated “running zone”.
- **Clean up time:** When we are all done with our toys, we help put them back where they belong.

What Happens If You Break a Rule

Our teachers will help you remember the rules.

1. **Gentle reminder:** A teacher will use kind words to remind you of the rule.
2. **Calm down time:** If you need a moment to get calm, a teacher might ask you to sit in a quiet, special spot for a few minutes. They will stay close by so you know you are safe.
3. **Talk about it:** After you are calm, a teacher will talk with you about what happened and how you can make a good choice next time.
4. **Tell a grown-up:** If you keep having a hard time following the rules, a teacher might tell your family about what happened.

Staying Safe Is Important

If a child hurts other kids or teachers, or their behavior makes the Family Room unsafe, they might have to go home early. The most important rule of all is to keep everyone safe and happy.